

Cultural Affinity and Multilingualism With Offshore Call Centers



By Ossama Nazmi

Cultural affinity coupled with multilingualism in the outsourcing world have become key aspects, especially if dealing with an offshore call center project. When all other factors check out during the most rigorous due diligence a client could conduct for an outsourcing provider, culture and multilingual capability are often underestimated and in most cases undervalued.

Many of the outsourced programs awarded to different offshore destinations have fallen short in satisfying the cultural compatibility and multilingual capability elements needed to gain the targeted customer satisfaction scores. In many other cases the service had to come to a complete halt after serious glitches caused by cultural unawareness and linguistic issues.

The destination chosen should show an inclination towards the client culture and the type of offered service, like directory assistance, for instance. The directory assistance requires deep knowledge of places inside the served country, in the exact same way locals are used to calling those places. Often, customer service requires a close conversation where an offshore agent is hit by colloquial terms and phrases. An efficient call center provider would have armed his agents with the adequate culture knowledge and training to overcome these kinds of situations.

Multilingualism is also a key factor for many leading outsourcing destinations; their value proposition abates when multilingual capabilities are demanded. For that reason, the North African region has emerged with a unique value proposition among key global tenants. It is a location that is able to provide multilingual services across vertical markets with a high degree of cultural awareness. Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt have all established contact center sector for years. Tunisia and Morocco, are still exclusively serving the French markets. As for Morocco, the existence of another European language is also valid. Spanish is served from Tangier north of Morocco at limited numbers. Egypt on the other hand is still perceived as an Anglophone destination, although, on the contrary it has a proven track record of serving most of the European languages to fortune 500 companies, at an adequate level.

The two strong evidences that any outsourcer should examine before committing to an outsourcing tenure are multilingual capabilities and cultural affinity. These factors establish the base for an ultimate experience for customers that are not only enjoying a “local-sound” but rather a high quality phone experience.

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