



Case Study

Over-Simplifying Projects
for Doubled Revenue



COMPANY

Sol Press

INDUSTRY

ePublishing &
Digital Localization

LOCATION

Orange County,
California



The Company

Sol Press is an American publisher that brings fan-favorite light novels, visual novels, and manga, originally released by Japan's leading creators, to the passionate local audiences found in the United States. With every release anticipated by thousands of fans, of whom you can find sharing photos of their merch displays on Sol Press' Discord Server or posting Youtube videos about the next title, the pressure is always tightening for faster and more predictable releases.

Business Demands

In order to localize a title in time, the digital localization process requires international teamwork between Sol Press' internal team, original developers in Japan, outsourced translators, editors, graphic designers, and quality assurance teams; all of whom must process the work chapter-by-chapter while balancing the original story's integrity with the necessary western elements it needs for target audience context.

Challenges

● COMPLEX PRODUCTION CYCLES

In localization, digital assets are not only handed off in a *multi-lapped cycle* between different team members for versioning, but the assets themselves convert in *file type* (and back again) multiple times. This is hard to manage when tasks involve translation accuracy, cultural interpretations, and the memory mapping of multiple storylines at once.

● MOTIVATING TEAMS REMOTELY

Founder (Michael Valdez) came to us with an assertive question: *Can this focus my outsourced team on what needs to be done?* Since his contractors come from a *competitive labor market*, located in places like Germany and the Phillipines, it's difficult for team members to naturally gain a *sense of urgency*; resulting in a *paid incentives program* awarding expected deadlines!

● RELEASE-TIMING PRESSURES

Sol Press is in a particularly dynamic position where achieving a fanbase creates a stronger likelihood of *PR scrutiny*. Because of this, they must ensure their projected timelines are accurate; otherwise, they pay the price in lost sales and loyalty.

● EFFICIENCY-DRIVEN CAPITAL

Though Sol Press can estimate publication value by how well titles do in their original overseas markets, to succeed they require an *optimized localization process* and *cost-effective execution*; tactics found to be just as important as fanbase development.



SIMPLE PROJECT PACKAGING: EVERYTHING & ANYWHERE

Adopting new processes is difficult, so Sol Press needed a tool that could immediately secure buy-in with contractors half way around the world, but one that could still inherently hold them accountable. Since Steer's project cards were designed to package every requirement for project success in one place, their users' activity was first expedited out of necessity, but soon after evolved into full adoption from the tool's ease-of-use. For Sol Press' internal team, since synced projects, action items, and resources could exist in multiple places at once using their *linking* features, they were able to create a scalable system quickly and based on their own operational model -- a model configured by Steer's optional accountability-driven features, like goal metrics and milestones.



USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE: "I ONBOARDED MYSELF"

Though Sol Press' leadership team had the option to call us for any required onboarding both for themselves and for each of their 22 team members, since the tool was designed for common sense usability, every user was able to understand how to use the tool by simply exploring the interface. When asked if the onboarding tours were useful, the primary operations executive (Adam Haffen) laughed and asked "what onboarding tours?"

"Adopting Steer has not only afforded us efficiencies that, compared to previous years, is night and day... but using their tool gave us better ways to pre-plan our releases, so we could get titles out to fans months sooner in advance."

MICHAEL VALDEZ,
FOUNDER & CEO, SOL PRESS

Steer's Results



RELENTLESS ORGANIZATION

By using Steer's platform, Sol Press' multi-looped projects were contained to an optimized number of proofing and hand-off stages. The access of all project requirements, tied together with their ability to sync across the workspace and avoid the need for duplication, made synchronization of workflows easier.

This took their typical 1/2 title per month completion-rate, and **raised it to 2 titles per month**, with the executive team forecasting a comfortable 3.5 titles per month rhythm.



MADE FOR "MY" SYSTEM

Since Steer was designed to structure only the basic (but most important) elements when it comes to execution, the tool enabled their operations executive to create his own simplified system for managing pre-releases. Features like resource-linking (originally a *feature request* from Sol Press' team) eliminated the need for complicated versioning tools and overall card views allowed for a more multi-purpose approach for the business.

The power of pre-release management allowed them to make their pre-orders available months in advance (instead of weeks), **taking their average pre-orders from 150 to 500 sold per title; more than doubling their revenue.**

