

From cost arbitrage to value arbitrage

Business context

The only thing that is constant is change. There has been a lot of progress in the publishing industry over the last couple of decades. The ever increasing role of technology has brought newer dimensions to the industry. Along with these changes, the outsourcing model in the industry has also undergone a sea of changes. There are pre-press service companies emerging in newer geographies. These companies are investing in creating a lot more tools to keep pace with the latest trends in the publishing industry. However, the popular perception is that cost arbitrage is the primary driver for outsourcing in this industry. Although cost is a significant factor that drives offshoring, the companies need to continue working on delivering more value and increase the significance of 'Value Add' as a driver. This is a gradual change that requires continuous effort and innovation.

Standardisation is key

To achieve this goal, service providers focussed on standardisation. As a result, industry-standard XMLs were established and most service providers use these standard interfaces for their deliverables. Standard workflow tools are available with the project managers and production editors for monitoring and tracking the delivery and performance. As the service model spans across multiple geographies, the focus is now more on the communication and escalation process leading to standardisation of terms and contracts and service level agreements. In addition, standardisation will lead to a clearly defined and agreed scope, requirements and timelines for delivery, thereby reducing the uncertainties and risks associated with projects.

Quality

The next key aspect to focus on in moving towards this goal is the quality of deliverables. For instance, in a scenario where editorial services are outsourced, on one hand, each publishing house has a unique style that distinguishes it from its competitors. On the other hand, any dilution in the author's writing style will have a direct impact on the readers. Editorial service providers will have to strike a balance between the publisher's house style and the tone of author(s)' language. They have an important role to play in preserving the essence of the written content while also ensuring the quality of the final book/article. They rely on their armour of automated tools to ensure consistency and quality. However, tools cannot be the only answer to quality in deliverables. There needs to be a hybrid approach combining the right set of tools and expert talent. The complexity of the requirements should be the driving factor determining this combination. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not work and might be counterproductive.

Innovation

Another key feature that will play a crucial role in this journey is continuous learning and innovation. Most of the processes and activities followed by the service providers are well defined, taught and religiously followed to meet customer expectations. However, to add value to the end customers and exceed their expectations, the service providers will need to be innovative in their approach. They will need to explore newer ways of doing things. Innovation need not necessarily be at the scale of changing the publishing world. Simple things like documenting customer requirements and learnings from a project or assignment and incorporating them in future projects will go a long way in adding value.

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.