

Technical Support Outsourcing Services: *Can Your Company Benefit?*

By Rob van Herpen

Many companies can benefit from outsourcing their technical support services. However, how do you know if your company is one of them? Here are some questions you can ask yourself to see if outsourcing can benefit you and what to look for in an outsource company.

Do you want to provide a high level of satisfaction for your customers and have a large number of repeat customers? Outsourcing your technical support services adds value to your services and keeps customer retention rates high. After-sales service is one of the most important features that your company can offer to create a good rapport with your clients. It reinforces your brand image as a provider of quality products or services that your customers can trust. Ensuring that your customers are happy as long as they are buying, owning, and using your products or services can put you ahead of your competitors as well. Remember: You are not just selling a product; you are selling a business relationship.

Do you want to reduce your overhead costs? One of the most enticing features of outsourcing and usually what ultimately drives companies to outsource is reducing costs. Outsourcing technical support can be done at a more efficient and cost effective level than keeping it in-house. As your business grows, you have to hire more employees. They require resources and training. When you outsource, you reduce those overhead costs.

Does your company have too much, too little or inconsistent technical support demand? If you have too much demand for customer support you have to make the decision as to whether you want to invest in hiring in-house employees or outsource the extra work to an external technical support company. If you choose to keep it in-house, you are forced to hire, train and create space and provide resources within your offices. If you choose to outsource technical support, these problems are virtually eliminated (save for training employees). In short, you are paying for only a part of these costs while still receiving the services you require to keep your customers happy.

If you have too little or inconsistent technical support demand, you run the risk of employees sitting around waiting to help customers while using valuable resources and increasing overhead costs without creating a sufficient return. If you keep inconsistent work in-house, you may be in the difficult position of hiring less qualified employees short term. Outsourcing your technical support will allow you to have access to an ample supply of employees when you need them.

Do you have/ want to have international customers? International customers require customer service representatives that speak their language during varying times of the day. Are you willing to hire representatives that work during the night or on weekends and also speak the languages native to your customers? Outsourcing to a technical support company that specialize in 24/7 support and multilingual support is a great alternative to having employees in house.

If you need to keep customers happy, cut costs, have too little or too much work, or require support for international customers then your company is a great candidate for outsourcing your technical support services. But how do you choose an outsource company?

Do they provide you with transparent services? Ask how they will report the processes that they are providing for you. An important part of outsourcing technical support is overseeing how the project evolves – you need to be informed of the progress at all times. What information will the reports include? How many customers are being served per day or per hour? How long do they stay on the phone? Will they be recording the calls? If the company will not provide all the information, it's a safe bet they aren't doing what they say they are.

Do they have a definite strategy in mind? Can they give you a quick summary of their company strategy? What are the company's goals, values, and mission? Without a solid vision, you may be dealing with an unorganized and inexperienced company that lacks hierarchy and communication processes.

How solid is their technological infrastructure? Ask what software and technologies they are using. Do a little investigation into how the software works and how reliable they are. If you are paying for customer support, you need to make sure that the company can provide it with little technical difficulties.

Does the company provide your customer's language(s)? Outsourcing can turn disastrous if you don't have native speaking representatives. How many representatives do they have that speak your language? If your company is multilingual, do they provide multilingual services? When a customer calls and the contact care representative does not speak the language well or with a strong accent, you can be assured they feel less secure about their purchase or relationship with you. Customer support is supposed to bring trustworthiness to your company, not distrust. Ask to speak to a representative that speaks your language so that you can gauge how well they can serve your customers.

How does the training process work? Another important piece of the puzzle is the training methods of the representatives. How will they handle training to best serve your customers? What do you have to provide to ensure training goes smoothly? The first step to successful outsourced technical support is quality training processes.

What happens if there are problems? What problem solving measures are in place? Can they mention a problem that they were able to successfully resolve? What will happen to customers that are trying to call? Ask the company about a problem that occurred with another client and what solutions they provided.

How have things gone with other clients? Of course, current or previous clients can provide a lot of information about the company. Ask for contact information of a client and try to speak to them directly. If this is not possible, perhaps they have written references that you can read.

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