



# Enabling seamless **design outsourcing** with Magiix

Mitigating the people, product and process issues



< A PowerWeave Whitepaper >

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**P**ublishing isn't new to the concept and practice of outsourcing. Most publishers have adopted outsourcing of manufacturing and logistics centric processes such as printing, distribution, pre-press and sales with great success. The motive for such outsourcing has been 'to co-opt expertise not available in-house' or to offload processes that do not constitute a publisher's core competence which is, conceiving and bringing to market content based products and services. Also, processes that are capital-intensive such as printing, pre-press and even scanning have been obvious outsourcing targets.

Despite very strong leanings towards outsourcing, the 'creative processes' – editorial & design - have however, traditionally been controlled in-house. And while freelance editorial and design staff have always been hired by almost all publications, such outsourcing has been limited in scope and driven by sporadic needs rather than as an on-going strategic outsourcing initiative.

The underlying reasons for publishers' reluctance to outsource their art departments are several and can broadly be classified as:

- Product Issues
- Process Issues
- People Issues

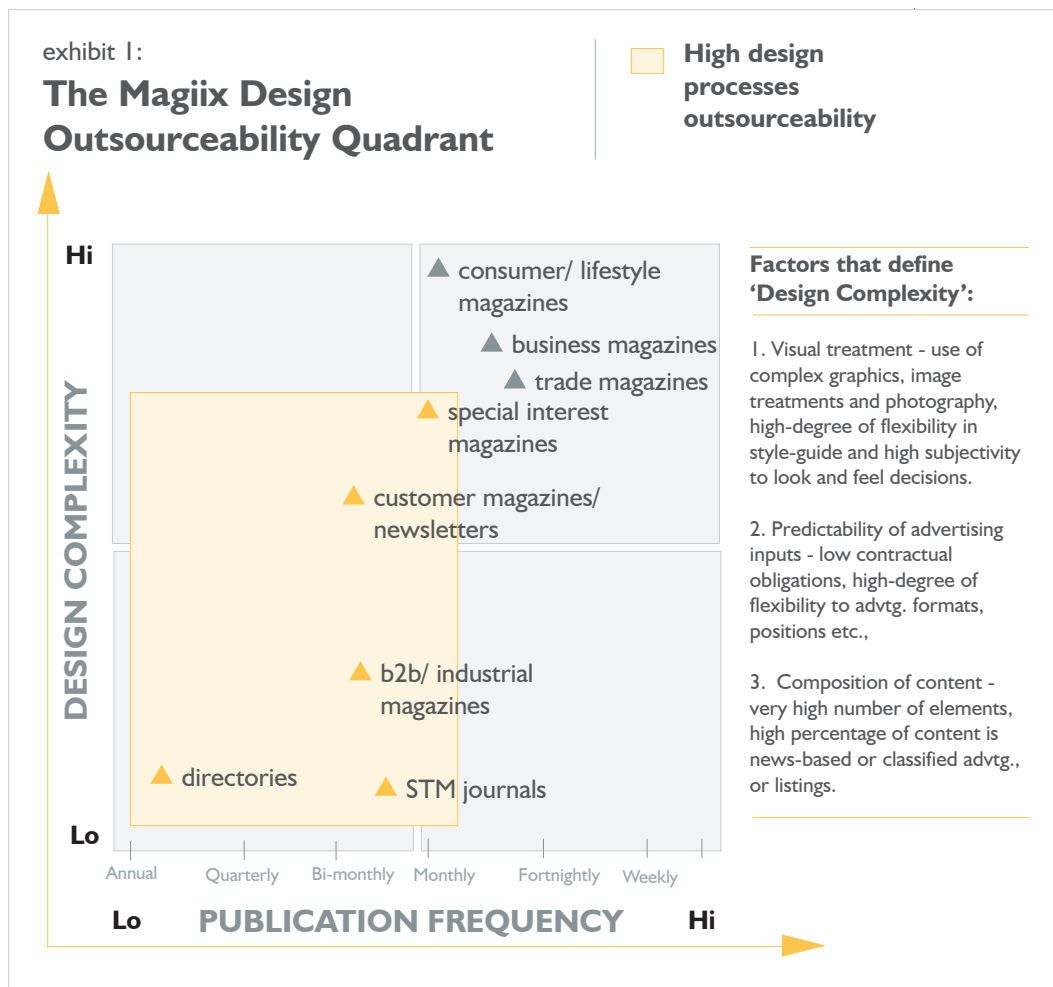
## Nature of the beast: Product Issues that influence design process outsourcing

**A** **Design complexity impacts outsourceability:** Magazines that are typically design-driven (lifestyle, fashion and some special interest publications) have a very high involvement of editorial in the graphic creation and layout processes. Second, such magazines have very high-end skills in graphics production and design and would prefer design to be controlled in-house. Publications such as above, that thrive on 'design' as a brand differentiator and often, depend heavily on 'design values' to push sales and subscriptions are less suitable to outsourced design. Of course, highly stylized and visual oriented publications can still be outsourced provided they have a low publication frequency (e.g bi-monthly).

