

# Why we are confused

A couple of days ago I wasn't near a computer and I needed to transfer some funds at the bank where I've had accounts for at least the last 25 years. So I called the 1-800 number for telephone banking. The automated voice at the other end of the line said, "Press one for English." It didn't go on to say "press two for some other language." It just said to press one for English.



**You can't beat a system you can't understand**

By Sam Bari

I couldn't help but wonder what language I would be doing business in if I didn't press one. So I didn't do anything to see what would happen. Sure enough, the automated voice started speaking Spanish. Now I know this is an American bank that was founded in the U. S. of A. It has headquarters in a major U. S. municipality and has branches all over the country and in most of the free world.

Although we don't have an official language in this country, most business has been conducted in English, at least for the last couple of hundred years. Not having an official language is laughable, because that means it is perfectly legal for people of school age to do their homework in any language they want, even if their native tongue is a little known Asian dialect. I find it difficult to believe that has not yet happened and the case taken to court.

Anyway, I redialed and pressed one for English. I selected the option to talk to an associate because I wanted to find out why I had to press one for English. When the associate answered the phone, I noted that she spoke English with an accent I didn't recognize, so I asked where she was from. She said India. I thought that was interesting so I asked her how she liked living in America.

She said, "I've never lived in America, is it nice?" I affirmed that it was and asked where she was. She said she was in Delhi. We made pleasant small talk for a few minutes and I completed my transaction. After I hung up, I thought: Well...

there's another job that has been outsourced from the United States.

When I thought about it longer, I remembered that the customer service person from my cell phone company was also in a different country. I must admit, coming to terms with realizing that all manufacturing is outsourced to other countries and now even customer service positions were being filled on foreign soil gave me pause.

I had to wonder, if all these jobs are outsourced to other countries, then why do we have 12,000,000 illegal immigrants here with thousands more clamoring to cross all of our borders every day? It appears that people are coming here to get better jobs, but the good jobs are going to the countries they are leaving.

Then I read a disturbing statistic. The U. S. ranks number 29 in education in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This organization measures student literacy in science, math, and reading, focusing this year on science among 15-year-olds, and is an often-cited reference for policymakers sounding the alarm bells about the state of education in the United States and its implications for the ability of Americans to secure jobs in a global economy.

According to OECD, the U. S. is behind countries like Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Liechtenstein, and ahead of just nine other OECD countries. That explains why foreign nationals fill the few engineering, accounting, and scientific jobs that are still available in this country.

They are better educated, and more competent than native born and educated Americans applying for the same positions.

The average Asian high school graduate leaves most of our college freshmen in the dust in math and science skills. And graduates from the better institutions of higher learning in India are preferred over their Ivy League counterparts on a global scale. Scary isn't it?

We can't go to their countries looking for work because for the most part, we can't compete. We don't have the talent or the skills if statistics are to be believed.

Yet, despite our apparent overall incompetence and educational shortcomings, the U. S. is still the wealthiest nation in the world. No matter how many times our economic system has been challenged, we have always prevailed and bounced back to be world economic leaders.

When you look at the big picture, our continued success and ability to sustain enormous wealth with an expanding upper class is confusing. I guess we really do live in a system we can't understand.



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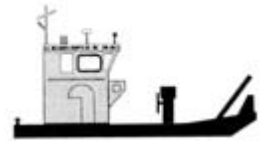
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