

# PrintWeek

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VAKIL &amp; SONS | PROFILE

## Vakils embarks on the BPO path with a raft of print solutions for publishing

*Sachin Shardul* spends time at Vakils and investigates how a traditional printing unit is making a transition into pre-media applications

**B**imal Mehta, executive director at Vakil & Sons (Vakils), settles into his stylish office after an invigorating game of golf on a sunny day. "It's my favourite game," he says. "And with this kind of climate, I can play 365 days a year and continue to play golf even as I age."

Besides golf he has been charting another course. He has been trying to re-draw the core competencies at Vakils. Ever since he returned from the USA fourteen years ago, armed with brand-new ideas, he has been trying to make his company a publishing BPO services hub of the world.

### Publishing BPO

Today, global publishers and service providers are outsourcing their printing and publishing services to printers like Vakils in India.

Elaborating about a printing and publishing BPO, Mehta says: "Estimates put the Indian publishing BPO at \$400 million with 30% annual growth. Worldwide, the industry is valued at \$2.5 billion and is expected to double in India by 2009. Volume of work which is headed towards India is expected to touch approximately \$1.1 billion by 2011."

This means the shop floor at Vakils has a fleet of computers which services international clients. It ranges from financial institutions, publishers and Japanese comic book publishers.

Rishi Anand who oversees the pre-media operation at Vakils explains: "We are equipped for web and print media. Besides our core printing services, we also have service offerings across the industry such as e-publishing and conversion, typesetting, editorial, copy editing, e-book, designing, pre-press digitisation."

### Strengthening of pre-media

With the dawn of new business ventures and entrepreneurial challenges, the requirement of data conversion has attained its peak. It is not an unfamiliar term in today's business scenario.

Mehta says: "We undertake document conversion processes of various kinds and also convert PDF's, word processors, typesetters along with the conversion of document and paper formats into XML, HTML-SGML and other structured formats. Books, catalogues and CAD conversion process are the services we offer."

### Social awareness

In 1946, Vakils established a 25,000 sq ft plant in Mumbai. The press is equipped with a fleet of pre-press, press and post-press machineries.

Mona Doctor, managing director at Rite Print Pak who collaborates with Vakils, says: "Vakil & Sons stands for integrity, quality and attention to details. They have maintained their class and the people who head the organisation are very passionate."

Mehta's father, Arun Mehta, managing director at Vakils who has been president of the All India Federation of Master



**Bimal Mehta: "cross-border printing holds the key to the future"**

### Vakil & Sons

**Founded in:** 1946

**Speciality:** E-publishing and conversion, typesetting services, editorial services, pre-press services

**Location:** Mumbai

**Equipment:** Heidelberg four-colour, Ryobi 524 four-colour and Ryobi 920 four-colour plus coater

**Staff:** 70

Printers, points to a collection of contemporary Indian painters like M F Hussain, Jehangir Sabavala, Akbar Padamsee, Satish Gujral who are featured on cards and calendars.

Arun explains: "Paintings from renowned museums such as Victoria and Albert Museum in London, National Museum in New Delhi, Bharat Kala Bhavan in Benaras and The Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai blossomed into a fine collection of Indian miniatures in print, which were printed on hand-made paper."

Today, Vakils is involved in its support to under-privileged cancer patients in India. The greeting cards which are printed at Vakils carry the message of V-care. A part of the sales from these cards is donated to voluntary cancer foundation.

### Investing in knowledge

The publishing division of Vakils specialises in art books, cookery books, children's books and high quality general books. A number of books have been published through its associate company, Vakils, Feffer & Simons (VFS).

Vakils has invested in books by Indian authors. Mehta says: "Our books have been bestsellers. Some of our titles have had 25 editions." He adds: "In addition, VFS is in collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania Press for the publication of educational books on Indian history and art."

Vakils supports children's literature. As Radhika Menon, publisher and managing editor, Tulika Publishers, Chennai, and director, Goodbooks Bookstore, the only bookstore in India exclusively for children, says: "Our experience with Vakils has been extremely good. We are getting very good responses from the schools and the general public regarding our publications. Vakils has been taking interest in our publication and promoting them to the masses."

Mehta agrees: "The client and vendor relationship has shifted to a more knowledge sharing experience. We can help our clients save money at each point of the chain. But if we analyse the entire production chain and how its components inter-relate, we can engineer a sustainable increase in production efficiencies." ■