



## Why You Need a Ghostwriter

by Bobbi Linkemer

**L**et's face it, if you're not a writer, or simply lack the time or desire to write, do what many best-selling authors do. Get help from a professional ghostwriter. A ghostwriter has a special knack for crawling inside your head, understanding what you want to say, and speaking in your voice. A ghostwriter distills a great deal of information into tight prose ... translates your feelings into the written word ... and organizes a complex message into a coherent manuscript.

### What is a ghostwriter?

Ghostwriting is a form of freelance writing (In other words, it is a business transaction, and a ghostwriter is a supplier of services.) As the client, you pay for those services and have full control over the copy. Terms and details are agreed upon before you start the project. You have a right to expect the ghostwriter to perform professionally and respect confidentiality.

### What does a ghostwriter write?

#### Books

Books are a highly specialized and often expensive form of business communication; but, in many cases, the payback can be enormous. There are numerous reasons why a company might want to author a book. Here are a few of them:

- as a vehicle to convey a CEO's vision
- to share the news of winning a prestigious award
- to publish an autobiography or an authorized biography
- to explain a process in a highly specialized area

#### Corporate histories

Businesses are like families: they have personalities, cultures, and histories. Publicly owned companies tell their stories in annual reports; private companies have fewer regulatory restrictions and thus much more freedom in how they tell theirs. Like annual reports, corporate histories can be simple and relatively inexpensive or meticulously designed and full of bells and whistles. It depends on your goals, which can range from telling relatives about a family-owned enterprise to telling the world about your company's products and services.

#### Family histories

People want to connect with their roots. If you doubt it, consider the explosion of interest in genealogy and the number of people you know who are visiting the countries where their ancestors were born. In a

society where grandparents no longer live down the block and extended families are often neighbors instead of relatives, more people than ever want to capture their stories while there are still people around who remember them. Compiling a family history involves research, organization of myriad details, tracking down and identifying old photos, interviewing people, and of course, writing it all in an interesting way.

### **Memoirs and autobiographies**

Everyone has a story to tell, which is one reason writing classes are full of people who want to put theirs between the covers of books. Not surprisingly, there is even greater demand in celebrity and business circles. From tell-all memoirs to discreet, thoughtful autobiographies, these books sell well and, sometimes, even dispel the stigma surrounding many sensitive topics (alcoholism, drug addiction, abuse, to name a few).

It is one thing to know your own story; it is quite another to write it coherently and colorfully. Writing a book takes organization, planning, and self-discipline; but that's only the beginning.

### **Proposals**

There are three main types of proposals:

**Business proposals** are written for two reasons: to respond to an RFP (Request for Proposal) or to present an idea or product in order to create interest, funding, or a business alliance. The body of the proposal must cover these points: purpose of the proposal, problem or situation to be addressed, goals, methods to be used, anticipated timelines, how you will evaluate effectiveness, and what you need to finish the project.

**Book proposals** are like resumes; they get you in the door. They also force you to think through, in advance, every aspect of your book. A good proposal tells the editor or agent what your book is about, who will read it, why you are uniquely qualified to write it, whether there is market for this book, what else is out there on the subject, how you will help to promote it, what the chapters contain, and, of course, how well you write.

**Grants** must conform to a very specific format with many sections, beginning with a cover letter and ending with supporting documentation. Essentially, a grant asks for money for a special project from a foundation or other funding source. Like other proposals, grants must answer basic questions: Who (organization or institution) is applying for the grant? What is the project? Why and when do you need the money? Who will implement the project? How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your plan?

### **How are ghostwriters paid?**

- Work for hire – a flat fee for creative input
- Royalties — Money paid each time a copy of the book is sold. (an advance on the book is money paid against the future royalties)
- Advance plus royalties — money paid up front, plus a share of profits
- On consignment — promise of a percentage of potential sales, with no guarantees
- Hourly rate — time actually spent on the project, billed periodically
- Acknowledgement in print is often considered part of the fee. The ghostwriter's name appears on the cover preceded by one of these three words:

- with – indicates that the ghostwriter has assisted on the project
- and – means both parties have contributed to the material in the book
- as told to – the ghostwriter has transcribed and edited the client’s story or material
- no credit line — you may express your appreciation somewhere in the acknowledgements, in which case, you may have to negotiate a higher fee.

In essence, a ghostwriter becomes your voice for one purpose: to express your thoughts and ideas as you wish them to be read by others.