



What is Music Publishing?

Music publishing is the business of acquiring, administering, marketing and promoting musical compositions (i.e. “songs”).

What is a Music Publisher?

A music publisher is the business partner in a musical composition. A good music publisher has the knowledge and contacts to promote a composition. Typically a publisher enters into a songwriter/publisher agreement with the songwriter, whereby the songwriter assigns ownership and control of the copyright protected musical works to the publisher in exchange for a percentage of the income derived from the exploitation of the musical works. A music publisher cannot collect more than 50% of the performing right. A reputable publisher never charges a fee for his/her service.

What does a Music Publisher do?

A music publisher is responsible for:

- the contractual acquisition of copyrights
- the administration of the copyrights including the registration of copyright ownership
- issuing of licences
- registering of works with copyright collectives such as SOCAN and CMRRA or SODRAQ to ensure revenue
- distribution of reproduction rights royalties to the writers
- and ensuring compensation of all usage of catalogue domestically and internationally

They may also be responsible for:

- the creative exploitation of copyrights including song pitching for cover recordings
- the placement of songs in film, television shows and commercials
- various ancillary uses including ring-tones and merchandising

Types of Publishing Deals

There are many types of Publishing deals that a writer can enter into. Some of the most common are:

Single song agreement - usually a 50/50 split between the writer and publisher for the life of the copyright for an individual work.

Exclusive songwriter agreement – usually a 50/50 split between the writer and the publisher for the life of the copyright for all works within a specified period of time.

Co-publishing agreement – two or more publishing companies co-own the copyright.

Administration agreement – occurs when a copyright owner contracts a publisher to administer the copyrights for a percentage of the revenue for a specified period of time. The administrator does not own the copyright.

Sub-publishing agreement – an agreement with a publisher in a foreign territory to represent their catalogue in that territory. A sub-publisher will collect and distribute royalties to the original publisher for a percentage of the revenue.

Do I need to start my own publishing company?

Unless you have specific reasons for doing so and have the knowledge, skills and contacts to be a successful publisher, there may be no need. SOCAN does not require that you be established as a publisher in order for you to collect all the royalties payable on a musical work you created. If no publisher is involved on a musical work, we pay 100% of the royalties to the writer.

If I sign with a publisher, do I still own the copyright in my work?

Not necessarily. Typically, you assign your copyright to your publisher in exchange for the publisher exploiting your copyright, but this is dependent upon the terms of the agreement you have negotiated with the publisher.