Finding your Ghost

The literally lost soul’s guide to finding their story’s writer.

By

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Throughout the ages, *an open secret*...

Ghostwriters have been utilized by executives, professionals, celebrities, politicians and kings to control public personas, legacies and, sometimes, mythologies. They know that the quest to secure *their* moment in history can only be achieved through the power of the written word.

They also know that *writing* a book requires a level of dedication that they can ill afford lest they take their eye off their own tasks... They understand that their time is too valuable and/or too limited to dedicate the weeks, months and, sometimes, even the years that would be needed for them to get their book written. Sometimes, they even realize that writing is hard work! Like pushing a rock up a hill, it takes a lot of energy and dedication to move the weight of ideas and hopes and ambitions and dreams of a book to completion.

*They know that which you will soon know,*

*that Ghostwriters are the enablers of the written word.*

*Please contact me to confirm my availability and to discuss your writing project.*

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From Wikipedia

A ghostwriter is a professional writer who is paid to write books, articles, stories, or reports which are officially credited to another person. Celebrities, executives and political leaders often hire ghostwriters to draft or edit autobiographies, magazine articles and other written material. Ghostwriters are often used in film composition and popular music such as hip-hop. The ghostwriter is sometimes acknowledged by the author or publisher for their assistance.

The role of a Ghostwriter

The division of work between the ghostwriter and the credited author varies a great deal. In some cases, the ghostwriter is hired to polish and edit a rough draft or a mostly-completed manuscript. In this case, the outline, ideas and much of the language in the finished book or article are those of the credited author.

In other cases, a ghostwriter does most of the writing, using concepts and stories provided by the credited author. In this case, a ghostwriter will do extensive research on the credited author or their subject area of expertise. It is rare for a ghostwriter to prepare a book or article with no input from the credited author; at a minimum, the credited author usually jots down a basic framework of ideas at the outset or provides comments on the ghostwriter's final draft.

For an autobiography, a ghostwriter will interview the credited author, their colleagues, and family members, and find interviews, articles, and video footage about the credited author or their work.

For other types of non-fiction books or articles, a ghostwriter will interview the credited author and review previous speeches, articles, and interviews with the credited author, to assimilate their arguments and points of view.

Ghostwriters are hired for numerous reasons. In many cases, celebrities or public figures do not have the time, discipline, or writing skills to write and research a several-hundred page autobiography or "how-to" book. Even if a celebrity or public figure has the writing skills to pen a short article, they may not know how to structure and edit a several-hundred page book so that it is captivating and well-paced. In other cases, publishers use ghostwriters to increase the number of books that can be published each year under the name of well-known, highly marketable authors.

Remuneration and credit

Ghostwriters will often spend from several months to a full year researching, writing, and editing non-fiction works for a client, and they are paid either per page, with a flat fee, or a percentage of the royalties of the sales, or some combination thereof. Having an article ghostwritten can cost, "$4 per word and more depending on the complexity" of the article. Literary agent Madeleine Morel goes on to state that the average...
ghostwriter's advance for work for major publishers is "between $30,000 and $100,000." In 2001, the New York Times stated that the fee that the ghostwriter for Hillary Clinton's memoirs will receive is probably about $500,000 of her book's $8 million advance, which "is near the top of flat fees paid to collaborators."

According to Ghostwriters Ink, a professional ghostwriting service, this flat-fee is usually closer to an average of $12,000 to $28,000 per book. By hiring the ghostwriter for this negotiated price, the client ultimately keeps all advances and post-publishing royalties and profits for themselves.

In Canada, The Writers' Union has established a minimum fee schedule for ghostwriting. The total minimum fee for a 200 to 300 page book is $25,000, paid at various stages of the drafting of the book. Research fees are an extra charge on top of this minimum fee:

- **Fees:** Contracts with ghost writers are negotiated on an individual basis. The Writers' Union has established a minimum fee schedule. For a book of 60,000 to 90,000 words, the Union recommends a total minimum fee of $40,000, payable as follows: 15% on signing; 10% on delivery of detailed outline; 25% on delivery of first draft of one chapter; 25% on delivery of first draft of entire manuscript; and 25% on delivery of revised manuscript.
- **Payment:** The fee is to be paid at each stage and the contract is subject to termination by either party following each payment. Research fees would be in addition to this minimum writing fee.

