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McHUGH EXPERT INTERVIEW

McHugh Interviews McHugh on Consulting

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INTRODUCTION

Recently I was asked by a couple of clients, "Why don't you interview yourself?" I thought they were joking but then I asked, "What would you like to know?" Their questions serve as the basis of this interview. In my self-interview you will learn how I am differentiated from other consultants, my techniques and processes, and my thoughts on creativity and product development.

Q Are you like many "consultants"— namely, someone between jobs?

A It's been said that a consultant is a person, with a briefcase fifty miles from home, who borrows your wristwatch to tell you what time it is. It does seem that there are many unemployed executives who advertise themselves as consultants. That's not me, as I have been in this business full-time for 16 years and have consulted for over 30 years. I am in the consulting business for the long haul and will be available to advise clients as long as they need me.

Q How are you different from other publishing consultants?

You won't be working with a neophyte, needing on-the-job training, when you work with me as I have proven processes, templates, and a bank of tested audit questions. At the front-end of our relationship, I will spend time discovering your needs and whether or not I can serve you.

I am committed to educating clients by providing 80 free professional papers on every aspect of publishing management. When I finish an assignment I debrief myself and ask, "What have I learned that I can share with my readers?" Much of what I learn advising clients finds its way into my writing.

I also bring to every assignment an in-depth knowledge of rights and permissions. I make suggestions on how

to improve rights management, review licenses, point out potential legal exposure, and most importantly suggest when you need to consult with a qualified copyright attorney. Copyright and licensing issues pervade most aspects of today's publishing and successful executives understand this fact. To view 12 free McHugh Papers on rights and permissions, go to http://www.johnbmchugh.com/rights\_permissions.htm.

Q What is important in your relationship with clients? How do you ensure that you provide the best possible service to your clients?

A An assignment is about what the client wants to accomplish and his/her needs. Much of working with clients is about effective communications. Therefore, from the very first contact I pay attention and listen to the client. I ask questions to clarify and increase understanding.

As an outsider, it is important for me to get a sense of the political dynamics of the client's organization and attempt to understand where the power resides. Finally, I always strive to understand the client's culture because organizational culture can be a powerful determinant of a company's performance.

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**Q** What is your typical process for working with a new client?

My process starts with a careful listening to your needs. My modus operandi is participative—the more you and your staff participate, the better the chance that I will succeed in meeting your needs. Then my process is generally the following: I will prepare a draft consulting proposal containing project scope, deliverables, schedule, and fees. You review, we may revise, you sign, and we go to work.

Next is data gathering, which usually consists of a combination of interviews and your written responses to a custom questionnaire. Depending on the situation, I may visit your office. I then submit a draft report, we discuss it, I revise it and resubmit it to you, and then we discuss the report and a possible implementation plan. You and your staff can then call me on an unlimited basis to discuss anything related to the assignment.

**Q** What is most important when you start an assignment for a client?

**A** Three items I want understood between the client and myself. These questions need answers: "What is to be accomplished?" "What are your expectations?" "What is the scope of the project?"

**Q** What do you enjoy most in your work and why?

**A** Two things. First, management audits of publishing programs are enjoyable because of the contacts with staff, volunteers, editors, vendors, etc. The assembling of information and then making constructive suggestions that will help the client improve its publishing program are gratifying.

Second, executive recruiting has always been at the top of my list. I enjoy interviewing job candidates as it is

stimulating and always broadens my perspective. Helping the client find the best-qualified candidates is gratifying too. For the convenience of my clients, I have captured my recruiting in a fairly simple process which is explained in my *Executive Recruiting Checklist* (PM-6, 2 pages), which is free at my website, <http://www.johnbmchugh.com/management.htm>.

**Q** Earlier in your career you were the Director of Programs and Membership at the American Society for Quality (ASQ). How has that experience affected your thinking on the subject of quality?

**A** Profoundly. At ASQ I was in charge of all the Society's businesses and membership. I had 10 managers reporting to me. My responsibilities at ASQ made me focus on the customer and his/her requirements for satisfaction. I learned the importance of well-documented processes, measurements, and cycle time. What was hammered into my head during my ASQ days was the need to always listen to the customer (including internal customers).

During my ASQ tenure, I also started reading the works of the leaders in the quality field: W. Edwards Deming, Joseph Juran, and Philip Crosby. As a result of my ASQ experience, Total Quality Management and the customer permeate all my work.

**Q** You have written extensively about product development. Why is that?

**A** Much of my work is for associations and nonprofits. Associations and nonprofits produce multiple product lines. The work of certification, education, standards, and publishing divisions are closely related as these units are involved in information products, are in the knowledge business and, therefore, share commonalities.

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Yet my experience is that few associations fully exploit their strengths in the product development arena. I advise all clients, "Think about product development on an integrated basis by planning together." I suggest you read *Improving Product Development in Associations through Collaboration and Information Sharing* (PD-17 2010, 4 pages.) which is available at [http://www.johnbmchugh.com/association\\_pub.htm](http://www.johnbmchugh.com/association_pub.htm).

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**Q** What role does creativity play in product development?

**A** Creativity may play the most important role in product development. Many leaders are uncomfortable with creative colleagues and unknowingly pay little attention to the creative function in their organizations. To learn more on this subject, read *McHugh's Tips for Fostering Creativity in Your Organization* (PD-12, 2010, 4 pages), which is available at [http://www.johnbmchugh.com/product\\_development.htm](http://www.johnbmchugh.com/product_development.htm).

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**Q** What do you see in the future for the publishing industry?

**A** Our industry will see more and more digitization of copyrighted content. Copyright protection will become even more vital as content aggregators want more free content. Therefore, learn all you can about copyright and licensing. And finally, since new product has to come from somewhere—namely publishers—solid product development processes will always be contemporary.

OTHER MCHUGH EXPERT INTERVIEW  
AVAILABLE AT [www.johnbmchugh.com](http://www.johnbmchugh.com)

- *Copyright Aspects of Social Media: An Interview with Attorney David Koehser*, (I-14, March 2010)
- *Using your Association Web Site to Sell More Advertising: An Interview with Richard L. Barwis, IV*, Cornerstone Media, (I-2, March 2010)
- *Success in Association Publishing: An Interview with David Beacom of NSTA*, (I-3, March, 2010)
- *The Library Market and Publishers: An Interview with Katina Strauch, Against the Grain*, (I-48, April 2010)
- *Ebooks and Copyright: an Interview with Attorney David Koehser*, (I-15, May 2010)
- *Book Acquisitions: An Interview with Claire Reinburg, Director NSTA Press* (I-49, June, 2010)
- *Innovative Content Distribution: An Interview with Pam Boiros, Books 24x7*, (I-5, June, 2010)
- *Innovations in STM Publishing: An Interview with Mark Mandelbaum, Executive Director of ICST*, (I-17, June 2010)

### ABOUT JOHN B. MCHUGH, PUBLISHING CONSULTANT

John B. "Jack" McHugh, a 30-year veteran of the publishing business, is a long-time successful publishing consultant. He is the author of the *McHugh Publishing Management Series*—80 practical papers on all aspects of publications management. He also publishes the McHugh Expert Interview series, interviews with publishing leaders on various publishing specialties. All of these are available free at [www.johnbmchugh.com](http://www.johnbmchugh.com).

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In the book publishing business, McHugh has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and 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: Alliance for Children and Families, ASCD, 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.

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