

Thank Tech Companies for Helpful Offshoring

by Mike Cassidy

Whew! For a minute there I thought the growing trend of sending technology jobs overseas was another example of Silicon Valley companies caring more about profits than people

But no, no, no. Such thinking is wrong-headed. Ask the companies that are moving work to India, China and elsewhere. They're doing it to "be close to our customers" or to "follow the sun" or to "free workers up to do more exciting jobs."

They are definitely not **n** and this is important **n** they are not doing it to find cheap labor and bigger profits. In fact, such thinking is hurtful.

It's like Oracle spokeswoman Jennifer Glass said to *Mercury News* reporter Aaron Davis recently: "Talk that Oracle is expanding aggressively in India simply for cost savings is insulting." Not to her, mind you, but to the highly qualified Indian engineers.

"Our employees in India find it offensive," Glass said. "The fact that they are viewed as cheap labor when they are highly qualified."

Mike Cassidy is a columnist with the San Jose (CA) Mercury News.

Actually, they are both highly qualified *and* cheap labor. Still, we mustn't assume.

Imagine thinking Oracle would hire Indian engineers at \$15 to \$20 an hour instead of U.S. engineers at \$40 to \$120 an hour just to save money.

I mean **n** if Oracle wanted to save money, they could find other ways. Chief Executive Larry Ellison could again forego a salary. After all, Ellison has more money than God. (Word is he passed God on the *Forbes* list with his 2001 compensation of \$706 million.)

Or Oracle could move Ellison's CEO job to India. (Thanks to a *Mercury News* reader for the idea.) Say his compensation is 80 percent less there: that \$706 million becomes \$141 million overnight.

After running a series about offshoring this week, the *Mercury News* received a passionate response from many readers. The issue is an emotional one in Silicon Valley, which has lost more than 200,000 jobs since December 2000.

So forgive those who've been out of work for months for thinking just maybe their former companies are shifting work to developing countries solely to save money and increase profits. These folks aren't thinking straight, what with the stress of trying to pay bills with no money at all.

If these folks *were* thinking straight, then they'd understand that

Oracle and companies like Intel, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Agilent, Cisco, Sun and Adobe could have other good reasons for shifting jobs to cheaper labor markets.

Oracle talks about "following the sun." The time difference between India and California means workers finishing the day in Redwood Shores can hand off work to software developers in India who are just starting their days.

This is just plain considerate. Sure, Oracle could employ the same strategy by hiring U.S. workers to work an overnight shift, but who wants those hours? You might think bad hours are better than no hours, but really, they're bad news.

Unless you're working for a call center in the Philippines that serves Dell. Those workers actually do work all night. See, night in the Philippines is day in the United States and that's when Dell customers are awake and calling for help. "It's like living in a bubble," a call-center worker told *The Wall Street Journal*. "Often, I don't see my family for days." Which could be a benefit, depending on how you feel about your family.

So, let's ease up on these companies as they pack up jobs and move them to where they can be done more cheaply. This is not about money.

In the end, really, this is about you. •