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Benjamin Shaw Profile

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revise their manuscript and then explain their changes. We're able to help them overcome this barrier.

ATG: *Your client base appears to be scientists and science researchers, particularly in China and Japan. Are there other parts of the scientific community that Edanz considers part of your market?*

BS: Many of our clients are in the increasingly important East Asian markets of Greater China, Japan, and South Korea. Reflecting the global nature of STM publishing we also have a significant client base across Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Latin America, with some African and even European customers. The non-China/Japan segment of our business is the fastest growing with predominant markets comprising Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Italy, and Malaysia.

ATG: *Are there specific scientific subjects that Edanz focuses on in offering your services? In what subject areas have you been most successful in helping authors? How do you measure that success?*

BS: We offer services to authors in all scholarly fields with most customers coming from the natural sciences, as these receive the lion's share of funding in the markets where we're active. It can be difficult to measure the success of our clients as our services are provided before submission for peer review and much can change by the time the author is eventually published. Changes like those to the manuscript title or target journal make it difficult to track what happens to a manuscript after we've handed it back to the author, so we tend to look at our return-customer metrics as an indication of how well we're doing.

Even though we're growing rapidly most of our volume actually comes from repeat business. More than 1,600 of our return customers have used us for editing more than 10 of their papers, over 500 have used us for more than 20 papers, and we even have 135 return customers who have sent us 40 papers over their career. **Edanz** only charges the customer after editing is complete, so we have to keep authors happy or we wouldn't get paid.

ATG: *What can authors expect in terms of fee schedules, turnaround times, etc. from Edanz?*

BS: Fees vary depending on length, but an average charge for a typical article of 3,500 words is under USD 350. We're unique in that authors don't choose the amount of editing they want us to perform. Our clients trust us to bring their paper to the accepted standard regardless of starting point. That means a minority of authors with particularly difficult languages end up paying more to reach a high standard, but on average fees are still at the \$350 I mentioned. We complete the first round of editing within three business days.

Many editing companies apply additional charges for a second round of editing. As our service is designed to be author-centric, we offer unlimited rounds of revision so that

against the grain people profile

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Benjamin Shaw

BORN AND LIVED: Born in the U.S., have lived in London and Beijing.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Checking out the Beijing dining scene, reading.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet, Shogun, Siddhartha, The Death of Vishnu, The Mongoliad, The Scarlet Pimpernel, His Majesty's Dragon.*

PET PEEVES: Pandas.

PHILOSOPHY: Cooperation is an evolutionary advantage found at all levels in nature. Various types of cells and organs 'cooperate' to sustain life; species cooperate among themselves and other species. Humans have organized into increasingly large and sophisticated groups. Humankind must better cooperate to solve the existential challenges facing our species.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Having the vice president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences mention **Edanz** in a video interview was humbling and fulfilling.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Remove as many of the barriers facing ESL scholars as possible so they can communicate their research findings on a level playing field.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Power, within our industry and in general, is shifting toward the producers and consumers of content. "Non-traditional" markets such as those in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America are playing an increasingly important role in research and scholarly communication. The successful industry players five years from now will be those who have a deep understanding of their end users. By adopting the "lean" philosophy found in modern software development, they will provide value by increasing research productivity. Non-traditional markets will serve as a useful testing ground for new services and products that can be applied to traditional markets. 🐼

all customer manuscripts can undergo two or more rounds of revision. The meaning of some particularly difficult sentences requires clarification from the author, so multiple rounds of editing ensures all language problems are fixed. We're also unique in that fees are not due until after editing is complete. Authors are able to claim reimbursement through their grant funding or to have their university pay directly on their behalf.

I mentioned before that we cannot guarantee publication success, and it should be a red flag if an author comes across an editing service that does.

ATG: *It was reported that during your presentation at the annual Fiesole Retreat in Singapore you argued that journals should emphasize an author-centric perspective and work hard to deliver a positive experience for authors. What do you mean by that? Are there particular publishing requirements that you think foster a negative climate for your clients?*

BS: Being author-centric means putting the scholarly author and communication of their findings at the center of decisions regarding everything from peer review to submission systems and APC payments. This could take the form of relatively simple projects like streamlining Instructions for Authors and

translating them into local languages or making a video Aims & Scope.

There are also difficult issues that need to be tackled, like improving the value of peer review. Authors almost universally accept the scientific rigor that peer review brings. What they're often frustrated with is the inconvenience and glacial pace, and what I call "user interface" problems. One of the biggest user interface problems is the lack of clarity in comments from referees and journal editors. Strikingly, in a survey we recently carried out in China, 90% of respondents said they have been confused by the response letters that journal editors sent them on their recent submissions. It is often unclear to authors whether a journal editor is rejecting a paper or is open to considering it after further revision. The authors who participated in this survey had a lot of ideas on how their experience could be improved. For example, 89% said they expect journals to provide comments to help them improve their article even if they're being rejected. Unfortunately, only 18% of authors say they typically receive comments when being rejected. Additionally, authors would appreciate a recommendation for an alternative, perhaps more appropriate journal when receiving a rejection letter.

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