Sometimes the ghostwriter will receive partial credit on a book, signified by the phrase "with..." or "as told to..." on the cover. Credit for the ghostwriter may also be provided as a "thanks" in a foreword or introduction. For non-fiction books, the ghostwriter may be credited as a "contributor" or a "research assistant." In other cases, the ghostwriter receives no official credit for writing a book or article; in cases where the credited author or the publisher or both wish to conceal the ghostwriter's role, the ghostwriter may be asked to sign a nondisclosure contract that forbids them from revealing their ghostwriting role.

**Types of Projects**

Ghostwriters are widely used by celebrities and public figures who wish to publish their autobiographies or memoirs.

The degree of involvement of the ghostwriter in non-fiction writing projects ranges from minor to substantial. In some cases, a ghostwriter may be called just to clean up, edit, and polish a rough draft of an autobiography or a "how-to" book. In other cases, the ghostwriter will write an entire book or article based on information, stories, notes, and an outline, provided by the celebrity or public figure. The credited author also indicates to the ghostwriter what type of style, tone, or "voice" they want in the book.
In some cases, such as with some "how-to" books, diet guides, or cookbooks, a book will be entirely written by a ghostwriter, and the celebrity (e.g., a well-known musician or sports star) will be credited as author. Publishing companies use this strategy to increase the marketability of a book by associating it with a celebrity or well-known figure.

A consultant or career-switcher may pay to have a book ghostwritten on a topic in their professional area, to establish or enhance their credibility as an “expert” in their field. For example, a successful salesperson hoping to become a motivational speaker on selling may pay a ghostwriter to write a book on sales techniques. Often this type of book is published in the vanity press, which means that the author is paying to have the book published. This type of book is typically given away to prospective clients as a promotional tool, rather than being sold in bookstores.

**What is a Ghostwriter?**

When you hear the word “ghostwriter” you might think about some new show on your favorite channel, some haunted computer, or even the local psychic who claims that spirits have written an entire book for her. But in truth, most people don't know what a ghostwriter is, or what they really do. A ghostwriter is a real person, a professional writer who is paid to write books, articles, web content — pretty much anything — and then allow that work to be credited to someone else.

You can see ghostwriting everywhere, from your favorite celebrity's tell-all to political speeches, most website content, to magazine articles. Yet, more than likely, you will never know that what you are reading was written by a ghostwriter, because in today's market most publishers or authors don't acknowledge their ghostwriters.

**So what does a Ghostwriter do, exactly?**

Well, there are many different areas to ghostwriting—and just as many different types of professional writers out there who are paid for their knowledge and their ability to spin words. From medical to law, children to cooking, relationships to gossip, there are thousands of professional writers out there who are experts on many fields and can paint great works of art with words for other authors and publishers. Sometimes, ghostwriters are only hired to “polish” up a work that another author has already done. This includes editing, typesetting, proofreading, and adding to the manuscript. But, the majority of the time, the ghostwriter does almost all of the work themselves, from research to final draft. Most authors or publishers will hire a ghostwriter with a specific idea in mind for a book or article, and give a basic topic or title to a ghostwriter to have them create a unique work from scratch.

Most authors and publishers will tell you that a ghostwriter is an indispensable resource that they cannot live without. Without ghostwriters, most celebrities would not have time to sit down and write out their autobiographies, most articles would never be completed, and if they did, they might not have the talents and skills needed to create a written work that would not need any editing for content, spelling, grammar, or other structural problems.
Ghostwriters: An open, well known secret.

So, how can this industry be so prominent when most people don't even know about it? Easy. Publishers and authors keep ghostwriters a well-known secret so they don't lose them. Ghostwriters are everywhere—in the writing world, the music industry, the Internet, politics, and even in academic settings. And, even though the use of ghostwriters is at an all-time high, there are those who feel that hiring a ghostwriter is a clear case of fraud and, in some cases, actually call for lawsuits or charges.

