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Guide to McHugh Papers on Association Publishing and Product Development

AN ASSOCIATION'S ADVANTAGES IN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

An association has one critical advantage over its commercial competitors in developing new product. That critical advantage is the immediate access to a wealth of information and knowledge about content, potential authors, editors, and markets because of the association's pool of loyal members. The publishing, education, certification, and standards businesses all can prosper because of the membership connection.

An association enjoys this advantage because of its mission as an educational or professional nonprofit organization. Membership typically consists of leading experts and practitioners in that profession or discipline. On a daily basis, an association's staff members have meaningful exchanges with members (or at least the potential for such), which results in increased staff knowledge and ideas for new products and improved marketing.

Associations are *ipso facto* also in the information and content business. Associations serve their members by providing specialized information packaged as publications. Add to this the fact that associations possess marketing and promotional advantages given their direct access to their members. These factors should make nonprofits formidable publishing entities, on a par with commercial publishers, and perhaps even stronger than their commercial competition.

However, many associations struggle with product development. Associations can do a much better job in new product development by creating an effective partnership between staff and volunteers.

For those whose only publishing experience is with a commercial publisher, working in an association can be at times confusing given the special environment of an association. Therefore, in order to understand how associations work, you need to be aware of the key differences between association publishing and commercial publishing.

HOW ASSOCIATIONS DIFFER FROM COMMERCIAL PUBLISHERS

Association publishing differs from commercial publishing in the following ways:

• Are risk-averse.

• Sometimes take longer to make decisions because of volunteer involvement.

• Fail to maximize sales from lack of a clear strategy market awareness, or efficient investment of human and capital resources for their publishing business.

• Can be hindered by micromanagement by inexperienced volunteers.

• Lack some of the financial incentives of commercial publishing; for example, bonuses and pay for performance.

• Are highly political. i.e., volunteers have may extensive hidden agendas.

As an association employee migrating from the commercial publishing world, you might find the slowness in decision-making to be particularly frustrating. Boards of directors generally do not have the ability to make business decisions rapidly. Opportunities can and will be lost and can be a major frustration to some staff members. (Some associations have a fast track decision process that requires only the approval of the executive or management committee— smaller bodies than the board—which can expedite a decision for a project you are championing.)

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For these reasons, I have chosen to write about how association management, staff-volunteer relationships and politics impact new product development.

THE EVOLUTION OF MCHUGH'S PUBLICATIONS FOR ASSOCIATIONS

I have written new *McHugh Publications* periodically to reflect two things: first, my clients' need for education and practical information in publishing management; and, second, to reflect what I have learned as a result of working with clients

I concluded that two areas seemed to be neglected consistently in the literature and virtually nothing existed that helped association publishing managers. First, there was a need to write practical material on the "hows" of succeeding as an association publishing manager in the special world of associations. Most of what is written is on editing, communications (newsletters, PR, etc.) and now, social media. All of this is important, but publishing managers need help on the business side of publishing along with coaching on navigating the staff-volunteer relationship in associations. Much of the success you will enjoy in your association career will be governed by the politics of the staff-volunteer relationship.

The second area needing practical information is product development. Associations are in the information and knowledge business and yet so few associations use their marketplace advantages to develop new products with commercial potential. New product development not only is relevant to publishing but also certification, education, and standards as association sponsored businesses are integral to their growth. Therefore, much of what I have written attempts to fill the vacuum in "how-to" for product development of knowledge, particularly, the people and organizational aspects.

GUIDE TO READING THE MCHUGH PUBLISHING MANAGEMENT SERIES

In the *McHugh Publishing Management Series*, you will find a number of papers on the subjects of association publishing and product development at my Web site, **www.johnbmchugh.com**. For those unfamiliar with my work, I suggest a hierarchy of reading for you. My purpose then is to suggest taxonomy to guide you through my work as a tutorial on associations, publishing, and new product development. Call me or e-mail, 414-351-3056 or **jack@johnmchugh.com** if you have any questions on what I have written or if you have suggestions for any new papers that would be useful to you.

Jack McHugh

Introduction to Associations and Publishing

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Other Aspects of Association Publishing

- A-5, *McHugh Publishing Management Audit: The Basics and Benefits,* 2009, 4 Pages,

- A-9 *Making Association Publishing an Income-Producing Asset: Role, Mission, and Stages of Development*, 2009, 5 pages

- B-13, *Starting an Association Publishing Program: 20 Questions to Ask*, 2007, 3 pages

- P-4, *How to Establish an Editorial Board for a New Publication,* 2009, 4 pages

- P-7, *How to Start a Publisher's Library Advisory Committee,* 2009, 4 pages

- P-10, *Evaluating the Operation and Performance of Journal,* 2007, 4 pages

Working with Volunteers: Optimizing the Relationship

- A-1, *Nine Tip for Working with Association Volunteers*, 2009, 4 pages

- A-14 *Political Success in Associations: Making the Volunteer–Staff Relationship Work,* 2010, 5 pages

New Product Development Basics

- PD-4, *How to Think about New Product Development and Acquisitions: A Checklist,* 2009, 2 pages,

- PD-16, *Improving Book Product Development Using Total Quality Management*, 2010, 4 pages

- PD-1, *Checklist of 96 Book Acquisitions Tips and Suggestions,* 2009, 5 pages,

- B-16, *Book Publishing Co-Publishing Basics and a Checklist of Questions,* 2006, 3 pages

- PM-4, *How to Organize an Executive Retreat: A Vehicle for Managing Change*, 2009, 8 pages

New Product Development in Associations

- PD-13. *Optimizing New Product Development in Nonprofit Organizations: Overcoming Roadblocks*, 2009, 8 Pages

- PD-14, *How to Evaluate Association New Product Development,* 2009, 4 pages

- PD-15, *Knowledge Management, New Product Development, and Nonprofit Publishing,* 2009, 3 pages

- PD-17, *Improving Product Development in Associations through Collaboration and Information Sharing,* 2010, 4 pages