PITON Global

EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER · WP-89

RESEARCH SERVICES · PHILIPPINES

The insight-reliability standard: the executive economics of research services outsourcing to the Philippines.

An analysis of why reports delivered is a volume vanity metric, how source reliability and decision-usable findings — never research throughput — decide the true cost of a desk-research operation once unsourced claims, stale data, cherry-picked evidence, and analyst rework are counted, and the vendor-selection discipline that delivers a report an executive can act on.

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ABOUT THIS SERIES — VOLUME 89

Every research-services proposal is priced per report or per analyst-hour, because output is easy to count. This volume is about the only research outcome a decision actually depends on: the finding built on reliable sources, synthesized honestly, and framed so an executive can act on it. The gap between delivering a report and delivering one that is trustworthy and usable is where unsourced claims and quiet rework live. The full series lives at piton-global.com.

THE PITON-GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

About the authors

John Maczynski
Chief Executive Officer

John has bought research capacity for three decades, and learned that the fast desk that ships every report and sources none of it is the most expensive one a decision-maker can hire — because a finding built on a stale stat or an unnamed source is a decision made on sand, and every claim an analyst

Ralf Ellspermann
Chief Strategy Officer

Ralf has spent twenty-five years running Philippine knowledge-services desks, and he judges a research team by its source reliability and decision-usable rate, not its reports-per-week: whether every claim traced to a credible, current source and the synthesis was honest about what the evidence has to re-verify is the report done twice. His standing question ignores the page count: of the reports you delivered, how many rested on reliable sources an executive could actually act on? Applied at PITON-Global, that question is what clients get on every research sourcing decision — personally, with no account layer in between.

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did and did not support. The research contract in Section 3 codifies what he learned rebuilding desks that shipped reports fast and sourced them loosely. He now reads research providers the way he once ran them — from the source-audit and the rework log backward.

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ABOUT PITON-GLOBAL

PITON-Global is a buyer-side advisory practice, Manila-based since 2001, that has never operated a delivery floor or taken a placement commission. Its stock-in-trade is knowing the Philippine provider market at the operating level — 1,000+ mapped operations, re-verified continuously, including each research team's real source reliability and decision-usable rate rather than its reports-per-week headline — and converting that knowledge into a shortlist of six to ten genuinely qualified partners per engagement. Buyers from Tripadvisor, Garmin, TSYS, HealthPartners, Yetipay, Workrise, and Norman Disney & Young have run their searches through the practice.

SECTION 01

Executive summary

-60%	99%+	-64%	6.3×
Fully-loaded cost per decision-usable report vs. US onshore	Source-verification rate on vetted teams, up from 82–90%	Reduction in analyst rework on vetted teams	First-year ROI, reconstructed case (Section 6)

A research-services engagement is bought on the price per report and paid for on the findings it gets wrong. The vendor reports hundreds of reports delivered at a fraction of the onshore cost; the decision-maker finds the market-size figure with no source behind it, the competitor stat that turned out to be three years stale, the conclusion that cherry-picked the one study that agreed with it, and the analysts on staff quietly re-doing the desk's work before it can go to a principal. The desk shipped its reports and the business inherited decisions built on unreliable evidence, a trust problem, and a rework bill. The gap between delivering a report and delivering one an executive can act on is where the real cost of cheap research hides, because an unsourced or slanted finding is not insight delivered — it is a bad decision waiting to be made.

The Philippines — English-fluent, analytically deep, with a mature knowledge-services talent pool — is where research services are delivered with the most source-reliability discipline, because that pool can run the rigorous sourcing, honest synthesis, and decision-framed writing that reliability demands. Five findings:

1. **Reports delivered is the industry's most flattering number.** Any desk can fill a deck with plausible-looking findings. Vetted teams are measured on outcome: source reliability, synthesis honesty, and decision-usable rate. Weak providers quote a low per-report price the business repays in unsourced claims, rework, and bad calls. Section 2 shows the gap.

