# Welcome to RapidBlog.com

written by Manoj Khanna | June 1, 2004
Finally I’m taking this seriously. Finally I’ve come back. RapidBlog.com was started in the winter of 2003. The site was hosted at a very affordable host – hence – went down a couple of times; lost contents at times; unfortunately, without any backups. I’m tired of the hosting service, but can’t do anything as I paid a year full in advance and now they (‘the-hosting-company’) won’t refund me. So, I say, what the heck. Let it be. Another ordeal for couple of months but this time I’ll make sure I’ve all my proper back ups.

Anyway, that was just a brief description of the things happened with my dearest site. But, let me tell you that this site is not about whinning. Its about technology and high-tech world. Where I work. Things I do. Its all about that. And all of my rants and raves, bundled into one piece – RapidBlog.com.

Hope you’ll enjoy your stay here.

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# Open Source. To be or not to be.

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There is a big debate about whether to consider using open source softwares – across the industry be it government – state or local, corporation large or mid-sized. The past two decades have been a thrilling expeirence for some companies who made billions on top of what what they could actually make. The illiteracy of the ignorant mind and the colored contours of the fancy e-world did most of the harm. Money spent and the money saved are two different issues.

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# The outsourcing dilemma and growth: a fractured look

written by Manoj Khanna | June 1, 2004
Most of the work in the IT industry is virtual. Virtual meaning no physical prescence is required to do the job. This holds true in terms of coding, testing and maintenance of the software programs, and in certain cases servers and other peripherals can be taken care of remotely.

This virtual thing led to another situation of product development overseas. In today's terms outsourcing.

Few decades ago the textile industry found so much cheaper to

manufacture overseas and soon all textile jobs vanished.

The question today is how can the average american worker compete against labor and production costs which are far lower in countries like India, China, Phillipines, Ukraine, and Russia? This is the dilemma faced by the local IT industry and the job seekers. And leads to one of the dreaded fears while delaing with globalization issue. The question is that how are we dealing with such an issue?

The other issue is that are we living in an industry that pays a premium wage. The reason the wage is high is because there are few who can do the work( a long gone reality – not anymore!). Pay is strictly based on supply and demand. If the supply goes up, wages go down, until a natural level is found. When the pay gets too low, people leave the field causing lower supply (this isn't happening in the current scenario), causing wages to go back up, and on and on. To some it's frightening to open the gates and let in the competition, but it's also natural.

On the other hand the argument remains, everything seeks it's own level.

In a recent story the Financial Industry plans to move 500,000 jobs offshore in the next five years. Cost of living in dollar terms in India is a lot less than US -and so it makes sense (for companies) to shift as much work to India as possible i.e. if cost of living is less, salaries will also be less. This is basically a case of high currency valuations [U.S dollar vs Indian Rupee] which are gradually getting adjusted. If and when currencies get adjusted – there will be lesser incentive to move work on account of costs and more so on account of availability of manpower.

*I read it somewhere on the net "it was Jack welch that approched a fruit vendor in India name Wipro. He learned that they had limited computer talent and he funded the massive*

*education in computer to Wipro employees. Presently GE had 10,000 employee in India mostly in the computer industry and very closely associated with Wipro who provides consultants to GE."*

In an another story there is a talk about 2 Million Jobs Moving Offshore – vis-a-vis Manhattan moving to Bombay?

*In an another argument "Till a decade or two back, there was hardly any American company that wanted to move to India. What changed between then and now is that in 1991 (if I'm correct), India became a signatory to WTO. This guarantees protection of Intellectual property among other things ie a company wanting to move its operations to a signatory country can do so without peril. the protests that rocked seattle in ~2001-2002 were mainly a result of the apprehension that such movement of work as guaranteed by WTO will leave american workers high and dry. To answer why move to India and not some other country, there are many reasons, mainly english-speaking population and availability of skilled labor which is cheap and yet as skilled as in any other developed country. There might be other countries with skilled manpower -but they may have a problem speaking english (and thats one of the fringe benefits of colonization)."*

Thus the discussion is on – and will be on. For days to come till we really find what's going to come out of it. As for now job is the biggest concern for the local workers no matter what the CEO thinks!

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# Economy, Business, Branding, Outsourcing and Globalization

written by Manoj Khanna | June 1, 2004
Today there is a lot of debate about the pros and cons of outsourcing, especially in the IT sector. But outsourcing is something which has been happening for quite a while – better …

Today there is a lot of debate about the pros and cons of outsourcing, especially in the IT sector. But outsourcing is something which has been happening for quite a while – better to say quite some decades now. But recently the things have gone unbalanced, the global IT bubble burst few years ago, and the other industries have taken a set back in revving the things as they could. The following is an interesting write up which I found recently, it dates back to couple of years ago, but it still raises a few questions and brings to light some known and unknown facts to the common all of us:

*The dominant characteristic of the economies of the industrialised West in the last decade has been the gradual process of de-industrialisation. Increasingly, corporates are*

*closing down large plants, laying off workers with secure permanent jobs and outsourcing production outside national borders. In the countries where production centres have moved, the labour is usually non-unionised and temporary. Thus, for western corporates and multinationals, such a system minimises the risks and liabilities and maximises profits.*

According to Ms. Klein, in 1977, 45,000 United States garment workers lost their jobs. She points out these factories closed down not because they were doing badly but because they could do better by outsourcing.”Companies that were traditionally satisfied with a 100 per cent mark up between the cost of factory production and retail price have been scouring the globe for factories that can make their products so inexpensively that the markup is closer to 400 per cent,” she writes.

