USP: English that you can understand!

You've got to hand it to Dell. It has figured out what its customers want—customer service that is understandable, and responsive. This customer service is not what its currently offers, since most likely if you call Dell you will end up talking to Raj in Bangalore or Juan in the Philippines (and by talk, I mean trying to make yourself understood to someone who has some understanding of computers and less regarding English). In response to this desire to talk to people who might understand what you are asking, and give you instructions you might be able to use, Dell has instituted a program called Your Tech Service Team, in which you will talk to support people right here in the U.S. The kicker is that it will CHARGE you a premium ($12.95 a month, which ends up being $155.50 a year). So let's recap: for a mere $155 a year, you will get customer service in understandable English from an American company. Sounds like a hell of a marketing program. If you think I am making this up, please read the article in the *Washington Post*.

On the other hand, the same article points out that Jitterbug, a cell phone company, has decided to 1) keep call centers in the U.S. because its customers prefer it and 2) it uses this as a point of differentiation. Sadly, I think this is a good USP. If I was given a choice of computers, and told where customer service was located for each company, I would most certainly choose the one with U.S. based service. Having had a Dell myself, and having had to call Raj, I can tell you that Raj was NOT helpful. Raj did not understand me and I didn't understand him. This served to frustrate me and ultimately made me decide not to buy a Dell again. Unfortunately, most other computer and software manufacturers have also decided to cut costs and install their customer service centers in

various South Asian locations. See the movie Slumdog Millionaire to see how this has impacted India, for instance.

What is frustrating about Dell marketing this service at a premium is that it stems from an understanding that its customers are unhappy with receiving tech support from another continent. Instead of correcting the situation, they have opted to squeeze their customers some more. It is just like the airlines. The airlines know that you don't want a middle seat, and that you want some sort of meal or beverage when you are shut up in the flying tube, so they will charge for the privilege. **All because companies actually know what customers want.**

So much for the idea that companies aren't responsive to customer complaints.