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## McHugh Publishing Management Audit: The Basics and Benefits

By John B. McHugh *Publishing Management Consultant*

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### WHAT IS A PUBLISHING MANAGEMENT AUDIT?

A publishing audit is a comprehensive examination of your organization's publishing program. The purpose varies from organization to organization but at the heart of an audit is the rigorous asking of questions. Typically an audit stresses operational aspects in addition to financial aspects. The term "audit" connotes accounting but that's a narrow view of the audit process. The heart of a successful publishing audit is the asking of penetrating and incisive questions

As an overview to the specifics of *McHugh Publishing Management Audit*, you will learn the benefits of an audit, what components an audit examines, the eight steps in an audit, and possible outcome of an audit.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A PUBLISHING MANAGEMENT AUDIT?

A publishing management audit provides these benefits:

1. Factual information for management decisions.
2. Unbiased management information.
3. Suggested areas of opportunity.
4. An assessment of past performance.
5. Recommendations on how to improve future performance.
6. Suggestions on organization design, process and communications.
7. Insights into the political dynamics of your organization and its effect on the performance of your publishing division.
8. Recommendations on staffing, recruiting and staff education and development.

### WHAT DOES AN AUDIT EXAMINE?

Every organization will have different needs when undertaking a publishing management audit. However, a publishing management audit usually examines these 16 components of a publishing program.

1. **Profitability:** Evaluation of the profitability of the publishing product lines and the publishing division with recommendations for improvement.
2. **Publishing Processes:** Evaluation of all publishing processes.
3. **Promotion and Marketing:** Evaluation of publicity, promotion and marketing of the publishing division with recommendations.
4. **Editorial Decision Making:** Assessment of editorial decision-making criteria and selection processes.
5. **Rights and Permissions Management:** Weakness here can expose the organization to potential legal exposure. Rights and permissions management are neglected in many organizations. (McHugh brings considerable depth to this aspect of publishing management audit.)
6. **Internal Communications:** Evaluation of internal communications, reporting and workflow.
7. **Key Metrics:** A list of key metrics (or measures) to help you to evaluate operational effectiveness and establish baseline benchmarks.
8. **Staff Position Descriptions:** Evaluation of publishing division's position descriptions with recommendations for revision.
9. **Staff Skills and Experience:** Assessment of the skills and experience of publishing staff.

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10. **Professional Development:** Recommendations for the publishing division's professional development of their knowledge and skills.
  11. **Morale and Climate:** Assessment of morale and climate of the publishing division.
  12. **Organizational Design:** Suggested organizational designs for the publishing division.
  13. **Co-Publishing:** Analysis of co-publishing arrangements and recommendations.
  14. **Research:** Assesses the quality of market and customer research and suggests what additional research is needed.
  15. **Customer Satisfaction of Service:** Evaluates organization measurement of measuring customer service and satisfaction.
  16. **Other Publishing Opportunities:** Open-ended recommendations for other publishing opportunities, particularly, electronic publishing.
5. Conducting on-site listening roundtables with staff to glean ideas for improvement.
  6. Interviewing mutually selected volunteers and authors/editors.
  7. Reviewing any previous consulting documents prepared for your publishing division.
  8. Submitting a draft management report for discussion with client.
  9. Submitting the final report with recommended priorities and an implementation plan.
  10. Reviewing report with client and being available, on an unlimited basis, to assist client at no charge.

## THE TEN STEPS IN A MCHUGH PUBLISHING MANAGEMENT AUDIT

How a publishing management audit is conducted will vary from situation to situation and from organization to organization. However, for most organizations, the following steps constitute the process.

1. Preparing and submitting a comprehensive questionnaire to executives and publishing staff.
  2. Requesting a number of organizational documents for the consultant's review and analysis.
  3. Evaluating the information in the completed questionnaires.
  4. Interviewing on site with executive staff and publishing division staff.
- A reorganization of the publishing structure.
  - A revision and realigning the responsibilities in the positions descriptions.
  - A reevaluation of the publishing program's mission statement.
  - A reevaluation of the volunteer oversight and involvement in the publishing program.
  - The divestiture of all or some of the publishing properties because of the capital intensive nature (books) or because of marginal performance.
  - The outsourcing of a particular function, for example, shipping/fulfillment or advertising sales.

## POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A MCHUGH PUBLISHING MANAGEMENT AUDIT

A *McHugh Publishing Management Audit* is meant as the starting point for improving publishing operations. Depending on your specific reasons for undertaking this McHugh Audit, some outcomes are:

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- The decision to expand publishing product lines by either growing internally or acquiring a line from another publishing company
- Audit the entire system of rights management by evaluating how the organization acquires, protects and markets the rights to its content

Publishing is rarely static. Publishing is usually dynamic with changing markets, customers, capital and staffing requirements along with the financial expectations also in flux. For all of these reasons, a *McHugh Publishing Management Audit* can be money and time well spent to help you improve your publishing program. Send McHugh an e-mail, if you would like him to call you to learn your needs.

Send e-mail to [jack@johnbmchugh.com](mailto:jack@johnbmchugh.com).

## McHugh Publishing Management Audit

SERVICE	DESCRIPTION	BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book Publishing</li> <li>• Journal &amp; Periodical Publishing</li> <li>• Acquisitions/New Product Development</li> <li>• Staffing Analysis</li> <li>• Marketing/Web Site Analysis</li> <li>• Advertising Sales</li> <li>• Rights/Permissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Appreciative Inquiry" participative approach involving group discussions and in-depth phone interviews with key staff, authors, members, and customers to get a 360 degree assessment of their business.</li> <li>• Detailed analysis of every area of your publishing operation's strengths and weaknesses, with recommendations to optimize staffing, streamline management processes, and increase sales, revenues and profitability.</li> <li>• Extensive list of new product and new market ideas generated by your own staff, authors and customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harness in one document the collective knowledge and wisdom of your own people to create profitable new products and programs.</li> <li>• Make adjustments and correct weaknesses to grow your publishing program to the next level.</li> <li>• Accelerate achievement of recommendations by using McHugh's practical implementation plan.</li> </ul>

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## About John B. McHugh

### *Practical Problem-Solving Advice for Publishers*

John B. “Jack” McHugh is a 40-year veteran of the publishing business. Jack has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and Saint Mary’s Press. Jack is also an experienced association publishing executive. For seven years, he was Publisher and Director of Programs at the American Society for Quality and for a two-year period, he served as the Interim Publisher at the Project Management Institute. Jack’s specialties include association/nonprofit publishing, book publishing, executive recruiting, journal publishing, rights and permissions, organizational design, and startups. He serves as an advisor to the Friends of Kletzsch Park in Glendale WI <http://goo.gl/6PhtU4>. Jack is the manager of two LinkedIn™ groups, Association and Nonprofit Publishing and The Self-Employment Forum.

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