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Pinar Erzin

ACCUCOMS, pinar@accucoms.com

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Adding Value to Publishers' Business

by **Pinar Erzin** (Managing Director, ACCUCOMS) <pinar@accuoms.com>

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."
— Nelson Mandela

Abstract

Language is the first and most important way in which ACCUCOMS adds value to publishers' business. We also anticipate and adapt to developments in the industry continuously. We focus on the supply chain and the challenges the links in this chain are currently facing. This paper is based on our existing market intelligence and on additional data we gathered by holding surveys among publishers and librarians. The results clearly indicate that a focus on the end-user and improved market intelligence are needed in order to add value to publishers' business. We outline our data as well as our results, including the role the publisher services company can play to keep bridging the gap between publishers, subscription agents, libraries, and end-users.

Supply Chain

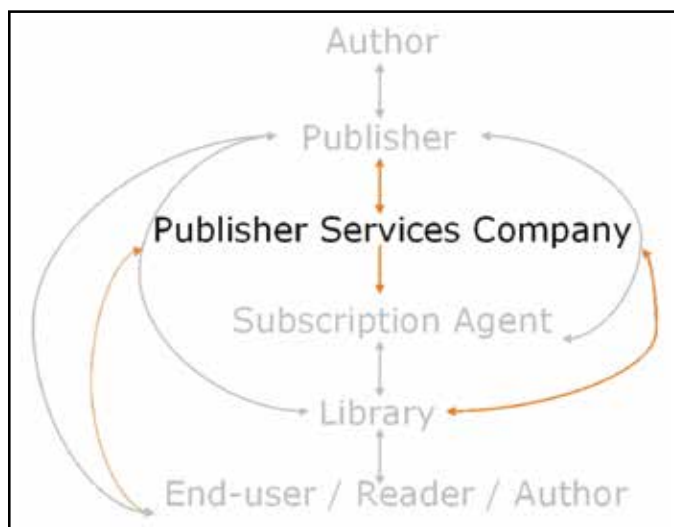


Figure 1 – Supply chain of scholarly and professional publishing

Over the years, the supply chain of scholarly and professional publishing has become more and more complicated. Initially, only the author, publisher, and library/reader were involved. When managing subscriptions became too large a task for publishers, the subscription agent filled this gap in the supply chain. More recently, publishers have chosen to outsource sales activities and customer service as well. These services, and more, have been provided by the publisher services company (see Figure 1).

The publisher services company enjoys a unique position. It interacts with all the other parts of the supply chain: publishers, subscription agents, libraries, and the end-user (who is often also an author). Thanks to this unique position, the publisher services company has a complete overview of the market. The market currently shows the following trends:

Economy: Libraries face ever-decreasing budgets, while publishers need to ensure that no losses are made.

Business models: The big deal is on its way out, and the subscription model has also come under fire. Both libraries and publishers are trying to decide which model(s) will be future-proof, as well as financially viable — subscriptions, patron-driven acquisition, and open access are all being tested, inspected, and discussed.

Technology: Interactive and mobile apps and devices are becoming more important.

Global business: While modern technology makes global communication easier, publishers struggle to decide which regions are most important to their business.

These trends raise several questions for the publisher services company. What should be its role in the future? Which services should be continued? Which additional services are needed?

ACCUCOMS Surveys

Publisher Services Survey

In January 2012, we conducted a survey among publishers.¹ The participants included society, university, and commercial publishers, both large (100+ titles), medium-sized (11-100 titles), and small (0-10 titles). Questions covered the past, present, and future of publisher services.

Publishers mainly outsource services because they need external expertise. This especially applies to sales representation, telemarketing renewal/promotion campaigns, and market research. However, saving time and money remain important reasons as well, especially for telemarketing campaigns and conference representation.

Publishers expect to keep using the same services they have used in the past: sales representation, telemarketing renewal campaigns, and telemarketing promotion campaigns (see Figure 2). Interestingly, publishers expect to use the following services more in the future: market research (+16%), PR & communications (+13%), and social media management (+8%).

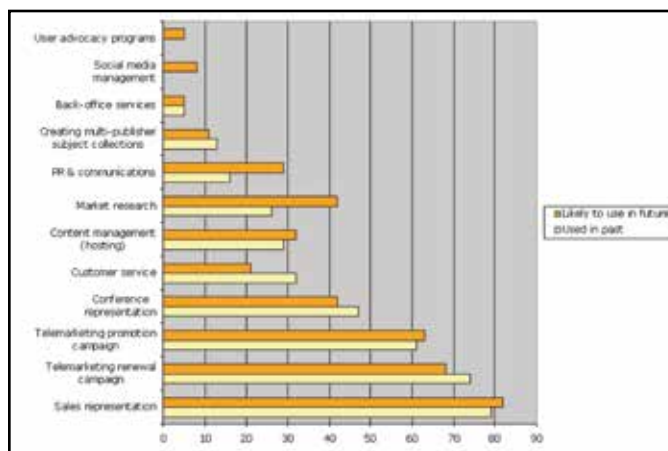


Figure 2 – Services publishers have used and expect to use again

In addition to this development, publishers rate market research as important to future business (see Figure 3). However, publishers indicate that sales representation and telemarketing campaigns will remain the most important services in the future.



