



Human Resources in Publishing

A research study for The Publishing
Training Centre conducted by BML

Summary of findings from recruitment
agencies

September 2009



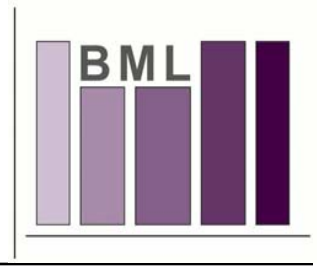


Project background



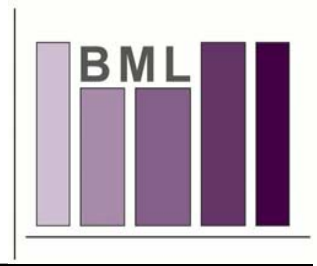
- PTC is funding a research project to examine in detail how book and journal publishers recruit, develop and retain their staff
- backed by the Publishers Association, Independent Publishers Guild and Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers
- working group from consumer and academic publishers to help steer the research on behalf of the wider publishing community
- full details of project objectives and methodology are provided elsewhere
- this report provides the analysis of the study among recruitment agencies in the book publishing field

Stage 2 methodology

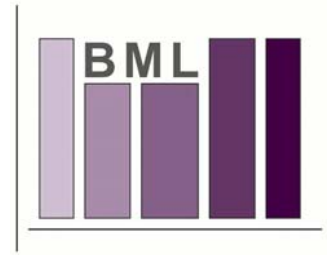


- Self-completion + telephone
 - recruited by phone
 - Telephone/e-mail follow-up to clarify/expand upon answers
- 6 responses received and analysed
 - 4 self-completion
 - 2 telephone only

Note



- Throughout the interview and report staff considered at 3 different levels, as follows:
 - SENIOR LEVEL = senior management
 - MIDDLE LEVEL = middle management, department heads, etc
 - JUNIOR LEVEL = all other staff



General recruitment: factors in job search

1st jobs: factors

Thinking about all industries (and not just book publishing), when people are looking for their first jobs, what would you say are the main things they look for when considering possible careers?



- It depends on what people have in mind eg
 - specific profession in mind, such as medicine, law, accountancy, with clear entry requirements/qualifications
 - disciplines such as marketing, publishing, IT, sales, PR, etc, with looser requirements, where a foot on the ladder is all important
- Under current conditions many are looking for anything to get them going, earn some money, gain experience
- Under non-recessionary conditions people may be fussier, looking for a combination of rewards, e.g. interest, money, travel, culture
 - relatively few look more than a year or two ahead, but even then like the idea of broad opportunities at the company
 - but first job often seen as experimental

Senior level: factors

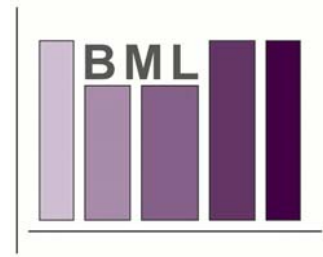
Now thinking about people looking for work at senior management level, again in any industry, what would say were the main things they look for when considering changing companies or even entering a profession at that sort of level?



- Varied responses, and the suggestions could not be placed in any particular order
 - often the same between changing companies and changing professions
- More money
- More status
- The next step up the ladder
- A new challenge
 - either new company or new profession
- Career progression may be a factor, depending on the comparative levels of current and future posts

Middle level: factors

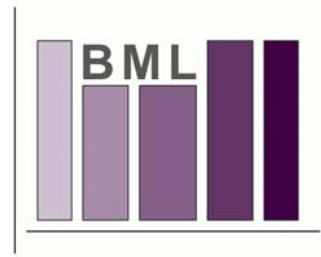
Now thinking about people looking for work at a middle management or department head level, again in any industry, what would say were the main things they look for when considering changing companies or even entering a profession at that sort of level?



- On the whole the same factors apply, though there is perhaps more emphasis on increased responsibility
 - and more status/improved job title
- Career progression is also possibly more relevant with middle than senior

Junior level: factors

Now thinking about people looking for work at junior levels, though not their first full-time jobs/careers, again in any industry, what would say were the main things they look for when considering changing companies or even entering a profession at that sort of level?