On the other hand, a vast majority of magazine titles, typically b2b titles, trade and association journals, corporate magazines and directories are typically less 'design-driven'. While design is valued, its relative importance in the packaging and communications process is not very critical. These publications are typically highly style-sheet driven and 'rules-based' with the art department

being more 'layout oriented' than 'creative design' based. In effect, publications with low to moderate design complexity are ideal for a design outsourcing proposition.

**B** **A magazine's frequency of publication impacts outsourceability of it's design process:** Magazines have content development/ page production cycles that vary based on publication frequency. The higher the frequency, the more news-based the content is likely to be and hence, shorter cycle times for the creative process. The shorter the publication frequency, the less likely it is to be able to outsource design.



## Way people are: The ‘Human Factor’ in design outsourcing

**A**

**The need to maintain ‘creative control’:** Magazine design and content creation are so tightly enmeshed, that editors have zealously guarded this terrain from the influence of outsourcing. Often, such circumspection has stemmed from legitimate fears of ‘loss of control’ over the creative process. Seeking freelance contributions in contrast is typically in small, manageable ‘tasks’ driven by individuals and inter-personal relationships between the editor and the external expert. But a fully or partially outsourced art department that works as an extended team is a different proposition.

**B**

**The comfort of physical proximity:** Editors and creative people are by nature, ‘visual’ people. They get comfort and a sense of being ‘in-control’ when they see a job in progress before their eyes. In a dynamically changing process like magazine issue creation, it would be vital for the editors and art directors to have almost real-time information on status of work-in-progress and an actual view of the article as it gets created.

Not only that, editors and art directors would need to intervene and remedy situations that are going out of hand. That’s easily possible when the execution of a creative job is happening in-house and within close physical proximity. Once outsourced, there is a perceived ‘out of sight is out of control’ thinking that takes over.

## The way things work: Workflow and process issues in design outsourcing

While the above broad, product and people issues are relevant, the creative process presents the real practical challenges to enabling design outsourcing. The uniqueness and complexity of a magazine’s issue creation process and hence, it’s amenability to an outsourcing proposition stems from a recognition of the following workflow facts:

**A**

**Editorial & Art - Need for close integration:** Editorial and design have traditionally been considered as mutually inalienable and inseparable processes that in concert create the published product. The output of editorial is an input for design and the output of design is an input for

editorial review. This inter-dependency of disciplines dictates the need to work in tightly knit teams that are seamlessly integrated in a creative workflow process. In the absence of information technology to support this workflow integration, the need for physical proximity is a given.

The degree of interdependence however, is a direct function of a magazine's design complexity as discussed above. So the lower editorial's involvement in design, the higher it's design outsourceability.

## **B** **Pagination is a highly dynamic process affected by changing advertising content:**

Issue planning and pagination is a highly dynamic process impacted by changing advertising content inputs. As advertising for an issue in creation gets sold or clients change release plans, issue pagination and thus article layouts can get impacted.

Managing this dynamism is to a large extent, a function of the level of editorial planning and visibility. If editorial, art, advertising and production can all be kept in sync on the latest pagination changes, much of the chaos can be reduced and productive time can be increased.

## **C** **Different magazine sections have different development lifecycles:**

News, features and special reports sections of a typical magazine have varying development lifecycles. Features are usually planned in advance while news sections typically get developed a few days before going to press. In any given magazine, not all sections are equally amenable to an outsourced design process due to available development time.

## **D** **Article creation is a collaborative, iterative process:**

The lifecycle of a typical magazine article involves a collaborative process of specify, create, review, change and re-create. An article is actually an aggregation of various type of content files – documents, images and illustration inputs that converge into a layout.

Layouts undergo an iterative process of 'create-review-approve' lifecycle and thus need to be tracked for versions and production-readiness. Tracking production-ready status across the creative lifecycle of an article is a manual, inefficient process. If editors can get real-time visibility into issue creation status and be in control over schedules, they could manage outsourced design.

