



# McHUGH EXPERT INTERVIEW

## McHugh Interviews McHugh on Request for Proposal (RFP) Preparation

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### INTRODUCTION

Publishers outsource various services such as rights sales, book fulfillment, book and magazine printing, and now in the digital realm, ebook file conversion. For this reason, publishers need a proven method of soliciting vendor proposals uniformly and consistently. The way to do this is with a Request for Proposal (RFP). In this interview, my goal is to provide information on the techniques used to prepare an RFP.

**Q** What is an RFP?

**A** A Request for Proposal (RFP) is a document sent to potential vendors outlining the organization's needs, expectations, and requirements. The RFP provides vendors with the information needed to submit a proposal. An RFP is an even-handed way of presenting the same information to all prospective vendors so that all receive a fair chance of securing a company's business in competitive bidding.

- The RFP specifies your requirements and needs, and provides essential information to the vendors to assist them in the preparation of a proposal.
- The RFP requires all vendors to provide the information about their services and prices in a consistent format.
- The RFP is an excellent screening device to help eliminate those vendors not serious about your business.
- The RFP provides a fair, consistent, and even-handed method of selecting vendors.

**Q** How are RFP's used in publishing?

**A** In the publishing business, it is common to outsource the warehousing and fulfillment of book orders. In some instances, the customer service function is outsourced. Most commonly the printing of periodicals and books is outsourced to printing firms. Website development and maintenance is now routinely outsourced. Sometimes, organizations contract all their magazine and book publishing to custom publishers. Many non-profit organizations do not want to be in the "hands on" publishing business and, therefore, outsource a number of publishing functions—including the production of books and periodical development of magazine content—and advertising sales.

**Q** How can you help publishers prepare an RFP?

**A** I can assist in two ways. First, as a contractor I can manage the internal process of developing an RFP for organizations. Second, I have written a McHugh Publishing Guide, PM-1, How to Prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP): Suggestions for Publishers, 2011, 9 pages, \$20.00, which can be ordered at my website.

**Q** What purposes does an RFP serve?

**A** • The RFP is the method of organizing a rational and cost-effective selection process of an expensive, complex service or good.

**Q** Why a guide for only publishers?

**A** Publishing, like any business, has its own characteristics and industry-related nuances. After managing RFP development, it occurred to me that the publishing industry would be well-served if I wrote a paper summarizing the "how to's" of managing the development of an RFP based on my experience. However, my RFP preparation methods would work well in any non-publishing business as well.

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**Q** Why should people pay money for what they can figure out on their own?

**A** If you are a neophyte at RFP development, the trial and error method--learning on the job--can be costly in terms of your time, your colleagues' time, and money. An RFP can ensure a successful vendor relationship and save you a substantial amount of money.

**Q** What topics do you cover in your new McHugh Publishing Guide, *How to Prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP): Suggestions for Publishers*?

**A** Topics covered include:

- What Is an RFP; Purpose of an RFP
- Preparation Don'ts
- How to Organize and Prepare
- RFP Tasks and Preparation Calendar
- Locating Qualified Vendors
- How Many Vendors to Include
- Topics to Cover; Selection Criteria and Decision-Making
- When You Receive Proposals
- Reasons to Disqualify Vendors
- Vendor Site Visits
- Legal Boilerplate

**Q** What else are you working on?

**A** I am writing these McHugh Publishing Guides:

- *How to Develop a Rights Policy and Establish Permissions Fees*
- *McHugh's 50 Rights and Permissions Questions Answered*

- *Starting a Book Publishing Program: A Checklist of Considerations*

- *Self-Publishing Realities: Assessing Financial and Professional Aspects*

**Q** What new McHugh Publishing Guides have you published?

**A** Two new Guides can be purchased at my website:

- B-22, *McHugh's 10 Suggestions for Successful Book Acquisitions*, 2011, 4 pages, \$5.00

**Contents:** Book Acquisitions Are Vital; Four Truisms about Book Acquisitions; Ten Suggestions; Developing Acquisitions Talent: Investing in the Future

- R-14, *McHugh's 42 Tips for Managing Rights and Permissions*, 2011, 5 pages, \$10.00

**Contents:** Decisions in Rights Management; Copyright in the Digital World; When to Consult with an Attorney; 9 Tips for Seeking Permission; 15 Tips for Licensing, Acquiring and Protecting Digital Rights; 18 Tips for Organizing the Rights Function

### ABOUT JOHN B. MCHUGH, PUBLISHING CONSULTANT

John B. "Jack" McHugh, a 40-year veteran of the publishing business, is a long-time successful publishing consultant. He is the author of the *McHugh Publishing Guide Series*—54 practical papers on all aspects of publications management, which can be ordered at his website. He also publishes the *McHugh Expert Interview Series*, 11 interviews with publishing leaders on various publishing specialties, which are available free at [www.johnbmchugh.com](http://www.johnbmchugh.com).

In the book publishing business, McHugh has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and

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Saint Mary's Press. McHugh is also an experienced association publishing executive. For seven years, he was Publisher and Director of Programs at the American Society for Quality. For a two-year period, McHugh served as the Interim Publisher at the Project Management Institute.

McHugh has advised a variety of association publishers including: AASHTO, Alliance for Children and Families, ASCD, ASM International, ASTM, AWHONN, Boy Scouts of America, International Employee Benefit Foundation, NSTA, Police Executive Research Foundation, SAE, SMACNA and SNAME. McHugh has also worked for commercial publishers such as Butterworth Heinemann, Cardiotext, Kendall Hunt, and Llewellyn Worldwide.

Jack McHugh's specialties include association/nonprofit publishing, book publishing, executive recruiting, journal publishing, rights and permissions, organizational design, and startups. Jack McHugh can be reached at [jack@johnbmchugh.com](mailto:jack@johnbmchugh.com) or 414-351-3056, Website: [www.johnbmchugh.com](http://www.johnbmchugh.com) .