2. **The reliable, decision-usable finding, not the delivered page, is the product.** Research a leader can act on comes from tracing every claim to a credible, current source, synthesizing honestly, and framing it to the decision — not from filling a template. Teams that source

rigorously deliver findings that hold; teams that ship loosely deliver claims that collapse under the first hard question, at a cost far above the per-report price.

3 **Unreliable research cuts both ways — false confidence and missed signal.** A confident conclusion on a bad source leads a decision astray; the contrary evidence left unsourced or unsurfaced hides the risk that mattered. Vetted teams hold source verification above 99% precisely because both tails cost — the wrong answer trusted and the right warning missed.

4 **The bad decision and the rework, not the analyst-hour, are what cost.** A report done wrong costs the decision made on it, the internal re-verification, and the credibility of the whole research function — many times the per-report saving. Teams that source reliably free internal analysts and de-risk the decision, and that reclaimed trust — not the offshore rate alone — is where the case study's return is built.

5 **Contract on the decision-usable report, not the delivered one.** The contracting failure of research is paying per report and hoping the sources are real and the synthesis honest. Vetted deals price against source-reliability floors, synthesis-quality targets, and decision-usable-rate minimums, making trustworthy insight the team's problem, which is where it belongs.

The intended reader is a head of strategy, insights or knowledge-management leader, or COO buying research services per report and paying for it in unsourced claims, rework, and bad decisions. Sections 2–4 separate the teams that source reliably from the teams that ship reports; Sections 5–7, the method and the proof.

SECTION 02

The volume mirage: reports delivered versus decision-usable findings

Figure 1 grades one month of a desk's reports on the four tests a decision-maker actually applies — is every claim sourced, is the data current, is the synthesis honest, is it framed to the decision — as a source-reliability scorecard. It is the same illusion a chatbot's containment rate creates: a page count engineered to look like insight while unsourced claims, stale data, and rework accumulate underneath.

FIG. 1 — ONE MONTH OF REPORTS: RELIABILITY SCORECARD VS. REPORTED VOLUME

RELIABILITY TEST	VETTED DESK	WEAK PROVIDER
Every claim traced to a named source	99%	71%
Source current within relevance window	98%	64%
Synthesis honest about contrary evidence	97%	58%
Framed to the decision, act-on-ready	96%	52%
Decision-usable, as delivered	**96%**	**49%**

Both desks reported 100% of commissioned reports "delivered." Left: PITON-Global engagement instrumentation, 2025–26, source-audited. Right: composite of pre-engagement vendor reporting reviewed in diligence.

The economics follow the reliability, not the page count. On the left, ninety-nine percent of claims are sourced and ninety-six percent of reports are decision-usable as delivered, so leaders act with confidence and internal analysts are freed; on the right, both desks "delivered" every commissioned report, yet barely half is usable — the rest unsourced, stale, slanted, or unframed, paying in bad decisions, internal re-verification, and lost credibility at once. A low per-report price that ships unreliable findings is not a saving; it is decision risk and rework, delayed and sometimes irreversible. The source-reliability scorecard — sourced, current, honest, framed — is the cheapest due-diligence instrument in this paper.

SECTION 03

The research contract: source it rigorously, synthesize it honestly, make it decision-usable

Figure 2 lays out the three clauses of a working research contract — the machinery a floor read verifies before any per-report price is believed.

FIG. 2 — THE RESEARCH CONTRACT, AS OPERATED ON VETTED TEAMS

SOURCE IT RIGOROUSLY

Every claim traces to a named, credible, current source; primary and authoritative sources are preferred over aggregators; and a figure that cannot be sourced is flagged, not asserted. The finding is built on evidence that survives scrutiny, so a decision rests on fact rather than a plausible-sounding guess.

SYNTHESIZE IT HONESTLY

Evidence is weighed on the whole record, contrary findings are surfaced rather than buried, and the confidence stated matches the strength of the data — no cherry-picking the study that fits the brief. The synthesis tells the decision-maker what is known, what is uncertain, and what the evidence does not support.

MAKE IT DECISION-USABLE

The report answers the question that was asked, leads with the implication, and arrives inside the decision window — with a source-and-confidence trail the client can read. Decision-usable means a leader can act on it without sending it back, which is the only outcome a research function actually feels.