Outsourcing production has coincided with the growth in temporary jobs in the West. What are now called “Mcjobs” are often the only option for thousands of young people coming into the job market. Fastfood chains, shopping malls, chain bookstores and music stores all employ people on a temporary basis, sometimes paying less than the minimum wage. According to Ms. Klein, the number of part-timers in the U.S. has tripled since 1968. Of course, those providing temporary jobs actively discourage unionism and even penalise it.

These part-timers, young and old, also live in a world where manufacturing things has been replaced by branding. You do not buy canvas shoes anymore, you buy a brand. You do not brush your teeth with toothpaste anymore, you use a brand. You do not wear a shirt, trousers, underwear, socks anymore, you wear brands. Ms. Klein calls this the “new branded world” where the nature of the product has ceased to matter, it is the brand that does. She quotes Mr. Hector Liang, former chairman of United Biscuits, saying,”Machines wear out. Cars rust. People die. But what live on are the brands.”

But why should branding lead to alienation? To quote Ms. Klein again: “Since many of today’s best-known manufacturers no longer produce products and advertise them, but rather buy products and ‘brand’ them, these companies are forever on the prowl for creative ways to build and strengthen their brand images. Manufacturing products may require drills, furnaces, hammers and the like, but creating a brand calls for a completely different set of tools and materials. It requires an endless parade of brand extensions, continuously renewed imagery for marketing, and most of all, fresh new spaces to disseminate the brand’s idea of itself.”

Thus brand marketing has invaded every part of life in these countries. Even toilets in colleges are plastered with advertisements selling a brand. Everywhere you look, you have brands staring down at you. The entire sides of buildings have been sold for brand promotion. All this is apart from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, buses, taxis, trains – all carriers of brand messages.

The response to this onslaught of brands on people in the West has been a movement called “adbusting” which has taken various forms. From magazines that parody brands to guerrilla actions that deface brands or hack sites of corporates, all these have been signs of protest.

Through the 1990s, media exposes about the manner in which certain brands, like Nike, were actually produced in other countries also led to both consumer resistance and revulsion with the branded world. Stories of child labour, sweat shops using young women, poor wages and terrible working conditions appeared regularly in the western media. The products being churned out in these factories in developing countries were the leading brands in the West. People began demanding that corporations must be held accountable.

Other forms of protest in the last decade include the Reclaim the Streets (RTS) movement where groups suddenly appear

unannounced on major roads or even highways and hold a "spontaneous" rave party or demonstration. In cities like London, on the last Friday of every month, the streets are full of people on bicycles under the banner of Critical Mass. They are registering their desire for a clean environment, better public transport and fewer private cars. The common theme in this type of protest was "reclaiming" what is "not 'ours', as in 'our club' or 'our group', but ours as in the people. All the people" (from a Toronto RTS leaflet).

These expressions of protest are also part of a much more coordinated effort by environmental groups world-wide, human rights groups, those fighting for workers' rights and peace groups on a range of issues. The internet and e-mail have greatly facilitated such coordination across continents.

The anti-globalization protests, in a sense, provided all these disparate groups an opportunity to come together and register their protest on issues that are organically linked.

Writing in The Guardian, Mr. Jeremy Rifkin suggests that these are "the first stirrings of a cultural backlash to globalization whose effects are likely to be as significant and far-reaching as were the revolutionary movements for political democracy and market capitalism at the end of the 18th Century". He calls it a new "civil society politics".

One can agree or disagree with this prediction but one thing is certain: the number of people questioning the new globalize world economy is growing. The nature of the protests might change, given the type of violence seen in Genoa. The targets in future might not be such meetings – the WTO is holding its next meeting in Qatar to ensure that Western protestors are kept out – but could be specific corporations that symbolize the global economy.

What is important for us here is to pay heed to some of the questions raised by the protestors. Who profits and who loses

in “the new branded world?” What is the real value added to our lives by the proliferation of brands? Is the consumer really king or are all of us becoming pawns in a huge “branded” game? Do we really want a world where rice, flour, vegetables, fruit, pens, ink, paper, clothes, shoes, … disappear from our vocabulary and we are left only with brands? …

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# Use Cases and Functional Requirements

written by Manoj Khanna | June 1, 2004

Integrating use cases and functional requirements, where functional requirements are things like: “the system must do xyz” and each such requriement …

Integrating use cases and functional requirements, where functional requirements are things like: “the system must do xyz” and each such requriement is sepatately testable is sometimes a big question in the corporation.

In the words of Alistair Cockburn:

*“If you are writing use cases as requirements keep two things in mind:*

They really are requirements. You shouldn’t have to convert them into some other form of behavioral requirements. Properly written, they accurately detail what the system should do.

They are not all of the requirements. They don’t detail external interfaces, data formats, business rules, and complex formulae. They constitute only a fraction (perhaps a third) of all the requirements you need to collect-a very important fraction but a fraction nonetheless.”

Thus use cases can represent functional requirements. Other requirements, such as system availability, security, scalability, performance, etc. cannot be represented by use cases.

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