## **E** **Laid out articles undergo multiple levels of review for copy, design and overall content:**

The creative process

involves exchange of layouts among multiple reviewers. This is often a manual process that uses paper printouts for proofing. Any outsourced design job must be seamlessly integrable back into the magazine issue's editorial workflow in a 'specify inside - design outside - review inside' process.

**F**

## **Existing production processes can dictate ease of outsourcing:**

The output of the creative process can undergo a multitude of operations to make layouts 'production-ready'. These typically include verification of layout integrity, color profiles, graphics resolution, integration of in-page advertising content, pagination reconciliation and pre-flight checks among a host of others. The deliverables of the design studio must therefore consist of native files, all associated and updated link files and PDF files for both pre-press processing and visual proofing. It is imperative for the design studio to understand the client-specific pre-press and printing specifications in order to deliver 'first-time-right' layouts. If the design studio is process-driven with rigorous quality assurance procedures at every level - creating the first layout from the brief right up till final layout delivery - then, clients are assured of an error-free engagement process.

## The business case for outsourcing design

### **A. Market dynamics have changed and new markets demand new strategy:**

Rising paper and distribution expenditure, high overheads of hiring full-time staff, growing shortage of skilled manpower and globalization have all contributed to relentless pressures on operating costs. And on the other hand, newer competition and a tighter market have made advertising revenue cycles unpredictable and revenue growths flat.

Rising costs and scarcity of affordable skills mean that emerging revenue opportunities in custom publishing, cross-media products and newer titles stays elusive. Clearly, new markets need new strategies. Workflow technologies can raise productivity and efficiency significantly freeing executive time locked in non-productive tasks. Plus existing high-value resources ought to be re-assigned to more meaningful, revenue-generating roles. Which means repetitive, manual tasks such as page layouts and design could be outsourced.

### **B. Underlying technologies for b2b communications and collaboration have evolved sufficiently:**

The evolution of technologies such as the Internet and high-speed networking are already revolutionizing publishing. Over the last few years, innovations such as CTP, remote proofing and

digital workflows in concert with highly evolved and intuitive desktop publishing tools have made a very profound impact on publishing processes.

### C. Offshore outsourcing presents huge opportunities for profitability:

The biggest impact of the Internet however is not as a communications enabler but as a multi-faceted enabler of business growth. Distance is no more a limiting factor in deciding who can partner a publishing business. Not only does the Internet present exciting opportunities as a medium for publishing and content distribution, it also provides a means to seamlessly connect with partners and complimentary businesses in a collaborative framework of cost and time-efficient value-creation. Technologies such as pdf, ftp and real-time collaboration has evolved sufficiently making working with remote design and editorial teams swift, simple and highly efficient.

Faced with rising human resource costs and skills shortages in the local market, publishers can now tap into high-quality, low-cost talent available in offshore destinations such as India to drive an outsourced design process for whole or part of their title portfolios.

Such a pervasive resourcing strategy built on a digital workflow architecture can in one stroke cut costs while adding publishing capacities that can be used to tap into new revenue opportunities. Moreover, offshore outsourcing to low-cost economies such as India is a proven strategy that has demonstrated productivity, quality and cost benefits across industries and processes.

exhibit 2:

