

More on Creative Services Outsourcing

A new hot niche segment
by Teri Tan

There is a lot more to creative services than just imagination and doodling skill-- Planman Technologies will attest to that.

Over at Planman Technologies, also in Delhi, its design team is hard at work on an ongoing k--12 project chronicling the lives of icons such as Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela. "Each title requires about 20 lifelike paintings with three weeks to deliver the final artwork. We have completed about 80 since the project commenced in May 2007," says v- p of sales Amit Vohra, whose team is highly experienced in biblical and ancient history illustrations, such as of the Vikings. "We have handled more than 130 creative projects of varying sizes and levels of complexity. Take this five- book series that uses biblical stories to teach toddlers counting and shape identification. Since the initial client input was sketchy, we carried out detailed research on the various characters, costumes, habitats, etc. We then provided penciled illustrations to our client for comments, implemented the changes and did coloring. Three more rounds of corrections followed before delivery of final artwork. Usually, we finalize the art in the second round, except for complex projects like this."

For greater efficiency, Vohra's 50 illustrators are task- specialized. A typical project team consists of illustrators who pencil the drawings; inkers and tracers who ink the penciled artwork; and coloring artists who do either digital or manual coloring. "Proper training is the key. We prefer to hire fresh fine arts graduates and postgraduates and have our art directors train them for specific tasks. It can take several months to a year to fully train a new artist-- a long process indeed-- but we can mold them according to our specific needs."

Despite the challenges, more Indian content services vendors are adding creative services to their portfolio, thus complicating vendor selection. Starting with pilot projects would allow publishers to assess a vendor's experience, capabilities and market knowledge. Equally important is choosing a vendor that is focused on design and art services. Otherwise, the necessary creativity may be missing.