



## Ghostwriters From The Inside Out

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How to Find and Hire the Perfect Ghostwriter

# How to Choose a Ghostwriter

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# Why You Need a Ghostwriter

As a successful entrepreneur you need to communicate all day, every day, with your customers, suppliers, partners, employees, and others.

Chances are you are pretty good, perhaps even excellent at spoken communications. Chances are you are also pretty good when it comes to very short factual written communications, like emails, or short business letters.

However, whether you have major writing-related business plans such as creating in-depth websites, or writing white papers or e-books, books for traditional print publishing or presentations to be distributed, you may benefit from the services of a so-called “ghost writer” or “ghostwriter.”

Ghostwriters can help you with fiction or non-fiction; they can help you with materials you have in development or they can help you with crafting materials from scratch. They can even help with every day business communications, though they may not be as cost-effective for that.

Like any ‘human capital’ resource, the trick with finding and using a great ghostwriter is in understanding what you’re trying to achieve, matching the resource to your goals, timelines, and budgets, and recognizing what a ghostwriter can and cannot do for you and your business.

Chances are, he or she can do a lot!

## **Ghostwriters Are Your “Secret” Weapon**

You’ve probably worked with various writing professionals before, such as copywriters or an ad agency.

Ghostwriters are different from other forms of professional writers for hire, mostly in one important way. The understanding with ghostwriters is generally that the written material will be published under your name – as if you wrote it. This is the explanation of the term “ghost” since in most situations the ghostwriter will be “invisible” to the normal reader of the material.

In other ways than this, ghostwriters are not too different from any other writing-related professional you might hire, such as a marketing or ad agency, copywriters, lawyers, or others.

In almost all of these situations, everything you pay for becomes your material through a legal concept called “Work For Hire,” but there are often specific restrictions on what you can do with the materials.

With a ghostwriter arrangement in most cases you can do whatever you want with the materials, including present them as if you wrote them, cut up and reuse the materials any way you like, or, and most importantly, sell them!

## Who uses ghostwriters?

More people than you would think. Ghostwriting is an “open” secret, not only in the world of consulting and internet marketing, but also in major publishing.

All the celebrity books that come out each year, for example, are almost all written by ghosts, and sometimes this is credited openly and sometimes it’s not. There are even well-known ghostwriters who work on any number of political, sports or entertainment titles in a given year. Once they are known, of course, they are “collaborators” or co-authors, but the idea remains the same. Hollywood scripts are often rewritten by ghosts. The most famous of these recently is Carrie Fisher – a “script doctor” – who is of course best known for playing Princess Leia in the original *Star Wars* movies! Some of her rewrites are credited and many others are not, though her involvement is usually known about among the industry. And there are hundreds of lesser known writers doing this too.

Regardless of whether it’s a screenplay or a book on business ideas, unless you’re borrowing the “expertise” of your ghostwriter to gain credibility, you generally won’t want to use his or her name -- you’ll want to use your own.

Is this like hiring someone else to write a paper for you in school? Of course not, although some entry-level ghostwriters actually do write school papers (and we recommend against ever using a writer who is willing to do school papers – this is a seriously grey ethical area to say the least).

There is however no ethical issue with using a ghostwriter for business writing any more than there is in hiring a mechanic to fix your car or a landscaper to do your lawn. You hire professionals to do what they can do better than you, when it needs to be done right. Or in this case, done “write”!

The bottom line is there is no shame in using a ghostwriter! And a ghostwriter can help you accomplish things in your business you'd never otherwise achieve.

## How To Choose, Find, Use and Profit From A Ghostwriter

The rest of our report will teach you about how to find, choose, use, work with, and get results with a ghostwriter; as well as some of the major pitfalls and red flags to avoid; and some ideas to get you started in finding that great ghostwriter for your next project.

For a moment, think about *why* and *where* you might want to use the services of a ghostwriter:

- **E-books** – without question this is the most popular use for ghostwriters today. While traditional big-house publishing is out of reach for most entrepreneurs and would-be authors, it is also unnecessary with the advent of the “e-book,” or electronic book. E-books range in length from just a couple of dozen pages in Microsoft Word format to elaborate “publications” in formats like Adobe Acrobat, complete with illustrations. E-books have a variety of business uses including brand-building, promotion of a services business, and in many cases, the direct sale of information itself.
- **Traditional manuscripts or screenplays** – another common use of ghostwriters is where people have ideas for, say, a novel or movie, and can't quite flesh out the story in the way they want. You can present a ghostwriter with some chapters, a full book that needs to be “scrubbed” or “punched up” or even just some ideas, and get a better book written much faster than trying to complete it on your own.
- **Articles for publication** – one great way to build a consulting brand is to publish articles in relevant places, online, or elsewhere. Frequently though, subject matter experts have great insight into materials but less than great ability to craft compelling reading about it. A big percentage of the articles in major legal, medical, marketing, and other trade and professional journals are ghostwritten, and it's a great way for anyone to look like a star in print.
- **Marketing materials with a byline** – such as letters, direct mail, emails, “welcome” materials on web sites, auction listings.

Now that you're thinking about how you might be able to use a ghostwriter, how do you find one, and what should you expect when you do?

## Finding a Ghostwriter

Ghostwriter is not normally a title you will see advertised, nor can you generally look up "ghostwriter" in your local yellow pages. Chances are also that if you have friends or colleagues who use ghostwriters, first, they may be reluctant to admit it, and second, they generally won't pass the person along to you, because he or she is *their* secret weapon.

