完全
Towards Perfection

Kanzen Institute Asia - Pacific Pvt. Ltd.

Case Study – Reducing defects & improving delivery speed for technical editing services

Background

A leading communications company, started in 2002 with an aim to accelerate the development of scientific research. The company provides English Editing, Translation with Editing, Publication Support Services and Medical Communications services to researchers, journals, publishers, pharmaceutical companies and corporations worldwide. It has a strong global presence to cater to clients across the world with offices located in United States, India, Japan, China and South Korea. The company has one of the largest in-house editing teams in the world and clients trust them with their communication and publication needs.

However, the company believes that there is a scope to improve its Quality levels in its English Editing Services (EES). Customer complaints as measured through the feedback have been on the rise in the last quarter and considering the closely networked research field, this has become a cause for concern. The company is already tracking and monitoring feedback, taking corrective and preventive actions. However, the company management feels that applying a different paradigm on its processes with guidance from external experts will help them focus better on reducing customer complaints.

In this context, the company has invited Kanzen Institute Asia Pacific (KIAP) to explore the potential for using *kaizen* philosophy and relevant concepts, tools and technique to slash the defect rate and ensure customer delight.

The Process Flow

Brief Process Flow within English Editing Services

Author, through referrals or web sources selects the company for English Editing Services and submits a query through the website. Systems are designed to attend to the query of the customer and an internal process for selecting the editor
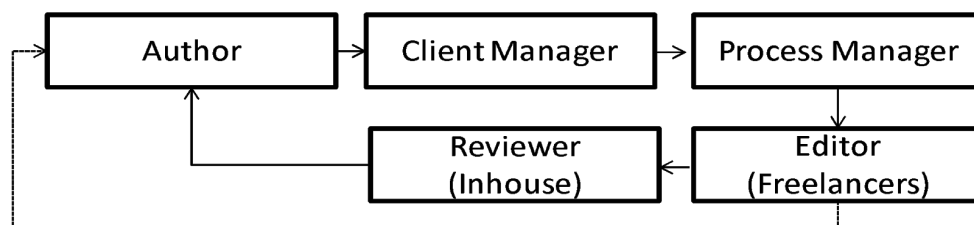
Client Managers and Process Managers are responsible for managing client relationship and internal delivery respectively.

Client Managers are responsible for sales and are work in the target markets with Japan, Korea, China and Brazil being the biggest ones. They have local language expertise and also help in translating client requirements and feedback into English.

Once a client has registered on the website, chosen the required service and sent research paper for editing, it is routed to the Process Manager. Internally developed workflow software is used by the Process Manager, and their role is to allot the paper to the editors.

The editors are freelancers and operating on English editing assignments out of any location worldwide. The editor's work is check and fine-tuned by the Reviewer who assigns a score for each paper to the editor based on a scale of 1(poor), 2 (major corrections done), 3 (minor corrections) and 4(paper good to send to client with no corrections)..

Each finished document sent to the client is accompanied by a client feedback form. The client is given a choice of 3 smileys' – happy, neutral and unhappy. The feedback is received by the Quality Department who in turn forward the same to the concerned Managing Editor for root cause analysis and corrective action plan. This is updated in the client log.

Current State Assessment

KIAP went through the entire value stream under the kaizen paradigm of "Zero Defect". The two key underlying philosophies are

"A Defect, if made, should not leave the process"

"Error can be made but it should not result in a defect"

As per client feedback 75% of the clients are satisfied and have given "Happy" rating whereas 12-15% of the clients give acceptable rating and 8-10% of clients give a non-acceptable rating. The value stream is compartmentalized – function silos have been put in place as the actual value adders i.e. editors and reviewers are under the Delivery team but work is directly allotted to them by the Process Managers who are part of an independent function. The Quality Department is a separate entity whose main job is to keep a track of customer feedback but having no direct role in the way the work is done.

The Goal

The long term goal for the company would be to bring in a paradigm of Zero Defect and make this the organization's culture such that every editor and reviewer works with the thought that he or she should deliver a defect free document to the client. Quality is a Culture and is in the Mind. In the short term, this goal translates into more specific targets for the English Editing Services:

1. Reducing the customer complaints by 50%
2. No repeat complaint from the same customer
3. The same type of complaint should not be repeated from another customer

Implementation Plan

A detailed 9 months intervention plan was agreed upon with The company. This consisted of a series of problem solving workshops over the first 4 months followed by hand holding and error proofing interventions over the next 5 months.

Based on Pareto analysis, top four defects were taken up for problem solving in the first workshop. The next four were taken up subsequently. Cross functional teams comprising the concerned Vertical Head, Quality, Process Manager, Client Service Manager and IT support member were formed for each focus area. The teams completed the observation, data analysis and arrived at root cause(s) during the 3 day workshop. The workshop ended with a comprehensive action plan for improvements. These actions were implemented and monitored over the next 4-6 weeks and results validated.

Problem solving tools ranging from the simple Why-Why to 5W-1H and our unique Differential Diagnosis were used for the different problems and areas depending on the complexity. Solutions were confined to the boundary defined by *kaizen* – improvement without investment

Key Improvements Done

- Reducing non value added waiting (dead time) time for translation jobs so that the editing team has adequate time for doing a thorough edit and review and still deliver within the defined Turn Around Time (TAT).

- Significant number of complaints were traced to new editors. A comprehensive on-boarding plan was made to ensure new editors have understood client requirements and worked closely with the experienced reviewers for at least 5 jobs before they become art of the regular pool

- The existing scoring system for edit quality and associated feedback to editors underwent a significant paradigm shift – the top defect of "Language and Grammar" now became non-negotiable from a quality angle.

- Error proofing solutions introduced in the in house workflow management software to ensure accurate allocation of jobs, flagging of quality scores and advance intimation of potential delays.

Results Obtained

Steady decline in the customer complaints per 1000 jobs over the one year with a 50% reduction in absolute complaints in the largest vertical.

Reduction in throughput time by 20% through workflow improvements

Team oriented and started developing a *Kaizen* culture