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THE DECISION-USABLE REPORT

99%+ SOURCED | HONEST SYNTHESIS | ACT-ON-READY

Claims rest on reliable sources, the synthesis is honest about what the evidence supports, and the report is framed to the decision — so unsourced claims disappear, rework falls, and leaders act with confidence. The desk gets cheaper per decision-usable report and more trusted at the same time, which is the entire promise of outsourcing research to people who measure source reliability, not reports delivered.

Operating parameters from PITON-Global knowledge-services engagements, 2025–26.

In diligence, the contract is tested from the decision-maker's side: commission a blind research brief and re-check every claim against its cited source for reliability and currency; read the synthesis for cherry-picking; measure how much internal re-verification the report needs before it can go to a principal. Perhaps one team in ten survives it cleanly. Steps 3 and 5 of the framework exist to find that one before the contract does — because everything in Table 3 of Section 6 depends on source reliability, not reports delivered.

SECTION 04

Cost and performance: cost-per-decision-usable-report economics and benchmarks

TABLE 1 — FULLY-LOADED COST PER DECISION-USABLE REPORT: THREE OPERATING MODELS (2026)

OPERATING MODEL	COST / REPORT	VS. US BASELINE
US onshore in-house research analyst	$1,180	baseline
Low-cost offshore research mill (per-report)	$780	−34%
Vetted Manila desk — sourced, decision-usable	**$472**	**−60%**

Basis: PITON-Global engagement pricing 2025–26; cost per decision-usable report = fully-loaded operating cost divided by reports delivered sourced, honest, and act-on-ready (unsourced or reworked reports excluded); the research mill looks cheap per report but internal re-verification, bad-decision cost, and rework lift its true cost per decision-usable report; US comparator fully-loaded in-house analyst cost per comparable report.

TABLE 2 — RESEARCH-SERVICES BENCHMARKS, VETTED VS. BASELINE (2025-26)			
METRIC	VETTED TOP TIER	BASELINE	EXECUTIVE READING
Source-verification rate	99%+	82–90%	The only research number a decision follows
Decision-usable rate (as delivered)	96%+	50–70%	Act-on-ready, or sent back
Analyst rework vs. baseline	−64%	baseline	"Source it rigorously" — held or not
Turnaround vs. baseline	−45%	baseline	In the decision window, or after it
Internal-analyst capacity reclaimed	+31%	baseline	Time on judgment, or on re-checking

Source: PITON-Global knowledge-services engagement data 2025–26; baseline = typical pre-engagement operations billed on reports delivered.

The strategic read: the research mill's −34% per report is a false economy — internal re-verification, bad-decision cost, and rework lift its true cost per decision-usable report far above the per-report gap, and a strategy set on a bad number is a cost no rate recovers. The vetted Manila desk's −60% is real because it is measured where the value is: the report sourced, synthesized honestly, and framed so a leader can act. Buy on reports delivered and you buy the right column of Figure 1; buy on cost-per-decision-usable-report and you buy source reliability — the same discipline every volume in this series keeps arriving at from a different door.

SECTION 05

Sourcing discipline: the 7-Step Vendor Vetting Framework, applied to research services

Research diligence adds one hard requirement to every step: a per-report price is real only when the source reliability behind it survives a blind re-check of every claim against its cited source. The funnel below is representative of a 20–45-seat research-desk search.

