

Offshoring – Striking the right balance

Business context

Business models spread across multiple geographies are increasingly becoming the norm. Offshoring as a practice has matured with all the stakeholders realising the advantages and pitfalls in the model. Offshoring in the publishing industry has been prevalent for the last couple of decades and has matured over this period. While most of publishers and pre-press service firms have fine tuned and customised this model to suit their requirements, there are some areas that they can focus on to get the best out of their offshore vendors.

The key factors in any relationship are trust and commitment. This is all the more important in an offshore context where the stake holders are located in different geographies. The client and vendor need to ensure that their actions and communication promote trust between each other and show their commitment to the relationship. Simple things like clarity in the requirement, timely responses, flagging issues in time, accepting responsibility for and learning from mistakes and transparency in plans and timelines go a long way in building trust. The vendor team should work in such a way as to become an extension of the client's team.

Communication is key

Communication is critical in an offshore model. The client can streamline the communication in such a way that the waiting time for the vendor is not high due to time-zone differences. A 10-minute call at the end of the day for the vendor will ensure that their productivity is not lost because of response delays. The vendor team should be encouraged to interact and communicate. In the initial stages of the relationship, especially, the vendor teams may not ask a lot of questions or communicate. This does not necessarily mean that they have the required clarity. A written confirmation with the requisite details will help validate assumptions and prevent ambiguity. Monthly video conference calls with key people in the team will help the client put a face to the names that they interact with. This will help the client understand the team better and will increase the bonding between the teams. A visit to the vendor location at least once a year is important in large relationships. Strategic planning exercises, feedback exchanges and team-building activities during these visits will help strengthen the relationship and vendor commitment.

Bridging the cultural divide

Understanding the cultural sensitivities of the offshore vendor is important. Language expressions and usage are different across geographies and can be construed differently as well. Moreover, the client as well as the vendor need to be educated to bridge the cultural divide so that they avoid inadvertently hurting the other party. Simple e-mail communication explaining the significance of regional events will go a long way in helping promote better understanding. In large relationships, there can be events organised with participation from the client and the vendor teams to promote better understanding and communication.

Joint planning sessions

Joint planning sessions with strategic vendors will not only help the vendor in planning, but will also increase their commitment to the relationship. There can be monthly/quarterly information sessions where the key events during the period can be shared with the vendor along with the general business trends. This will give the vendor a wider perspective about the client's business and enable them to come out with newer ideas, innovation and areas of cooperation. In addition, this will be a forum for the vendor to share best practices in the industry that will in turn benefit the client.

About Us

SpiralUp is a leading provider of specialist technical editing services and language solutions. At SpiralUp, we copyedit books, journals, web content and documents in different levels of detail and according to the publishers'/clients' house style ensuring consistency of style, language, structure and logic of content. We establish priorities and balance a desire for perfection within our clients' timeline and budgetary requirements. We offer the following editorial services:

- Pre-edit Service
- Copyedit Service
- Copyedit Service with XML Output

We have the capacity to provide both end-to-end solutions in the pre-press value chain as well as perform services as independent components.