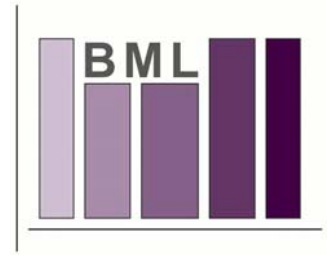
- Again the general principles are very much the same
- Salary and increased responsibility are perhaps the main drivers
 - especially where career progression is difficult in their current company
- If changing professions this is often because previous/first profession was not sufficiently to their taste

Variations for book industry

In what ways, if any, do you think priorities are different for people considering work in the book publishing industry specifically? Please also indicate where there are differences between the different levels



- Because of the generally acknowledged low level of salaries within book publishing, people are choosing the profession because of the possibility of job satisfaction and their interest in books, authors
 - willing to sacrifice the chance of higher salary for more appealing environment and work
 - and the chance of mixing with celebrities
- Depending on the actual function, creativity also plays a role, especially people in editorial and publishing roles
 - influencing what books are published, and their contents
- At first post/junior levels the desire to get a toehold in publishing
- At more senior levels, the chance to be influential
 - shaping the culture/education of the nation
 - higher profile with peers, booksellers, the press, etc
- Even where the roles are more generic (eg sales/marketing, IT-related), there is often a desire to work with books, even at a bit of distance
 - interest and glamour by association



General recruitment: changes in priorities

Priority changes: recent years

In what ways, if any, do you think these priorities have changed in recent years, whatever the industry? Please also indicate where there are differences between the different levels.



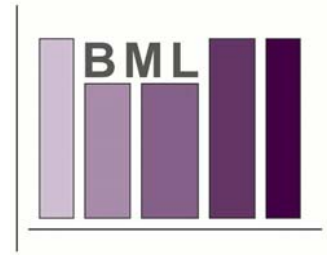
- The main issue is the advent of the recession, which has led people to place far greater emphasis on job security
 - this particularly applies to people considering moving jobs, who are more hesitant to make change
 - people are looking more closely at the financial strength of potential employers – especially at senior and (to a lesser extent) middle levels
- People in their first jobs are more open to securing any suitable position, and to considering temporary posts
 - looking further afield geographically
 - thinking across a broader range of industries and functions
- Career progression of less importance to many
- No real difference seen here between publishing and other industries
- Prior to recession, no changes to priorities mentioned

Priority changes: future

Do you think things will change again once this recession is over? In what ways? Please also indicate where there are differences between the different levels, whatever the industry



- Job security will become less of an issue
- Career progression will be at the forefront
- People will become more picky
 - there should be more opportunities altogether
- Higher level of confidence in staying put with companies, whatever their financial performance



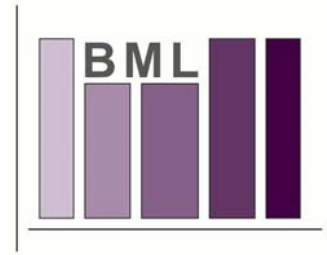
Attractions of book publishing industry

Industry attractions

What is it that attracts people into book publishing specifically? What are they looking for/expecting from joining the industry? Please also indicate where there are differences between the different levels.



- Initially it is often a love of books and reading
 - including being around authors
 - though this is role-related eg editorial vs IT
- In some cases an interest in education
 - especially beyond adult fiction
- The chance to be creative
 - shaping books, content
- Doing something 'worthwhile'
 - book publishing is seen as a worthy profession
- Physically producing something
- Book publishing seems to offer more flexibility than many other industries, so good especially for women
 - child care issues
- Coming into the industry at a senior level can sometimes be the fulfilment of a long-held ambition
 - but more often it is just a new challenge, with the specific industry not necessarily important



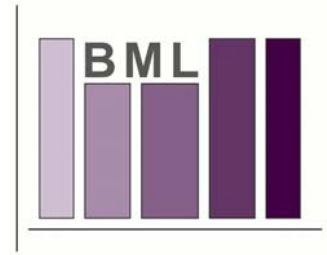
Barriers to entry into book publishing industry

Barriers/detractions overall

Thinking generally, what do you feel are the main barriers which put people off joining the book publishing industry, or make it difficult for you to recruit people into the industry? How does this vary from other industries?



- Salary is the main barrier
 - at all levels, but perhaps least for first/very junior jobs at present
 - Especially to attracting senior levels from other industries
- Particular problems in the digital area
 - difficult to attract from other industries
- Lack of ethnic diversity
- Need for degree-level education
- Relatively little training and/or personal development opportunities
 - depends on company size
- At middle level, much of the more interesting work (eg editing, author contact) is now (increasingly) outsourced
 - less attractive, challenging posts



Staff recruitment within function

Recruitment within function (1)

Below are a number of functions/roles within the book publishing industry. For each, please indicate whether there are specific issues relating to recruitment in them, and if so, whether these issues apply to senior, middle or junior levels



- For each function, around half say no particular issues
- Editorial roles:
 - Competitive/hard to break into
 - Lack of relevant experience except those already doing the job (especially mid-level)
 - Need for commercial/business development skills
- Production roles:
 - Perceived to be boring/not first choice at entry level
- Design roles:
 - Requires specific, creative skills and (at senior level) portfolio
- Marketing/PR roles:
 - Uncompetitive salaries at mid-level
- Sales roles:
 - Scaring to potential candidates
 - Lack of skills
 - Rewards issues (salary vs commission, company cars vs reclaim)
 - Uncompetitive salaries