FIG. 3 — THE 7-STEP FRAMEWORK AS A RESEARCH-DESK FUNNEL

	STEP	WHAT IT ELIMINATES IN A RESEARCH SEARCH	FIELD REMAINING
1	**Requirements definition**	Output-first scoping: fixes the source-reliability floor, the synthesis-quality target, the decision-usable-rate standard, and the turnaround the desk must meet by research type	1,000+
2	**Market mapping**	Research mills: desks that bill reports and treat unsourced claims and rework as the client's problem, and generalist floors with no analytical training or domain depth	~40
3	**Capability screening**	Desks without the machinery: trained analysts, audited source-reliability history, a citation-and-QC workflow, database access, and domain coverage across your research areas	~11
4	**Compliance & security audit**	Weak governance: confidentiality and NDA discipline, licensed-database and copyright compliance, data-handling controls, SOC 2 scope covering the research stack	~7
5	**Operational diligence**	The blind brief: commission a report and re-check every claim against its cited source for reliability and currency; read the synthesis for cherry-picking; interview on how they handle thin or conflicting evidence	4–6
6	**Competitive RFP & negotiation**	Per-report pricing: finalists bid against source-reliability floors, synthesis-quality targets, and decision-usable-rate minimums — all carrying credits for reports that come back unsourced	2–3
7	**Transition & launch governance**	Cold start: the desk calibrates against your research types, source standards, and house style on a sample before it takes live briefs, with the reliability floor certified before steady state, PITON-Global embedded buyer-side	1

Field-remaining counts represent a 20–45-seat research-desk search, PITON-Global engagements 2024–26.

The standing guarantees hold: **vendor neutrality** — PITON-Global operates no research desks, writes no reports, and takes no placement economics, so the shortlist reflects audited source-reliability performance, not inventory; **right-sizing** — teams for whom your operation is a flagship account. Six to ten genuinely qualified providers, delivered within 48–72 hours, free to the buyer, competing through a fully transparent, fair, comprehensive, and highly competitive RFP.

SECTION 06 · ANONYMIZED CASE STUDY

Re-basing the desk on source reliability: a 34-seat research operation, reconstructed

Engagement RS-070 is a US strategy-and-insights function — commissioning roughly 3,600 research reports a year across market, competitive, and diligence work — that had offshored its research desk to a per-report mill. The report price was excellent; the reliability was not: source verification sat near 86%, market figures were surfacing with no source or with stale ones, syntheses were quietly cherry-picking, and internal analysts were re-verifying most of the desk's output before it could go to a principal. The head of strategy wanted the leverage without the unsourced claims and the rework. Identifying details are anonymized under NDA.

SELECTION (WEEKS 0–8, BLIND BRIEFS)

TRANSITION (MONTHS 2–6, CALIBRATED FIRST)

Requirements fixed a 99% source-reliability floor, a synthesis-quality target, and a decision-usable-rate minimum, with a mandatory citation-and-QC and second-reader workflow. Mapping produced 40 claimants; the machinery screen — trained analysts, audited reliability, citation QC, database access, domain coverage — left 11; the confidentiality-and-licensing audit left 7. Blind research briefs re-checked claim-by-claim against sources shortlisted 5. A Manila desk won priced against source reliability and decision-usable rate, with a blind re-check written into the reporting spec.

The desk calibrated against the function's research types, source standards, and house style on sample briefs before taking live work; the reliability floor was certified in month 3. The citation-and-second-reader loop fed calibration from day one. By month 6 source verification reached 99.2%, decision-usable rate hit 96%, analyst rework fell 64%, and turnaround dropped 45%. PITON-Global chaired the source-reliability review board to steady state.

TABLE 3 — RS-070 FIRST-YEAR VALUE BUILD-UP (US$)		
VALUE COMPONENT	YEAR 1	BASIS
Labor arbitrage on the 34-seat research desk	$1.42M	63.8k productive hrs × ($32.10 – $9.90)
Internal-analyst capacity reclaimed (rework removed)	$0.62M	Senior-analyst hours returned from re-verification
Bad-decision exposure avoided (reliable evidence)	$0.30M	Decisions no longer set on unsourced or stale data
Turnaround & capacity value	$0.14M	Faster reports and higher brief throughput
Gross value created	**$2.48M**	
Less: engagement & transition costs	($0.39M)	Calibration, citation-loop build, database/house-style integration; advisory fee $0 (provider-paid model)
Net value ÷ cost = first-year ROI	6.3×	$2.48M ÷ $0.39M

Figures rounded; reliability, decision-usable, and rework effects audit-verified. Method in Methodology & notes.

