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Dell cancels Indian tech support

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) --After an onslaught of complaints, computer maker Dell Inc. has stopped using a technical support center in India to handle calls from its corporate customers.

Some U.S. customers have complained that the Indian technical-support representatives are difficult to communicate with because of thick accents and scripted responses.

Tech support for corporate customers with Optiplex desktop and Latitude notebook computers will instead be handled from call centers in Texas, Idaho and Tennessee, Dell spokesman Jon Weisblatt said Monday.

Calls from some home PC owners will continue to be handled by the technical support center in Bangalore, India, and Weisblatt said Dell has no plans to scale back the operation there.

"Customers weren't satisfied with the level of support they were receiving, so we're moving some calls around to make sure they don't feel that way anymore," Weisblatt said. He would not discuss the nature of the dissatisfaction with the call center in Bangalore.

Dell is one of a number of high-tech companies that have in recent years moved jobs to India and other developing nations for the cheaper labor, which in Dell's case helps keep down the cost of providing round-the-clock support.

Corporate customers account for about 85 percent of Dell's business, with only 15 percent coming from the consumer market. Worldwide, Dell employs about 44,300 people. About 54 percent are abroad.

Among Dell customers dissatisfied with the company's use of overseas labor is Ronald Kronk, a Presbyterian minister in Rochester, Pennsylvania, who has spent the last four months trying to solve a problem that resulted in his being billed for two computers. The problem, he said, is that the Dell call center is in India.

"They're extremely polite, but I call it sponge listening -- they just soak it in and say, 'I can understand why you're angry,' but nothing happens," Kronk said.

He added: "Every time I see a Dell commercial on TV, I just cringe. They make it sound so easy and it's been a nightmare."

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