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## McHugh's Twenty-Four Core Concepts about Publishing

By **John B. McHugh** *Publishing Management Consultant*

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All of us in any business or profession develop beliefs based on our subjective observations. What you will read is based on my publishing experience. These thoughts are subjective and reflect my own set of biases. Feel free to disagree with me. Contact me if you want to discuss any of the following. Call **414-351-3056** or e-mail **jack@johnbmchugh.com**.

1. Publishing is a business based on people, process, and creativity. Technology supports publishing, but without people, process, and creativity, nothing is published.
2. Keep in mind that publishing is a business, not some esoteric creative enterprise (although creativity is part of it). Stick with the basics. Develop a product, market it, and monitor profit margins.
3. Success in publishing revolves around paying attention to process, documentation, measurement, accountability, and customer satisfaction.
4. Customer satisfaction is vital to your success. Constantly monitor and evaluate customer satisfaction. Design product and processes to serve customers.
5. If you are a book publisher, talk to your readers every chance you get. Talk to readers at professional seminars and conferences to find out how your publications are being received and to mine new book ideas. Don't assume that the distribution channel manager is always your customer.
6. "Book publishing is a quick way to make a slow buck." It takes a significant amount of time to earn profits by publishing books. Time is needed to develop new books, market books, and to establish an identifiable market niche. If you are in a hurry to make money, stay away from book publishing.
7. E-books have not changed the book publishing business. E-books are merely another way for book publishers to repackage and distribute content without incurring new development costs. Smart licensing of your book rights can be the key to successful e-book publishing. The same observation also applies to the journal publishing business.
8. Books and magazines are totally separate and distinct businesses. You can't lump them together as operational and financial entities and expect to be successful. Likewise, book publishing, trade, educational, and scientific, technical, medical (STM) publishing are different businesses with different characteristics.
9. Fair and equitable treatment of authors, contributors, and freelancers is vital for success. However, a sensible, and defensible, business practice is to pay these professionals no more than competitive market rates for their services.
10. The management of copyrights and licensing is a key strategic function for success in publishing. Intelligent rights management is crucial to a publisher's success. Rights are a major asset of a publishing organization. Far too many publishing executives view rights management as a low-level clerical function and provide inadequate resources to support rights management.
11. New product development doesn't happen in a vacuum. Someone in the organization must be responsible for new product development. Successful new product development takes a leader to champion the introduction of ideas for new products into the organization.

12. One of the most powerful assets an organization possesses when creating new publishing products is small group dynamics. Understand small group dynamics, the behavior of teams, and the leadership of teams, and you will be well on your way to the development of a continuous stream of new products.
13. Co-publishing and co-venturing can be powerful for a publisher. Carefully evaluate all opportunities to co-publish/co-venture with other organizations. Work to structure deals that are beneficial to all parties.
14. The creation and marketing of content is publishing. Don't confuse the technological aspect of disseminating content with publishing. Content must exist if there is to be any publishing.
15. Publishing is another way of harnessing valuable relevant intellectual property. Nonprofits have many advantages when it comes to owning a vast inventory of intellectual property. The intellectual property owned by nonprofits is extensive and can be packaged in a variety of publishing media.
16. Many nonprofits are risk-averse in their publishing operations. This overcautious mentality inhibits the growth of an organization's publishing business.
17. Associations, foundations, societies, and other nonprofit organizations have many advantages that support publishing. Nonprofits should be able to earn respectable profit margins by publishing if they harness their many inherent advantages.
18. Publishing is a business that must be conducted in a profit-oriented framework. This is true even if a publishing entity is housed in a nonprofit organization. All publishing projects should have P&Ls, and the head of the publishing unit must have financial accountability.
19. No one template exists to optimally organize a publishing unit in a nonprofit organization. Greater variation exists in organization structures of nonprofit organizations than in commercial companies.
20. Many board members and volunteers have a propensity to micromanage publishing programs. Your job as an executive is to clarify that publishing operations is staff's job. Micromanagement by volunteers will have a devastating effect on staff morale and reduce the effectiveness of your organization's publishing program.
21. Publishing is the most complex business conducted by associations and societies. Hire the best publishing professionals and let them run the business.
22. Quality management concepts are powerful in a publishing environment. Concepts such as "process improvement," "measurement," "internal customer," and "rework," should be incorporated into your daily publishing lexicon. Read and learn from the masters: W. Edwards Deming, Joseph Juran, and Philip Crosby.
23. As an addendum to the preceding statement, there are no "perfect" books, journals, or magazines. The marketplace ultimately makes this judgment about publisher's products.
24. Project management ideas are particularly valuable if you are starting a new book division, magazine, or journal. A project management approach will enable you to effectively control the outcome of the project through a disciplined approach to project scope, communications, scheduling, resources required, risk, measurements, and project delivery date.

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- Product Development
- Copyright and Rights Management

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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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