Recruitment within function (2)

Below are a number of functions/roles within the book publishing industry. For each, please indicate whether there are specific issues relating to recruitment in them, and if so, whether these issues apply to senior, middle or junior levels



- **Online development/etc roles:**
 - Increasingly important to publishers
 - Very competitive with other industries/need to catch up
- **Digital publishing roles:**
 - Problems particularly at senior level
 - Lack of industry experience means recruitment at middle/senior level from other industries
 - Uncompetitive salaries or, if attract with competitive salary, candidates may not be wedded to books/move on quickly in search of even higher salary
- **Legal/rights/contracts roles:**
 - Not thought of/difficult to interest new candidates
 - Increasing need for foreign language
- **Cross-functional roles:**
 - Concern that taking on too early will lead to lack of specialism/suitability for specialist role later on



Image of the book publishing industry

Effect of image

Do you feel the book publishing industry has a positive or negative effect on recruitment into the industry? What sort of image do you think people outside the publishing industry have of it? Anything else?



- 2 feel book publishing has neither a positive nor a negative image
- 1 feels it has a fairly good image, but:
"companies need to address how to sell the opportunity to candidates and how they manage the interview process: some companies treat it as a beauty parade and are then surprised when the candidate turns them down!"
- 1 feels the image varies according to the sector (though always a bit old-fashioned)
 - Trade: highbrow
 - Academic: attractive to those with higher degrees and an interest in research
 - Educational: fairly positive image given the publicity of government initiatives and the fact that most people are affected by it either personally or through children
- The other two feel the industry has the image of being elitist, middle class, Oxbridge and not very well paid



Making the book publishing industry more attractive

Improving attractiveness

What do you feel the book publishing industry could do to make itself more attractive as a profession to those outside it? Anything else? What can book publishing learn from other industries?



- Improve salaries/rewards
- Dispel notion that it is elitist
- Expand and better publicise management training schemes
- Promote the industry more vigorously to students
 - away from obvious courses (eg English)
- One respondent said:
"Often companies brief us to look outside the industry but decide to hire 'more of the same' when the offer stage comes"

Senior: attractiveness

*In particular, what could be done to attract people at a **senior** level? What can be learned from other industries?*



- 2 say there is no problem
- Increase salaries in line with other industries.
- Move away from 'more of the same'
 - be more prepared to take in newcomers
- Appeal more to relevant external business and strategic experience instead of insisting that 'Books are different'

Middle: attractiveness

*In particular, what could be done to attract people at a **middle** level? What can be learned from other industries?*



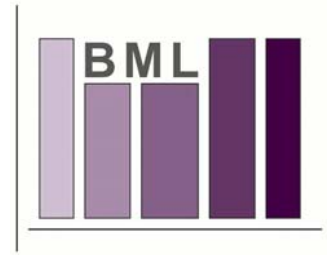
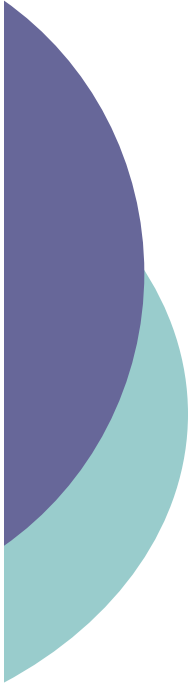
- 2 say there is no problem
- Increase salaries in line with other industries.
- Move away from 'more of the same'
 - be more prepared to take in newcomers
- Make more opportunities available to junior level staff with some experience, and offer more support and training. This should enable companies to save a little on the salary which can then be utilised elsewhere

Junior: attractiveness

*In particular, what could be done to attract people at a **junior** level? What can be learned from other industries?*



- One sees no problem
- Create a less elitist perception
- Increase salaries
- Cut down on tendency to give jobs to 'friends of friends' of senior staff
- More work with the Colleges and Universities
- Think of "Training Contracts" similar to the legal profession. 2 years 'mixed areas' editorial/production/sales/marketing with the prospect of a permanent role at the end. Not just for graduate level candidates, as has been tried previously with many companies, since graduates may not be best candidates for all roles (e.g. sales).



