

Commercial Publishing vs. Self-Publishing: Advantages/Disadvantages

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Self-publishing has always been an option for aspiring authors. With limited opportunities to publish commercially and with the availability of inexpensive technology to assist in the process, self-publishing may seem like an attractive option.

However, self-publishing may not be as attractive as it first appears once you have an understanding of the complexities of the book publishing business. To help you decide if self-publishing is for you or if you should pursue a commercial publisher, here are advantages and disadvantages of both.

Nine Advantages and Six Disadvantages of Commercial Publishing

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Publisher bears all financial risk	You will probably need an agent as many publishers do not accept unagented manuscripts
Book production expertise: first class design; editing; subject matter expert reviews; content development	Author loses control of editing, design, etc.
Specialized marketing expertise	Longer production cycle-time
Expertise in fully exploiting all channels of domestic distribution	Turnover of editorial personnel; projects can fall through the cracks
Expertise in reaching international markets	Mergers and acquisitions in the industry may cause changes in personnel, publishing focus; cast of characters; your contract might even be cancelled
Handles all distribution functions: inventory, warehouse , fulfillment, and print reorders	Financial instability: some publishers struggle to earn profit during transition from print to digital
Handles all licensing and permission requests	Author's potential earnings limited by size of royalty; generally, 10 to 15 % of sales
Clout in marketplace with a recognized brand and a defined audience	
Market intelligence (you will learn about market potential when you shop the proposal)	

Six Advantages and Seven Disadvantages of Self-Publishing

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Author maintains control over processes	Stigma of self-published books may still exist
Shorter cycle-time, depending on what services author pays for	Managing details of publishing process time-consuming
If a sole proprietorship, author tax advantages using IRS schedule C	Steep and expensive learning curve for a one-time venture

Higher profit margin for self-publishers	Numerous missed marketing opportunities due to lack of expertise
If successful, all profits belong to author	Opportunity costs: other more profitable opportunities to use one's resources
Established publisher may buy rights to the book (rare, but possible)	Lack of licensing knowledge may lead to bad deals and lost income
	Author may infringe on another's copyright and/or trademark without expert vetting of publisher

Of Interest to Self-Employed <http://goo.gl/Mm8DLc>

SE-30, *Self-Employment Tactics and Tips, 2012*, 2 pages, Free

SE-31, *Ten Tips for an Effective Website, 2012*, 1 page, Free

SE-32, *Self-Employment 101: Questions & Answers, Starting Out, 2012*, 9 pages, \$6

SE-33, *Eight Attributes Needed for Successful Self-Employment, 2012*, 6 pages, \$4

SE-34, *How to Establish a Profitable Hourly Rate, 2012*, 6 pages, \$6

SE-35, *Self-Employment 102, Questions & Answers, Suggestions for Success, 2012*, 14 pages, \$10

Of Interest to Publishers <http://goo.gl/b2hQgi>

***Self-Publishing: How to Evaluate the Feasibility*, © 2012 by John B. McHugh**

Is self-publishing a good thing per se and should authors boycott traditional book publishers and self-publish? I suggest that the questions aspiring self-publishers should ask first are: "Should I self-publish at all?" "What is the feasibility of self-publishing?" "What kinds of books have a better chance of success as self-published books?" "How do I get distribution?" "How does the book distribution system work?" "What tasks are performed by book publishers and what tasks disappear for ebooks?" "What is my time worth?" "What are opportunity costs and how do they impact the self-publisher?" "How do copyright and permissions impact self-publishers?" "How does one select a self-publishing consultant?"

You will learn answers to these questions in the new McHugh Publishing Guide, *Self-Publishing: How to Evaluate the Feasibility*.

Contents: Self-Publishing as an Option; Labor of Love or Profit Making Venture?; Types of Book Content; Market (Audience) Segments; Formats; Market Segment Statistics; Distribution in the Book Industry; Eight Questions to Ask Before Self-Publishing; Economics of Book Publishing: Fixed and Variable Costs; Opportunity Costs: What is Your Time Worth?; Estate Planning and Opportunity Costs; Tasks Performed by Book Publishers; Feasibility of Self-Publishing and Areas of Publishing Expertise; Editorial Decision-Making; Marketing and Distribution Plan; Copyright and Intellectual Property; Self-Publishing Experts: How to Select One; Six Tips for the Self-Publisher; and Resources for the Self-Publisher

B-8, 2012, 14 pages, , \$14 .00

Rights and Permissions: A McHugh Select

Contents: Eight Tips When Licensing Digital Rights; Five Tips When Acquiring Digital Rights: Two Tips When Protecting Intellectual Property on Your Website: and Six Questions to Ask When Pricing Digital Rights

R-34, 2014, 4 pages, \$4.00

Social Media: A McHugh Select

Contents: How to Think About Social Media: Social Media Swirl and Consultants; Absence of Social Media Standards and a Body of Knowledge; Three Levels of Social Media and a Context for Thinking about Social Media; 14 Questions to Ask; Writing a Social Media Policy: and Six Suggestions on Intellectual Property and Property Social Media

SM-8, 2014, 6 pages, \$5.00

About John B. McHugh

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 is the manager of a LinkedIn™ group, Association and Nonprofit Publishing.

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