

Case Study

Firstsource's unique workflow distribution solution helps leading US e-publishing company scale up their business multifold at reduced costs



"Truly appreciate Firstsource's efforts in completing the various projects as assigned. The relationships that have developed are a real benefit, which makes the work more enjoyable and satisfying for all of us"

Vice President - Client services

Background

The client needed to scale up operations and repurpose the print ads across 300 US newspapers into online rich text searchable advertisements at reduced costs.

The Solution

Firstsource established high quality production control systems and then invested in technology and developed a proprietary platform for workflow distribution across different resources.

Key Benefits

Firstsource's solution supported the huge volumes coming from 300 newspapers by scaling up the operations by 60 times over 3 years and enabled the client to repurpose all print ads into online ads well within timelines and without any high capital expenditures.

► Background

The client is an electronic publishing company that provides online technology solutions to the media industry in the United States. The client repurposes advertising print content for online publishing for over 300 newspapers across the US.

Advertisements in the US increasingly need to be available for both print and electronic (internet) consumption. Furthermore, the online advertisements need to be available when the print version reaches the readers. The client needed to repurpose the print ads into online rich text searchable advertisements and as they were catering to over 300 newspapers across the US, they had to manage the huge volumes in a time-bound environment without increasing internal resources and costs.

Firstsource not only provided the time difference advantage, its publishing BPO practice brought in high quality and innovative workflow technologies/mechanisms, to provide a cost effective solution to the client. This helped the client manage high volumes and focus on growing their business further.

► The Challenge

The client has a proprietary platform for "advertisement fabrication" which converted display ad content in newspaper PDF feeds into rich text format (RTF) searchable ads that could be syndicated online or repurposed for powering the local search engines for products, merchandise and services. The content family included Jobs, Real estate, Retail and Auto ads. Every newspaper also had its own taxonomy for categorizing products and services.

The entire work was done by a temporary home-based workforce using the client's web based online system. This operational model was causing serious operational difficulties in terms of:

- Meeting the Turn Around Times (TAT) of converting print ads into online ones
- Deploying people across days to meet the TAT
- Getting resources on the weekend as the volumes were very high during the same period

The nature of the client's business required these home-staffers to work at odd hours (late night /early morning). The growing business forced the client to increase the team size however availability of additional resources to do the same job was becoming a challenge.

Hence they were looking for a trusted and experienced partner who could help them overcome these issues and bring in innovation into their operations.

► The Solution

Firstsource transitioned the process as-is and started performing this work using a dedicated team out of its facilities in India. The operation started with the processing of around 4000 ads per month which continued for almost one and half years with a marked improvement on quality and on-time deliveries.

During the course of the project, the volume of production increased significantly, and this required Firstsource to manage these volumes. Due to technology limitations at the clients end, Firstsource had to overcome issues like client system downtime and network latency, that resulted in production losses as it affected the overall productivity of the operations.

Firstsource understood the challenges and created a solution to address these issues. The solution included:

- **Technology** - Firstsource invested in technology and developed a proprietary platform which pulled all the work from client's online system in real-time. This offline mode allowed the workforce to operate without fully depending on the client system and hence overcoming any delays due to latency and system downtime
- **Unique workflow distribution environment** - Firstsource created an environment where it brought in workflow and assembly-line manufacturing concepts to the operations floor. The work was distributed across multiple locations where the operational staff would download the ads, pull out keywords/phrases and classified the ads on client specific parameters and update systems. The system was very flexible and highly productive as the work was distributed in a way that multiple people could work on a single ad at the same time thereby increasing productivity
- **Scalability and flexibility**– Accurate forecasting and scheduling was done on an hourly basis which enabled Firstsource to handle different volumes of data at different intervals of time and on different days of the week

► The Benefits

Firstsource converted the client's business into a very powerful, scalable, cost effective and distributed operational model:

- Allowed the client to ramp up from 4,000 ads per month, 3 years ago, to a current run-rate of 250,000 ads per month
- Firstsource provides 100% TAT which has enabled the client to create and place advertisements on their online portal before the print newspapers reach the end customers
- Converting the online ad creation to offline format has resulted in productivity improvement of over 50%(from 8.5 items per hour to 12.9 items per hour)
- Highly accurate classification gives the client the ability to highlight individual items from within multiple item ads listed on their online portal

Firstsource (NSE: FSL, BSE: 532809, Reuters: FISO.BO, Bloomberg: FSOL@IN) is a global provider of BPO (business process outsourcing) services headquartered in India. Firstsource provides customized business process management to global leaders in the Banking & Financial Services, Telecom & Media and Healthcare sectors. Its clients include Fortune 500 Financial Services, Telecommunications and Healthcare companies. Firstsource has a global delivery model with operations in India, US, UK, Argentina and Philippines.
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