What this small section of the public doesn't realize is that without ghostwriters, most written works throughout history would not have been written, or at least not written nearly as well, without the help of a “wordsmitih.” For example, in Hillary Rodham Clinton's 1996 book, “It Takes a Village”, ghostwriter Barbara Feinman helped to create this entire works, and was then subjected to intense scrutiny from both Senator Clinton and many prominent magazines and news articles since she supposedly broke her confidentiality agreement when Senator Clinton did not keep up her end of the bargain on the acknowledgment of her help with the book. The same goes with former President Ronald Reagan's autobiography “Ronald Regan: An American Life,” which was ghostwritten by Robert Lindsey. President Regan himself acknowledged that he didn't write the book at all when he stated “I hear it's a terrific book! One of these days I'm going to read it myself.” So, without these ghostwriters, would either of these books have been nearly as well written, or would they have been written at all?

Face it, celebrity names sell better than an unknown author, no matter how good, or bad, the writing is. Many celebrities have taken to hiring ghostwriters to create a wonderful literary work for them, and then publish and promote it under their name. Celebrities such as Naomi Campbell, tennis star Martina Navratilova, and even William Shatner, have all had ghostwriters help with creating literary works in their name. But, William Shatner is one of the very few celebrities who actually acknowledge that they had ghostwriters help create his works.

Ghostwriters have also become an invaluable asset to publishers all over the world, especially when a famous author passes away with works left unfinished. Pocket Books has continued to release new literary works by V.C. Andrews long after the author's death, which continue to sell on the top of the lists all over the world. So, without ghostwriters, her famous characters and stories would have long since died out and we would not have some of the great works that are being released all the time. So, when those critics out there criticize ghostwriters and publishers for being dishonest, they should take another look at what a ghostwriter truly is and think about where the world would be without them.

**How much do Ghostwriters get paid?**

Ghostwriters get paid depending on their own personal preference, and most charge either by the
page, by the word, or they might charge a flat fee for a larger project. Ghostwriting services also depend on the writer. Those who have been in the business for years and have many great references or many works to their name will charge a lot more than a writer who is just starting out.

Many ghostwriters will tell you that the old adage, “You get what you pay for,” rings oh-so true in the writing industry and they are right. When you pay for ghostwriting services, there will be all sorts of pricing offers, from low to high, and you will find that the majority of the time, the lower charges are from timid writers who have not been in the business for very long or who may not be very good writers.

- **Editorial Addendum:** The recent trend is to outsource ghostwriting projects/assignments to offshore ghostwriters, which saves up to 80%. While a ghostwriter based in USA, Canada, or United Kingdom may charge around $20,000 for a 200 page book, it may cost about $3,000 - $5,000 to get the same job done from a number of offshore countries, without compromising quality. Many offshore ghostwriters offer even cheaper prices, as low as $0.01 per word. It is advisable, however, not to go with the cheapest bidder. The normal rate of offshore ghostwriters who are really good may be around $12 to $18 per page. It is better to hire outsourced ghostwriters at per page rate rather than per hour rate, unless you are getting a book written and need to talk with your ghostwriter for a number of hours.

**FAQ**

**Do YOU do the writing yourself?**

Yes I do. Many so-called "writing services" farm out writing assignments to God alone knows who, some college freshman who did well in a creative writing class in high school or something. Not me. I do all the writing myself. If I accept you as a client, you and I enter into a one-on-one professional writing relationship. If you e-mail me or call me on the phone, you are communicating directly with the person writing your assignment, not with some subcontractor — the ghostwriter’s ghostwriter?

**How much does it cost?**

Ah, now we get down to the nitty gritty. Unfortunately, I cannot give you anything more than general guidelines in this context. You see, I treat each job on an individual basis and try to estimate how much time it will require of me. Only then can I give my client an honest quote.

I will say that writing a book (I will use a book as an example) is not a trifling amount. Pursuing dreams rarely comes cheap—one way or another. Perhaps as in most other contexts, "you get what you pay for" is a truism here. However, I must be equally quick to note that I am not greedy. Who needs the bad karma that comes with greed? Not me. I believe that my fee is fair and honest, taking into account my skills and ability. You may find someone who will ask less than I do. You can, of course, also find someone who will ask for much more.

I work on a flat-fee basis.

I do not write on a percentage basis. Although this option has the greatest potential for riches, it is no way to run a business. I am happy for you to become wealthy from your book. You deserve it. After all, it’s your book.

