

Outsourcing – A Horror Story With a Happy Ending

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This morning, I turned on my Dell computer, and received an error message: "NTLDR is missing. Press any key to restart". After several attempts at pressing the "enter" key and getting the same message, rebooting several times and getting the same message, I called Dell Phone Support.

The technician somewhere in India told me that this was a relatively common problem, and required reinstalling the file in the I386 folder. He then went through a long sequence of steps to try to reinstall the file from the Windows XP reinstallation CD. He kept running into problems, getting the message "Access denied" when we tried accessing the I386 folder. Eventually, after about an hour on the phone, he told me that several files had been corrupted, and the only thing left to do was to re-format the hard drive, reinstall Windows, and try to rebuild the system. I was told that the process requires about 2 – 3 hours to complete.

I decided to do so using a local computer servicing company which had previously installed Ghost and made a backup image of my hard drive. I started out by explaining the NTLDR error message. The following is a nearly verbatim transcript of our conversation"

Local Tech: "Do you have a floppy in the floppy drive?"

Me: "No ---- Wait a minute – yes I do! I guess I should remove it?"

Local Tech: "Yes, then reboot"

Me: "It's booting correctly – Is that what the problem was?"

Local Tech: "Yes – That's the message you get when you try to boot from the floppy drive – It's a standard cryptic MS error message.

So how to I rate the advice the Dell Indian technician provided?

1.. Not only didn't he know the simple and apparently obvious solution to what is an extremely common problem – a badly designed Windows XP error message.

2.. Not only did he waste an hour of my time on a fruitless exercise when a knowledgeable tech could have solved the problem in ten seconds.

3.. But – if I had blindly followed his advice, I would have at best, lost all the programs, data files and everything else I've added since purchase.

To summarize – this incident has severely shaken my faith in the quality of Dell support service, I should mention that when I told the local tech of the procedure that the Dell support tech had followed, and the recommendation he gave – the local tech told me "those guys don't know very much – they just follow scripts, and rush you into replacing equipment and software."

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PT