Improving recruitment into the book publishing industry

Improving recruitment (1)

*Apart from making the job/position seem more attractive, what could be done to improve recruitment of **senior/middle/junior** level staff? Are publishers using methods of recruitment, or should they be trying other approaches? How can the book publishing industry benefit from what other industries do?*



Senior

- 2 say there is nothing
- 3 say the companies should use specialist recruitment agencies
 - companies themselves tend not to be very good at presenting themselves
- Rely less on the 'old boys' network'
 - though this is typical of 'creative' industries

Middle

- Similar to comments for senior level

Improving recruitment (2)

*Apart from making the job/position seem more attractive, what could be done to improve recruitment of **senior/middle/junior** level staff? Are publishers using methods of recruitment, or should they be trying other approaches? How can the book publishing industry benefit from what other industries do?*



Junior

- Similar to comments made for middle/senior staff
- Offer more advice/information and inducements with regard to promotion and career development
- Offer more in the way of management traineeships



Staff retention within the book publishing industry

Retention issues: overall

What do you feel are the major issues with staff retention within the book publishing industry?



- Make people feel more valued
 - it is not just about salaries
- Promised promotions to be fulfilled wherever possible
 - career development is very important
 - valued staff can be retained by seeing continuous development
- Take action as a result of exit interview information
 - too often this seems to be seen as academic
- Some churn is necessary/helpful
 - refreshing the gene pool
 - but not throwing out much-needed experience

Retention issues: by level

*Are there particular issues that affect retention of staff at a **senior** level?*

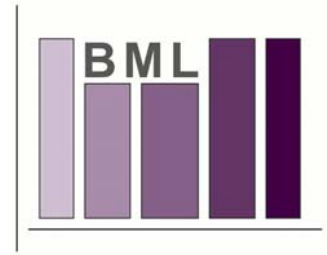
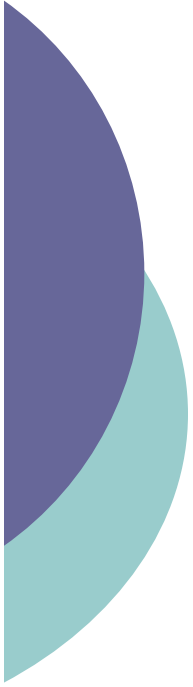


Senior

- The fact that salaries can be better elsewhere
 - both within and without the industry
- Hitting a ceiling within a company
 - not just salary or authority
 - fresh challenges
- Can be easier to institute change and development at a new company
 - new broom approach

Middle/junior

- Salaries
- Career progression/promotion prospects



Staff retention within functions

Retention within function (1)

Are there particular issues which apply to the different functions/roles, and if so, whether these issues apply to senior, middle or junior levels?



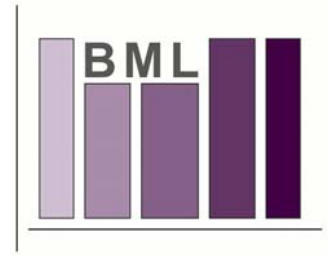
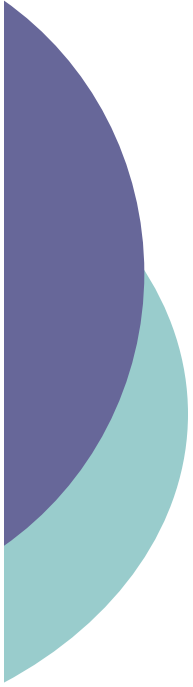
- **Editorial roles:**
 - 3 see no particular issues
 - Too few opportunities
 - People with the best jobs hang on to them
 - Too much, and increasing outsourcing
 - Competition
- **Production/design roles:**
 - 4 see no particular issues
 - Now being outsourced, particularly overseas (Far East/Asia): too few interesting posts left; mainly liaison rather than hands-on
- **Marketing/PR roles:**
 - 4 see no particular issues
 - Salaries the main problem

Retention within function (2)

Are there particular issues which apply to the different functions/roles, and if so, whether these issues apply to senior, middle or junior levels?



- **Sales roles:**
 - 5 see no particular issues
 - Traditional role declining: more of a desk job, with no obvious career progression in-house
- **Digital publishing roles:**
 - 4 have no particular issues
 - Great competition for top quality candidates
 - Short-term future will hold many opportunities as many companies are investing heavily in digital developments
 - Staff may be headhunted or offered significant increases in salary to work for a competitor
- **Other roles (online, legal, cross-functional):**
 - No particular issues



Staff retention : learning from other industries

Other industry lessons

What can the book publishing industry learn from other industries about improving staff retention?



- 2 made no comments
- Other comments were

"Small gestures such as awaydays, flexitime and summer hours make a huge difference. On a larger scale – good incremental salary rises, annual bonuses and timely promotions create goodwill and make candidates feel valued."

"Much of the issue is down to people management and not allowing individuals to stagnate. Remuneration is often not the problem, it is usually about the job losing its challenge"

"Using headhunters and recruitment consultancies, who know and understand the business, to their fullest capacity. Most are willing to advise on team building, job descriptions etc"

"Make more use of specialist publishing recruitment expertise"