**Will you steal my idea?**

No. Emphatically, no! I understand and respect that a healthy dose of paranoia is part and parcel of the creative soul. I urge you to feel comfortable with whomever you work with. If you cannot let go enough to trust someone to work on your material, don’t!

I am happy to sign non-disclosure agreements or in any other way reassure you that you can trust me with your thoughts, characters, ideas, etc. However, if you are a non-trusting type then the likelihood is that there is little I can say or do to reassure you. Sorry. I am a writer, not a psychologist nor magician.
**Will you help me get my book published?**

I’d like to but I can’t. You see, being an agent or a publisher is a more-than-full-time job (just ask anyone who does either of those things). I am a writer. I write your material in a professional manner which will give it its best chance for publication or production. (I do include a sample query letter with the finished manuscript to assist you in sending out your book or story.) I have worked with several P.O.D. publishers and currently favor BookSurge with its links to Amazon if you’re interested in pursuing that form of publishing.

**How long will it take you to write my book?**

Generally, less than six months. However, you should note that this time frame is the time I actually have the book to write. In other words, if we’ve agreed to move forward and I submit a draft pending your approval, but you take three months showing it to your wife, husband, mother, father, sister, brother and then give me the go-ahead for the next phase, those three months do not count toward the six month time frame. I guess it’s a little like the clock at the end of a sporting event. Ever notice how those final few seconds can translate into a half hour of real time?

**Is there any kind of book you won’t write?**

Sure. Lots of them. I won’t write things that are hateful or hurtful, which misrepresent people or which seek the downfall of legitimate governments.

By the same token, I am not judgmental. I have had many, many clients who have come to me after a lifetime of being put down for their dreams, their sexual orientation, their politics, or their ideas. I have written for the full spectrum of people and experience. I don’t shy away from sexually explicit material but I will not write things that are degrading to people or animals. I have written for ministers, doctors and psychologists, for freaks, fools and fetishists. I love the range of human experience and I glory in bringing it to the page.

If you aren’t looking to hurt something or somebody then I will likely be happy to consider your assignment.

**What happens after the book you’ve ghostwritten is published?**

I promise each of my clients’ absolute confidentiality, I cannot brag about successes. It is something of a "Catch-22" and something which causes me to lose some potential clients. Those are the breaks. Your book is your book. Other than you and me (and anyone you tell) no one knows my involvement with your material.

My only claim to your book is our agreed-upon fee. That’s it. It’s your dream. Your book. Your name on the cover.

**Fees and Payment Policies**

Here is an overview of my payment and contractual policies that may apply, should we decide to work together. Your actual contract terms may differ slightly depending on the situation.

**Payment Structure:**

- As an example, if we agree on a contract price of $25,000; 20% is due on signing ($5,000); 20% on delivery of detailed outline ($5,000); 20% on delivery of first draft of one chapter ($5,000); 25% on delivery of first draft of entire manuscript ($6,250); 15% on delivery of revised manuscript ($3,750).

- I accept payment by check in USD or Euros, bank wire transfer in USD or Euros, or by major credit card via PayPal in USD only; Visa and MasterCard. Also note, that if paying via PayPal, the service fee (which ranges from 1.9% to 2.9%) will be split between me (the Ghostwriter) and you (the client) and added to the invoice (i.e., a $5,000 payment would have a service charge of $145, of which, $72.50 would be added to the clients invoice).
Please note that the copyright on the written works I create will NOT transfer to you until payment has been received in full. In the event you do not make full payment according to the terms of our agreement, I will retain the copyright on the written work and you will be prohibited from using it until full payment has been made.

Due on receipt: I do not operate on a Net 10 or Net 30 basis. Therefore all payments are due upon receipt. This means: if you are paying by credit card, your card will be charged when the invoice is issued. If you are paying by check, I would expect to receive your check within 5 business days of the date on the invoice. There are no exceptions.

Project-Related Expenses

The client is responsible for covering all project-related expenses including, but not limited to; travel expenses (airfare, hotel, transportation, and meals while traveling), supplies, postage and shipping, faxing, photocopies and long distance telephone calls outside of the US. Travel expenses will need to be paid as they are incurred; other expenses will be invoiced.

