

TV Review: 'Outsourced' is Latest 5-Star Addition to NBC Thursday

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 23, 2010 - 5:41pm

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CHICAGO – It seems that NBC is getting some of their “Must See TV” mojo back, after adding the hilarious “Community” to the Thursday night comedy line-up last year and debuting the equally stellar “Outsourced” this year, which premieres September 23rd at 8:30pm CST.

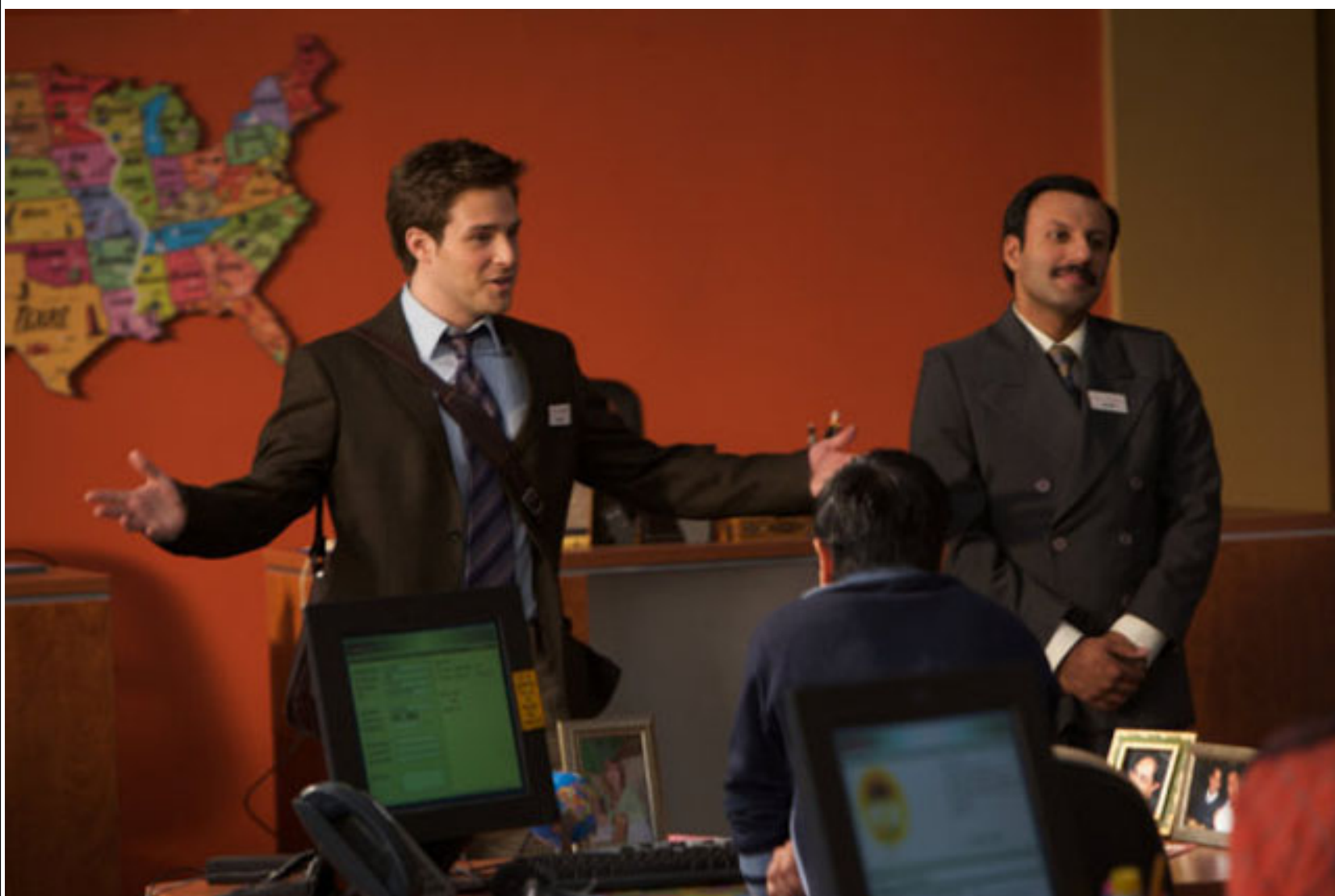


Television Rating: **5.0/5.0**

The timing on this show is auspicious, as America still copes with the outsourcing of jobs to far-flung places such as India. Here it is the familiar call center, where a joke items and novelties company from Kansas City has moved all of their order facilities. It is a fresh faced American manager named Todd (Ben Rappaport) that is called upon to get the new Indian office to produce, and there are nice levels of satire, humor and heart in a pilot chock full of laughs.

Todd is definitely a fish out of water as he assesses and sizes up his new charges. His assistant manager Rajiv (Rizwan Manji) desires his top dog position, and has intentionally stocked the call center with less-than-competent fellow native Indians. Among the characters there is Manmeet (Sacha Dhawan), Asha (Rebecca Hazlewood), Gupta (Pavesh Cheena) and Madhuri (Anish Nagarajan), who takes low talking down to a new level.

The initial training session is full of surprises, including the box of novelties that the company has sent, with cultural differences clashing with the absurd cheeseheads, joke coffee mugs and fake vomit. It is up to Todd to Americanize his “B” team, so they can take the calls from the USA without letting them know they are calling India.



Managing: Ben Rappaport as Todd, Rizwan Manji as Rajiv in 'Outsourced'
Photo Credit: NBC

There are other outsider managers at the center, including Charlie (Diedrich Bader) who is constantly holding up five fingers (to indicate how many days the aftereffects of Indian food will last) and comely Australian import Tonya (Pippa Black), who seems to have an attraction to Todd, which Asha doesn't seem to like at all. Can these two distant countries and cultures come together to sell plastic dog poop?

The jokes are rapid fire and none of them misfire. The writing is subtle and multi-layered, with a wealth of potential material. The subject of the sacred cow, for example, is hilariously broached without insulting any native boundaries. The novelty items in the new "bible" (the catalog) are amazingly crass and hilarious. The idea for laughs is that the Americans are the outsiders, equating everything through the wrong end of the cultural telescope.

The pilot episode is extraordinary because it immediately establishes the cultural differences. Todd explaining anything American is either misunderstood or unintentionally insulting, and his employees don't help by trying to guess what Americans want, which results in a great sequence in which the native call answerers perform the soundbites from American movies and song. The Americans calling in are great as well, angry because an Indian shouldn't sell them an "I Love USA" coffee mug.



The Call Crew: Rebecca Hazlewood as Asha, Sacha Dhawan as Manmeet, Parvesh Cheena as Gupta in 'Outsourced'
Photo Credit: NBC

Ben Rappaport is perfect as the American manager, coming off like a clueless Michael J. Fox type. Diedrich Bader is always slightly off in his character roles, here playing the manager of the call center for the "All-American Hunter" ("Do you hate your ass?" Charlie says in reaction to Todd injecting Indian food). The Indian players are full of off-beat characters and personalities, especially Rizwan Manji as the Machiavellian co-manager ("Your failure is my success.").

The hidden X-factor of any new TV sitcom is the heart, as in caring about the characters, and this is where "Outsourced" shines best. There is nice feeling in the divergent characters coming together, and you have to love a show that includes lines like "how would like pay for your vomit and poo?"

"Outsourced" premieres Thursday, September 23rd at 9:30pm EST/8:30pm CST on NBC-TV. Check local listings for channel location. Featuring Ben Rappaport, Diedrich Bader, Pippa Black, Rizwan Manji, Sacha Dhawan, Anisha Nagarajan and Rebecca Hazlewood, produced by Robert Borden.



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