

Founder and CEO of Impelsys

by **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

ATG: Tell us about yourself and how you came into this marketplace. What is your prior experience and what is your training?

SS: I am a serial entrepreneur with a passion for turning ideas into real businesses. I founded **Impelsys** as a pure-play services organization focused on providing online content delivery solutions and services to publishers. As the founder and CEO of **Impelsys Inc.**, I drive **Impelsys**' business vision, strategy, value and growth. **Impelsys** is my second start up which has now grown into a leading online content delivery solution for the STM, children's and educational publishing markets. **Impelsys** products and services help over 70 publishers with their online content delivery strategy. Our customers include major publishers such as **Reed Elsevier, McGraw Hill, Wolters Kluwer, Thomson, Springer, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt** to smaller publishers as **Marshall Cavendish, Benchmark Education** and **Prufrock Press**. Over a period of eight years, servicing some of the largest publishers in the industry, **Impelsys** has gained valuable expertise in the publishing domain, while gaining insights into the challenges faced by the industry.

The first company that I founded was **MedSite Inc.** As Chief Strategic Officer and Executive Vice President of Sales, I helped **MedSite** become one of the largest Internet pharmaceutical marketing companies in the United States. In 2006, we sold **MedSite** to **WebMD** for over \$40 Million.

I am a graduate of the **University of Pennsylvania**, where I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Entrepreneurial Management from the **Wharton School of Business**.

ATG: Your Website says that **Impelsys** technology enables publishers to go digital. What exactly is **Impelsys**? Is it a publisher? Is it a vendor? Is it something new? What does the name **Impelsys** mean or signify?

SS: **Impelsys Inc.** is a US company, offering technology products and services to the global publishing industry. The overall goal of **Impelsys** is to be the leader in providing content delivery infrastructure to publishers through a SaaS model, and helping them build a direct relationship with their end customers. As publishers make the transition from distributors of printed media to dynamic content/information companies, they are challenged with producing and delivering content electronically in multiple digital platforms quickly and cost effectively. This trend towards digital world also pushes demand for better technology solutions. **Impelsys**' business model integrates these opportunities to provide cost-effective solutions by leveraging its publishing domain expertise and its own proprietary publishing software products.

ATG: One of your platforms is called **iPublishCentral** which was launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October. Can you tell us about **iPublishCentral**? What is its relation to **Impelsys**?

SS: **iPublishCentral** is a flagship product of **Impelsys Inc.** It is the culmination of several years of intense research and development backed by **Impelsys**' proven insights into the publishing industry. Developed exclusively to meet publishers' content delivery requirements, today and tomorrow, **iPublishCentral** addresses the most common issue of taking print content online in minimal time with minimal investment. It lets publishers take full advantage of their content by creating new online products and revenue streams, thereby empowering them to drive their marketing, delivery and distribution strategies. **iPublishCentral**'s basic features and functionalities are free of cost helping publishers initiate their online strategies with minimal risk.

ATG: Who are some of your publisher clients? Do you only work with large publishers?

SS: Since its inception in 2001, **Impelsys** has experienced considerable success offering, quality technology products and services to high-profile publishing clients like **Elsevier, Benchmark Education Company, MIT Press, McGraw Hill, Wolters Kluwer, TSO, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Blackwell Publishing**, among others.

Impelsys has empowered publishers of all sizes, large and small to launch online products and helped them compete, evolve and grow in an increasingly complex marketplace.

ATG: A lot of this functionality (look inside the book, for example) is available through other providers like Amazon. Are you working with companies like Amazon? How about Google?

SS: It is true that many providers offer products/solutions that have certain features and functionality that is part of **iPublishCentral**. However, no company or product has been able to offer an integrated, single source solution that can help publishers market, distribute, and deliver content online, and allow them to enjoy all the rich features and benefits through a self-serve model. **iPublishCentral** allows publishers to manage their entire title information and assets in a single place. As a marketing tool, it enables publishers to talk directly to their readers with specific campaigns or promotion. It also helps publishers drive the popularity of their own Website, rather than just their book on **Amazon** or **Google Book Search**. As a delivery tool, it allows publishers to easily create feature-rich portals around their titles, with existing content formats and immediately start selling content to individuals and

institutions. With **iPublishCentral** publishers can capitalize on the same content multiple times. Moreover, it brings down the cost and time required to set-up digital strategies by integrating automated content conversion workflows and ready-to-go functionality with no hassles of content conversion costs, format compatibility, server hosting or maintenance.