Figure 3 – Importance of services in future, according to publishers

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Publishers believe the following new markets will be most important to their business in the future in addition to existing markets: Latin America, India, China, and the MENA region (Middle East & North Africa).

Integrated Content Survey

In October and November 2011, we conducted a survey among information specialists, and also conducted in-depth interviews. The information specialists indicated that they are most likely to add journals and eBooks to their collections in the future. They expressed mixed feelings about aggregators — while the range of content available through an aggregator is appreciated, the changeability of this content is not. The survey and interviews resulted in a white paper,² whose conclusions included the following:

- Librarians prefer pricing models that allow them to pick and mix.
- Any platform that would integrate content in various formats and from multiple publishers would have to be user-friendly, interactive, make excellent use of usage statistics and be accompanied by high-quality customer service.

Adding Value

When we talk about adding value, we also need to define what constitutes value in the scholarly publishing industry. In general, authors, publishers, libraries, and end-users have similar interests — they all benefit from a variety of journals and books with high-quality content at an acceptable price. As we saw earlier, current trends are the economy, price models, technology, and global business. This is where the publisher services company can add value by connecting the right buyer with the right content in the right place and at the right moment.

Bridging Gaps

In general, the publisher services company can bridge gaps by providing more complete data and helping both publishers and libraries to improve their efficiency. An example: during a renewal campaign a library reports that their subscription has already been renewed — the publisher services company is able to communicate with both sales representatives and subscription agents in order to provide the publisher with updated information. In addition, technological gaps can be bridged by providing IP and access activation services in addition to existing customer service.

Providing Industry Expertise

The knowledge and expertise of publisher services companies is built on years of contact with publishers and information specialists all over the world. This does not only make representation services effective and efficient, it has also led to industry reports and white papers. The publisher services company has become a knowledge bank for publishers and libraries alike: How are markets doing? Which products are needed? Which price models are viable? Which platforms are preferred?

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Managing Director, ACCUCOMS
Dellaertweg 7-B, 2316 WZ Leiden, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 88 4100 400 • Fax: +31 88 4100401
<pinar@accucoms.com> • www.accucoms.com

Pinar Erzin

BORN AND LIVED: Born in Ankara, Turkey. Lived in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: All to be seen on http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=4732661&authType=name&authToken=MJK&locale=en_US&pvs=p-p&trk=ppro_viewmore.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Family, friends, running, cooking.

PHILOSOPHY: Nothing is impossible

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Founded and established ACCUCOMS as a leading services provider for publishers, creating career opportunities for 40+ staff members.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Create disruptive and effective new services for the industry.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Researchers taking a predominant role in defining how and where the information will be discovered, distributed, and shared. 🌱



End-user Contact

The publisher services company has been providing customer service for years. As a result, it is acutely aware of the needs and worries of the end-user. Especially in these times of rising criticism towards the publishing industry and expansion of alternative e-publishing strategies, publishers need to gain a thorough understanding of what end-users want and need. The publisher services company can help publishers to establish a close relationship with their customers and to develop knowledge about their requirements into effective content strategies. *Guessing what the end-user wants is no longer an option!*

The Future

The publisher services company can help publishers, subscription agents, libraries, and end-users to prepare for, and make the most of, the future in the following ways:

- Using language, market, and industry expertise to provide intelligent, effective, and efficient publisher services.
- Optimizing information flows.
- Translating industry and market intelligence into customized strategic consultancy.

Future success depends on cooperation, however. The entire supply chain must share knowledge, collaborate, and be transparent as well as open-minded.

Author's Biography

Pinar Erzin, Managing Director and co-founder of ACCUCOMS, fulfilled commercial roles in the subscription management industry from 1999 as Sales Manager to cor-

porate libraries in Turkey, Publisher Relations Manager at **Swets Blackwell**, and as General Manager of **Extenza Marketing Solutions**. In June 2004 she launched **ACCUCOMS**, and she has been developing the line of services offered to publishers actively since then. In her role at **ACCUCOMS**, together with her multilingual team, **Pinar** works on behalf of publishers helping them to serve their customers and reach new markets.

Assistance of Rian van Spaandonk, Publisher Sales and Marketing Executive, ACCUCOMS, is gratefully acknowledged in the preparation of this article.

Company Profile

ACCUCOMS is an independent provider of services for academic and professional publishers around the world. Established in 2004, **ACCUCOMS** now operates from the Netherlands, Turkey, the USA, Costa Rica, and India. **ACCUCOMS'** multilingual teams offer efficient and intelligent representation, telemarketing, and business intelligence services to clients that range from large publishing houses to specialist society publishers. For more information visit www.accucoms.com. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **ACCUCOMS** invited both its customers and publishers it does not currently do business with. The results cannot be filtered on this characteristic, however, since the survey was completely anonymous.
2. <http://www.accucoms.com/about/ACCUCOMS%20White%20Paper%20Multi-Purpose%20Platforms>