Ghost Writing Time Estimate

A 250-page book, roughly 62,000 words, can take as long as six months to write! So, in order to have a book written, edited, laid out, and printed in time for the December Holiday Season it must be started in the springtime! Of course, this is just an estimate and cannot take into account delays caused due to
editorial, style, or content changes by the client or delays by the client in matters of fee payments, approvals, etc. To go the traditional publishing route (submitting the manuscript to various publishing houses and having it accepted) will add roughly two more years, minimum.

Some days, writing is just like pushing a rock up a hill. It’s hard work, day-in and day-out, putting in the required butt-in-the-chair time that writing requires. Basically, it boils down to this: The outline takes 30 days; the first draft of a sample chapter takes 20 days; the first draft of the manuscript can be expected about 75 days later; and delivery of the final, revised manuscript can be expected 30 days after that.

Please keep in mind that a writer is not a machine. An estimate of 30 days is just that, an estimate. It doesn’t take into account holidays, injuries and/or illnesses as life happens…

With that said, it is understood that if an estimated deadline is going to be delayed by the Ghostwriter then he would convey that to the client as soon as possible. Also, if the client knows that a deadline is approaching, but will not be able to meet their monetary obligation upon submission of the work done, that they will inform the writer as soon as possible so that the writer will not be impacted by the lack of payment. Please keep in mind that I normally get paid for work I have completed and expect it on submission.

Please do not be offended when I inform you that a payment is due when I submit the [outline, sample chapter, 1st draft of the manuscripts, et cetera] as I have completed the task and I’m ready to move on with your book project—and get paid for that month’s worth of work.

While this may seem strange to you, the alternative is getting paid upfront either in full, or before starting the next stage in the writing project as some Ghostwriters do.

Warranties/Guarantees

I guarantee that I will use my all of my writing and business expertise to the very best of my ability, to ensure that you are fully satisfied with the written works I produce. I want you to be able to say that working with me was a productive, creative, and painless experience in getting your book written!

Beyond that, I cannot warranty or guarantee that the written work(s) I create will produce any specific results that you may seek, including but not limited to your desired impact on sales, revenues, website traffic, or professional reputations. There are simply too many factors outside of my direct control, including the possibility that either you or a third-party at your behest may choose to alter documents after I have delivered them; therefore, I accept no responsibility for the results that you may or may not achieve based on the written work(s) I create on your behalf.

Non-Disclosure/Confidentiality

I take confidentiality and your privacy very seriously. In our signed contract, you will have my assurance of confidentiality and that I will not knowingly disclose your information or anything about our relationship unless you have given me permission to do so, or unless required to do so by law. This includes situations where there is the possibility of my writing on topics similar to your project or if I were to accept work from one of your competitors.

As your ghostwriter, I may request your permission to list you as a reference or to list your book in my portfolio. If you prefer to maintain complete secrecy about the nature of our work together, of course I will respect that.

Non-compete Agreements

Sorry, I never enter into non-compete agreements. I believe that contracts should be fair, equitable and attractive to both parties. My opinion of NCAs for freelance writers is that they provide all the protection to the client and are actually harmful to the writer,
and as such they are a "bad deal." Furthermore they are either illegal or non-enforceable in many states because they have the potential to significantly restrict the writer's ability to earn a living within their industry and/or geographic area. If you are concerned about protecting your proprietary methods and personal or company information, the non-disclosure agreement (see above) that I include in all my contracts should be more than sufficient to protect your interests.

**Final Step:**
*Getting the book published and into the right hands!*

A vanity press is a Print on Demand (POD) publisher. These publishers accept manuscripts and print books on a contract basis instead of a ‘Publishing House’ that accepts manuscripts and pays the author in the traditional manner. After a set up fee, which ranges between $500 and $3,000 depending on the level of service needed, they print and ship the books as they are ordered. These books can be bought on the internet ([www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)), through direct sales from their website and from retailers such as Barnes & Noble.

If desired, I can also handle this aspect of the project for $85 per hour based on hours worked that are not related to editing the manuscript beyond changes made by the client after the finished manuscript has been accepted. This process takes about 2 to 5 hours a week to handle properly and quickly in order to keep the process flowing smoothly and to avoid print delays.

As the owner of the book and its copyright, you retain all rights and royalties.

Please contact me to confirm my availability and to discuss *your* writing project.

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