We plan to syndicate with **Amazon** and other online bookstores to serve as an outlet for any online purchases made through our widgets or our platform.

ATG: Your technology seems to enable publishers to create widgets and expand their market potential. In your words, explain how publishers can take advantage of **iPublishCentral**.

SS: **iPublishCentral** is a revolutionary solution offering an end-to-end workflow solution that enables publishers of any size to effectively market, distribute and deliver their content online through a self-serve model.

iPublishCentral's market module, **iPublishWidget**, enhances marketing reach by allowing publishers to make their content available for sale online and promote their brands and titles across the Web through viral marketing. **iPublishWidget** increases the discoverability of the publishers' content by search engines and its reports provide insight into reader behavior and preferences. **iPublishCentral**'s **ViewInside** serves up publisher-controlled content sampling that enhance the likelihood of a reader's decision to purchase.

iPublishCentral facilitates content distribution through its distribute module, **iPublishWarehouse**, which allows publishers to sort, search, retrieve and distribute electronic versions of titles from a digital warehouse. **iPublishCentral**'s delivery module, **iPublishPortal**, allows publishers to quickly launch sophisticated, feature-rich branded portals, complete with the latest Web 2.0 functionality, and create marketable online content products and bundles in record time for as little as five dollars per title per month. Other publisher-focused features include individual and institutional subscriptions, integrated usage reports and advanced systems for managing content, users and subscriptions.

ATG: Besides a Website, what else does a publisher need to utilize **iPublishCentral**?

SS: Publishers don't even need a Website for using **iPublishCentral**. They just need to have standard title information that is title PDF, metadata as **Excel** or **ONIX** and cover art. Utilizing this information, publishers can create their own branded widgets, **ViewInside** and feature-rich portals around their title or series of titles.

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ATG: *Why should libraries be interested in Impelsys and iPublishCentral?*

SS: With **iPublishCentral** removing the cost barriers for transitioning content online, publishers of all sizes are now able to market and promote online content. Libraries can take advantage of this by being able to discover content which was not easy or available earlier. Using publisher book widgets, libraries can promote readership on certain titles and subject matters.

ATG: *This is a powerful and innovative technology. Can you tell us how you plan to develop it in the future? What are your plans for 2009 and the rest of the decade?*

SS: We have a 24-month roadmap to further develop **iPublishCentral**, wherein we are planning to add features that will help publishers leverage their core asset, content, to deliver both on online and mobile platforms. We also plan to give them the ability to maximize the returns on their content by allowing them to sell in a flexible manner — by bundles, by chapter, by subject matter sets, as complete databases, and offer individual and institutional access, backed with different pricing models. 🌱

against the grain
people profile

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Sameer Shariff

BORN & LIVED: India, Middle East, Singapore, USA.

EARLY LIFE: Always dreamt about turning ideas into businesses that create wealth, and in the end turned some of these dreams into realities.

FAMILY: Married with three kids.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Went to **Wharton Business School**, studied entrepreneurial management. Started first company **Medsite** after college, built it successfully and sold it to **WebMD**. I am currently working on my second venture — **Impelsys**.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE: I spend time with family and enjoy outdoor sports including golf and running. I ran the **New York Marathon** and plan to run the **Paris Marathon**.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

PHILOSOPHY: We are all privileged with unique attributes, which we should leverage to make a difference and create a better world.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Transforming an idea that was conceived on a piece of paper to seeing it today into a successful organization, which now employs hundreds of people and leads the industry in its niche.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: To be the leader in providing content delivery infrastructure to publishers through a SaaS model, and helping them build a direct relationship with their end customers. 🌱