

OUTSEC LTD

OutSec Ltd provides an outsourced typing service for individuals and companies needing transcription of dictated sound files. By developing its own solution to let transcribers download files without requiring specialist software this has achieved significant growth making it one of the UK's leading providers of online transcription services.

OBJECTIVES

Many organisations in specialised sectors such as medicine or law require rapid and accurate transcription of dictated sound files. OutSec Ltd runs an outsourced typing service that uses home workers who process and type up dictated sound files submitted to the company's website.

To set up a system that worked, OutSec had to avoid a number of internet usage problems, such as viruses, spam and server reliability issues that can plague e-mail. The company wanted to be able to access transcribers around the world, in any time zone, in order to deal with tasks requiring a rapid turnaround from UK-based clients. In some cases, the demand was almost real-time.

The company's website had to attract both potential clients, as well as typists and secretaries seeking work. The majority of sound files needing transcription can be many megabytes in size, and the upload and download of these had to be highly efficient. In addition, the company needed a system that would not require clients or home workers to install special software, but could run on the company's site itself, under OutSec's control.

SOLUTION

The company focused on teleworking as the best way to broaden its business. For the website, it developed a bespoke solution, called FileManager, that could upload and download large files, avoiding the problems that can come with using e-mail for this purpose, such as file size restrictions, viruses and data corruption.

The system allows clients to log into the FileManager system with a password-protected user ID and upload their sound files for transcription. Staff at its head office in Norfolk assign the task to a home worker, who simply downloads it and types it up on a local computer. The added benefit is that as the system runs entirely through the internet browser, neither the customer nor the secretary requires specialist software. "Clients find it very user-friendly, simple and easy to navigate," says Richard Phillips, Director of OutSec. "All other systems for file transfer

Best practice in:
Teleworking

Sector:
Services / other

Size of firm:
4 employees

Location:
Norfolk

Website:
www.outsec.co.uk



“We’re aiming to further develop OutSec FileManager, promote our services more aggressively, recruit more staff and keep growing at the same rate, and do all that while delivering the same high quality of service..”

RICHARD PHILLIPS – DIRECTOR, OUTSEC LTD

use specialist software installed on remote PCs, both for clients and transcriptionists.”

The website also offers capacity for growth because the system lets typists and clients use the same resources. By making the site into a recruiting hub for secretaries, OutSec was also able to expand its ability to satisfy new and growing orders from clients.

RESULTS

OutSec now has more than 65 secretaries located around the world who can log into the system each day. The company offers specialist transcription in fields such as medicine, law, accountancy, chartered surveying, property and estate agency. Over 160 companies (and some 500 individual users) now use the facilities, which are accessed directly through the OutSec website.

Using the internet browser rather than e-mail, to transfer files has clear benefits. This is confirmed by Richard, “Clients like the easy interface. And every time there is an e-mail virus and its associated bad press, OutSec benefits and gains more business.”

Presently OutSec is growing at 5% per month, with no sign of a slowdown, says Richard. “Clients use OutSec on a daily basis for all sorts of secretarial and typing services, all provided online through our system.”


Due to the success illustrated by OutSec’s project, it is a Regional winner of the teleworking category in the DTI and InterForum Awards for E-commerce 2004.

CHALLENGES

Developing the system and software was a gradual process which could have reaped benefits more quickly, Richard says. “If we did it again we would introduce the system three months earlier and include more functionality. When the system was introduced on a trial basis it required a number of tweaks, but those have now been ironed out.”

The company’s successful growth has been partly dependent on factors beyond its control. “The business plan was based on the greater take up of broadband internet access allowing large file transfer of sound files from clients,” says Richard. “The improved speed of computers, combined with more general access to broadband, also means that home workers can access these larger files more easily. Digital recorder costs have also fallen dramatically with an entry point less than £100 now, compared with £300 less than 18 months ago.”





The next step is to optimise OutSec's business processes as well. "This is an ongoing project, and in future OutSec will automate many of the routine processes involved in file transfer and allocation to and from client as well as client and typing invoicing," explains Richard.

Top tips:

- Always try and allow for a greater budget allocation for software development.
- Avoiding e-mail can protect clients and home workers from viruses, and can have positive publicity benefits when those threats were greatest.
- Calling on a global workforce means contracts can be carried out far quicker than with those in a single time zone.

LAST WORD

Moving to a teleworking concept with a dispersed clientele and a home based workforce, both of whom access the business solely through the website using the software system, has kept costs down and driven up revenues.

For more information on *Achieving best practice in your business*:

- Visit our website at www.dti.gov.uk/bestpractice
- Call us on **0845 015 0010** to order from our range of free best practice publications or visit www.dti.gov.uk/publications
- Contact your local Business Link advisor by visiting the website at www.businesslink.gov.uk or calling **0845 600 9 006**