Fifty-seven percent arbitrage, forty-three percent from reclaimed analyst capacity, avoided bad-decision exposure, and faster turnaround — a typical split for the series, earned because the desk was re-based on source reliability rather than report volume. Every line traces to a diligence step: the reliability floor to Step 1, the reliability-based pricing to Step 6, the citation-and-second-reader workflow to Step 3's contract. The head of strategy's line at the year-one review: "The report price barely moved. What moved is that I trust the findings now — my team stopped re-checking them, and nothing unsourced makes it into a board deck."

SECTION 07

The executive playbook: governance for the first 180 days

A research transition succeeds when the desk is measured and paid on source reliability and decision-usable rate — client in command throughout.

DAYS 0–30

Define reliability, contract on it

Set the source-reliability floor, the synthesis-quality target, and the decision-usable-rate and turnaround thresholds with strategy leadership before launch, and document the citation and second-reader workflow by research type. Contract against source reliability and decision-usable rate — never per report alone — with floors and targets carrying credits. Stand up the blind re-check as the program's arbiter of truth.

DAYS 30–90

Calibrate the analysts, prove the floor

Calibrate analysts against your research types, source standards, and house style on sample briefs before they take live work; certify the reliability floor and citation-QC loop. Switch on the citation-and-second-reader loop from day one. Publish the research dashboard: source-verification rate, decision-usable rate, analyst rework, turnaround, capacity reclaimed.

DAYS 90–180

Take live briefs, certify steady state

Route live briefs to the desk only after it holds the reliability floor and decision-usable-rate minimum. Review the reliability board monthly with the rework log and source-audit trend on the table. Certify steady state on two months at floor across research types; hand over on documented criteria; keep the quarterly blind re-check standing.

THE FIVE FAILURE MODES WE ARE HIRED TO PREVENT

Paying per report while claims go unsourced · filling templates instead of tracing sources · cherry-picking the evidence that fits the brief · shipping stale data past its relevance window · taking live briefs before source reliability is proven. All five are settled at selection and contract.

The research-services argument, in one sentence: a delivered report is output and a decision-usable one is a finding a leader can act on with confidence, and a vetted Philippine desk delivers –60% cost per decision-usable report with 99%+ source verification and analyst rework cut by nearly two-thirds — for buyers who re-check the sources instead of counting reports delivered, and compete the finalists through a fully transparent, fair, comprehensive, and highly competitive RFP. Anyone can deliver a report. We make sure you buy the desk whose findings a decision can rest on.

METHODOLOGY & NOTES

How the numbers were built

Reliability and rework figures (Fig. 1, Table 2) derive from engagement instrumentation in PITON-Global knowledge-services engagements, 2025–26. Source verification and decision-usable rate are measured by re-checking every claim in a sample of reports against its cited source; analyst rework, turnaround, and capacity reclaimed are measured against the client's pre-engagement baseline. The weak-provider column is a composite of pre-engagement vendor reporting reviewed in diligence, shown for contrast.

Cost-per-decision-usable-report figures (Table 1) are fully loaded — wages, benefits and statutory charges, facilities, licensed-database and technology tooling, management and QC overhead including citation checkers and second readers, attrition-driven recruiting — divided by reports delivered sourced, honest, and act-on-ready, with unsourced or reworked reports excluded from the denominator; US comparators reflect fully-loaded in-house analyst cost for a comparable report. A decision-usable report rests on reliable sources, is honestly synthesized, and can be acted on without being sent back.

The case study (RS-070) is anonymized under NDA; volumes and dates are generalized, figures rounded. Reliability, decision-usable, and rework effects are audit-verified; the capacity-reclaimed line reflects senior-analyst hours returned, and the bad-decision-exposure line is a conservative estimate. ROI = net first-year value ÷ all engagement-related client costs. PITON-Global's advisory fee is provider-paid and appears at $0 in the client cost base; neutrality safeguards are documented at piton-global.com.

Market context draws on IBPAP reporting and PITON-Global's proprietary provider mapping (1,000+ operations; source reliability and decision-usable performance re-verified May 2026). Estimates and projections are PITON-Global analysis and should be cited as such. The full series is available at piton-global.com.

Would your provider's report price survive a source re-check?

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Thirty minutes with John will tell you. Free to buyers, strictly vendor-neutral — a source-reliability-verified shortlist within two to three business days.