

Joan Salvatella, general director of Salvatella Editorial

‘The core of the industry is always shaped by authors with innovative ideas’

Joan Salvatella is the editor and general director of Editorial Miquel A Salvatella, a family-run company that has specialised in children’s and educational materials since it was founded in 1922. The Salvatella publishing house currently has some 70 different collections and publishes around 40 new works each year. The company’s clients are primarily from Catalonia (50%), the rest of Spain (35%) and Latin America (15%). The staff is made up of 8 people who cover all functions, ranging from management and administration to merchandising and warehouse work.

What professional profiles are most in demand in the sector at this time?

Firstly, we need authors with innovative ideas.

We also need good sales executives who, in addition to having general knowledge of the sector, also have good sales skills. People are also needed with enough preparation to perform auxiliary editing tasks.

Furthermore, the technological changes occurring in the publishing industry require people who are specialists in the area of electronic books.

Finally, other profiles are also needed, such as designers, proofreaders, illustrators, etc.

What are the main skills required for each of these profiles?

With regard to authors, they need to have innovative and different ideas, alternative products that fill a niche in the market, namely, people with creativity, initiative and with a customer orientation. In the children’s industry, it is more important to have a good concept than specialised writing and stylistic skills.

Salespeople need to have a lot of initiative and networking prowess, particularly valuing communication skills, even above in-depth knowledge of the publishing market (although they also must know about it).

Assistant editors must have great initiative, as well as the ability to propose new projects. People with a vision of the future of the market are highly valued.

At this time, due to the entry of new technologies in the publishing industry, people are needed who are involved in the world of e-books. This person has to know how to take decisions about the best materials, best contents and the dimensions, etc.

Auxiliary profiles, which include proofreaders, designers, illustrators, etc., are in great demand, but there are also a lot of highly-qualified people, particularly in a time of crisis like now. Above all, they must understand the editorial style and do their work in line with the company’s philosophy and standards, since skills such as mastery as the appropriate software are taken for granted.

In general, we value people with a high level of analytical and conceptual thinking in order to take decisions in line with the publishing house. Initiative and creativity are also very important, as well as a customer orientation.

What are the main reasons for the demand for each one of these job profiles?

Authors are obviously the core of the publishing industry, although the thing we seek most are innovative and different ideas that guarantee that the product will be well received on the market.

Good salespeople are needed because a good idea or good product will not have the expected reception if they are not given suitable publicity. They have to make a lot of contacts and be on the move constantly to publicise the company’s new products.

An assistant editor with initiative is essential because he will keep up-to-date on the new features of the industry, will take initiative when it's his turn to go to different events and will have the scoop about market trends. Therefore, he will be the right-hand man of the publishing agent by helping the editor with the fundamental task of taking decisions about the house's new editions and reprints.

A person is needed who will delve into the world of digital books, since publishers have to be prepared for the enormous transformations that the book sector is currently experiencing.

Which professional profiles that are currently in demand in the sector have the most significant shortages?

Those who know about digital books. Owing to the newness of this sector and the size of the transformation, there are still not enough career professionals with training in this area.

In Spain, the big change has yet to arrive and we should be prepared to adapt to the new platforms. Having the catalogue ready and the sales strategy designed, along with the booksellers, in order to take advantage of these new opportunities.

How do you think these shortcomings should be resolved? (by improving the level and/or content of training in these areas, attracting talents from abroad...)

Via the continuous interchange of knowledge with countries that are more advanced in this sector and via the movement of professionals that can be constantly up-to-date about the advances that are made.

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