### Why Offshore Outsource?

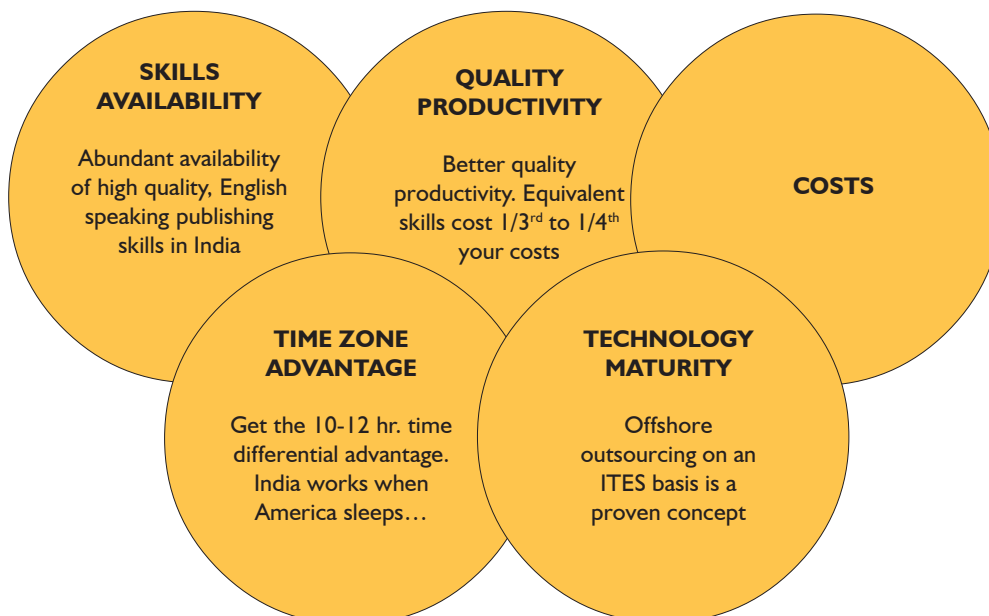
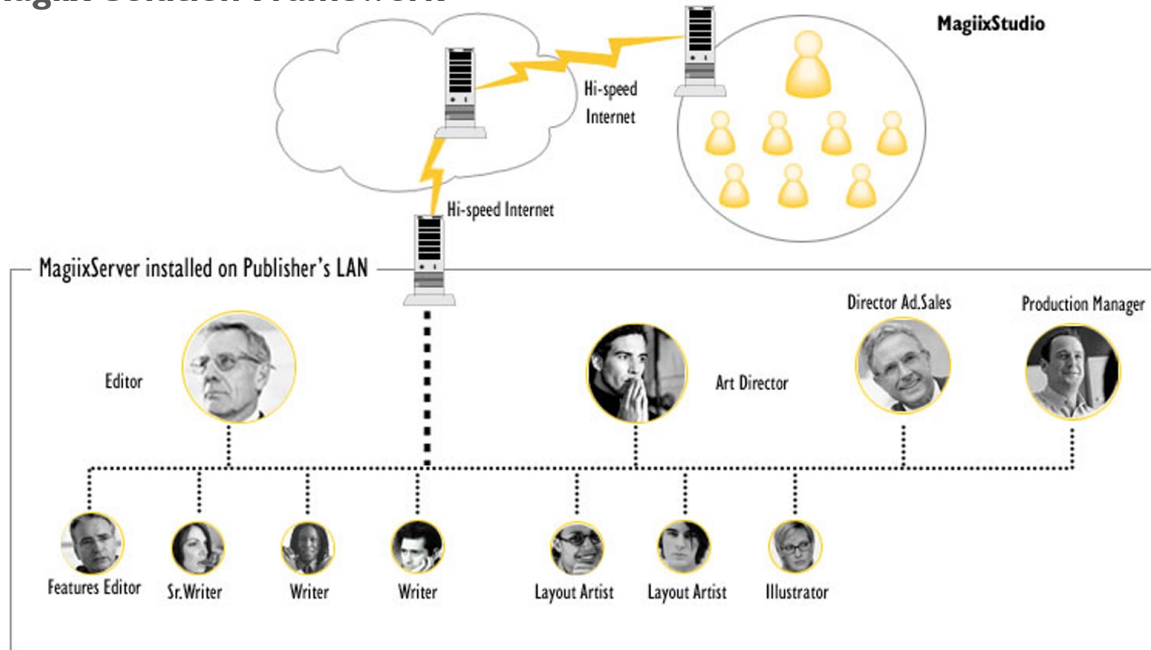


exhibit 3:

### Magiix Solution Framework



#### D. Magiix' revolutionary digital workflow based solution framework now allows seamless outsourcing

From the preceding analysis, emerge a few key insights that form the foundations of the Magiix solution. These are:

1. Much of the process and human issues stem from the fact that editorial-design processes are predominantly manual and offer low workflow visibility to editors and art directors. **Digital workflow tools can not only streamline and organize workflows to raise productivity across the board, but also empower publication managers with greater visibility & control over the creative processes.**

2. While editorial and art are highly inter-dependent processes with iterative processes of 'specify-create-review-recreate-approve' cycles, a means to integrate these functions using digital workflow and high-speed Internetworking can obviate the need to co-locate editorial and design. **Built on hi-speed, hi-reliability digital networks and broadband Internet technologies, remote design resources can be seamlessly integrated to the publisher's internal workflow.**

#### Magiix Benefits:

##### Create growth for your business:

- Free existing high-value resources to take on emerging revenue opportunities such as custom publishing, newer titles and cross-media offerings.

##### Gain visibility into production:

- Using a single, integrated information system to maintain control over and achieve instant access to job status whether done in-house or outsourced
- Achieve faster issue creation and approval cycles with digital pdf-based workflow tools

##### Control production costs:

- Achieve on-demand scalability of design resources.
- Slash per page production costs by significant margins.

##### Increase efficiency:

- Online collaboration reduces issue turnaround time and greatly increases productivity.