



LET'S TALK ABOUT BUNDLES

**Simplifying content
selection for use cases**

ADVANCING
DISCOVERY

Let's talk about bundles



“Content is king” has been taken as the great truth of the information era. But many variables affect the ability of your organization to secure, use and make the most of any given content set.

One of those variables is, inevitably, the supplier. Anyone who has negotiated contracts knows that suppliers differ enormously, and the approach a supplier takes to understanding the needs of customers, organizing and enabling access to information, and ensuring results is as important as what's in the databases.

Maria Markovic, representing the Copyclues division of the Chicago-based firm Logiclues, works with a wide variety of organizations to help them find, license and manage the best possible content for their users. With a focus on organizations in the STM space, often in medical devices and diagnostics, she is an expert on the full scope of suppliers -- knowing how they work as well as what they offer.

When making recommendations or even negotiating on behalf of her clients, Maria takes into account such factors as available budget, specific content needs, and licensing models. She then maps those factors against what suppliers are willing and equipped to provide.

“I always start with an information assessment,” she says. “Does the company already have an idea of what they need? Do we need to do a survey or run a focus group to assess information needs? Do they have subscriptions already or not?”

She continues: “We start with an information assessment and go from there to look at the content that users indicated they wanted, which platforms or journals were requested. We always look for the fastest ways to access content at the lowest cost, which might mean subscriptions, but it also might mean alerts to make people aware of new content so that they can place document delivery orders.”

Putting the customer at the center

According to Maria, whether a platform or content will be pursued for a subscription depends on a number of elements, including a publisher/vendor evaluation. This evaluation takes into account whether and how the publisher/vendor puts the customer at the center of the relationship. Some of the criteria for assessing this attitude include the degree to which a vendor allows the potential customer to truly evaluate content, as well as how carefully the vendor works with the customer to create the best licensing option for their situation.

“Springer Nature takes a flexible approach to working with different companies and creating the best solution for the customer, whether they need a handful of titles or the whole collection,” she explains.

“I also like the availability of trials for the different types of content available,” she adds. Many vendors have cut down or eliminated the availability of no-cost trials, making it harder to truly assess how the content will work in the environment. In a time of constant budget crunches, organizations do not always have funds that stretch to paid-for trials of desired subscriptions.

Having worked with Springer Nature on accounts across organization types and industries, Maria says that Springer Nature provides both quality of content and a customer-centric experience: “It's not just about selling [the customer] something; it's about getting the client the best solution at the best cost, not just for the immediate need but the long term. What's going to benefit the customer most?”

Customers needs are paramount, they need to be at the center of all decisions concerning them

Identifying — and paying for — the “right” content

In today’s world of careful budget scrutiny, costs associated with content licensing are often at risk. “Libraries are always seen as cost centers, not money-making centers,” she says. “They’re usually the first to be scrutinized, and sometimes there isn’t even a library function, which means there’s even less budget.”

Of course, lack of budget doesn’t make the business need for information go away, so Maria gets creative with her clients, while educating them on what they might need to plan for in the future:

“They may not have the ability to purchase all the content they wanted, but we put together other types of solutions, be it with document delivery or relying heavily on Open Access, or seeing how OA can supplement what they license,” she explains.

This is also where content bundles can come into play - bundling content sets can bring down the cost of access, but Maria has to work closely with clients to ensure they negotiate for the right bundle and can justify the costs internally; closely reviewing usage and calculating ROIs on best content options (bundles vs. individual subscriptions vs. document delivery cost) is critical.

Working with a publisher with an open communication approach when assessing customer’s options is essential. “In one case,” she recalls, “we had a larger group of [Springer Nature] journals in a bundle, and we worked with the account manager to tailor the most cost-effective bundle based on what the customer was actually using the most. Even with a bundle subscription approach, a solution was created that allowed bundle access with cost adjusted according to usage. And the solution continued into a longer term contract”.

Making it work

Identifying and paying for content is one thing; making it discoverable and accessible for users is something else. Maria has found Springer Nature to be an excellent partner in making premium content visible and accessible to users through intranets, ebook collections, targeted emails and other types of internal marketing and advertising.

“Everyone is very conscious of cost,” she says. “They’re not going to automatically buy, even when they know they need something, unless there’s verifiable proof that it’s being used.”

Having the right content is only the starting point. Publishers in the STM world are often sole-source suppliers, and libraries or information providers do not have the ability to pick and choose between suppliers for the same content. That is why focusing only on the sale, makes working with suppliers difficult. Instead, long term win-win solutions should be the goal. Suppliers who care about customer value, long-term relationships, and supporting implementation, working on solutions for enhancing access and usage are what drive the full ROI of information investments.

To discuss Springer Nature content and how to derive greater value for your organization, please contact us at rd@springernature.com