Certainly if you have friends or associates who rave about a reliable ghostwriter, you can start there, but we're assuming for most of you that isn't the case so we need to think about where to go to get started.

Fundamentally ghostwriting is just a form of freelance writing. It may be a more advanced and valuable form, but most ghosting is done by professional or part-time freelancers, so you can start looking for ghosts the same way you would look for any freelance writing work.

### Five Ways of Finding Freelancers

Finding freelancers was never difficult – most are hungry and fairly eager! With the advent of the internet this has gotten much easier, as various online marketplaces and classifieds-style websites have popped up.

You can find freelancers at least five ways online.

1. Online open access freelance project auctions
2. Online restricted-access project auctions
3. Online open classifieds
4. Job boards
5. Freelancers' own listings

Let's take a brief look at each one.

### Online Open Access Freelance Project Auctions

These work very much like eBay, except they are a services and therefore inherently “reverse” auction. You as the owner of a project and person seeking the service post an ad for your project. In this ad you can describe in detail what you want to achieve, how long you expect it to take, what kind of expertise you require of any potential partner, what your budget is, how you prefer to pay, whatever you like.

Then freelance resources will submit bids to you, stating their plan, their qualifications, their price, and so on.

In many cases you don’t need to specify your budget. You can say you’re unsure, or even if you are sure, you can say you don’t want to say. Like any buyer, you are in control.

You’re free to craft the ad any way you like, bearing in mind that different kinds of writing resources will respond to different kinds of descriptions and budgets.

Typically auction durations are about as long as eBay, ranging from 3 days to 10 days, in some cases longer.

When we say “open access” project auctions we mean those where

- There is no professional qualification or certification required to bid
- There is no special fee or membership required, other than perhaps a basic auction system membership, to bid
- There is no restriction on location or other factors

Essentially we mean “anyone can bid” on your project, and given the nature of the Internet, “anyone” probably will. We’ve seen writing project postings get proposals from 10,000 person shops in Bangalore India as well as proposals from one-man writing firms in Bangor Maine! And everything in between.

There are dozens of project/freelance auction sites and they come and go all the time.

To see the latest at any time we’d recommend running some Google searches on words like “freelance” and “freelance auctions” and “freelance marketplace” but there are two main project auction sites that remain among the highest-traffic, have reliable payment and feedback systems, five year histories and are likely to be around for a while.



These are:

[www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com)

[www.guru.com](http://www.guru.com)

These and most other similar sites are organized categorically by work type – generally you’ll find ghostwriters lurking in whatever section is called “writing” or “copywriting,” which, for arcane reasons, is often joined with “translation” services though these are hardly related at all other than in, obviously, dealing with words.

The major auction sites are free to browse, and often free to join as a buyer (just like eBay).

And because they *also* offer restricted-access (as do other more exclusive services) we’ll discuss them further in the next section.

## Online Restricted-Access Freelance Project Auctions

Elance and Guru.com offer multiple levels of service to both project owners and prospective vendors of the services they need. In theory, the more you pay in fees, the better projects you have access to as a vendor – and the better providers you will get responses from as a buyer of services.

There may be some truth to this; there may not.

In most cases including Elance and Guru.com, the buyer (you) has to do very little to open an account, has almost no requirements other than to verify the ability to pay, which is usually no more complex than registering a credit card, and you are under no obligations until you affirmatively award business to someone.

“Ghostwriting” is not a regulated trade, as, of course, writing is not generally. This means there are thousands of people who make writing services available who may or may not have the qualifications you want, or any qualifications at all. They may have been successfully writing for decades, or may have decided last Tuesday to try their hand at freelancing.

The “restricted access” levels on Elance and Guru.com and the more exclusive online project auctions – some of which charge annual fees in excess of \$5000 – are intended to weed out truly unqualified vendors on the premise that hack

vendors will not spend money to win business, and serious business professionals more likely will.

There are also some online auctions that have higher requirements of both buyers and sellers – verified references, a verified street address, business registration proof and so forth.

In short hand, expect somewhat higher quality but also higher prices from the more exclusive levels of the auction sites; from a buyer standpoint there are also budget minimums in some cases. Some sites only take projects over \$1,000, for example.

But in many cases the “step up” level costs almost nothing. For instance, to list on Elance “Select” as opposed to the regular level of Elance, will only cost you a \$25 deposit per project. Almost any improvement in the quality of submissions is worth that.

Most of the project auction sites (open and restricted) have feedback systems similar to eBay’s, so you can do a little reading about anyone you might want to work with before committing, and you will have feedback to use as some degree of safety that your work will be done well.

The good news about writing is that *res ipsa loquitor* as the lawyers say: The thing speaks for itself. Think about it. If a writer’s response to your online auction is literate, grammatical and brilliant chances are you may have a good resource, at least on the subject of general writing skills. If your submissions are word-challenged or have glaring grammatical mistakes, move on...

The project auction sites also offer services in addition to connecting buyers and sellers, such as “online project management” tools, bulletin board systems, and other things and often require buyers and sellers to use their own payment systems. Generally speaking the burden for paying for all this falls on the seller of the services, not you, but if you want a simpler way of dealing with people, classifieds might work for you just as well.

## Online Open Classifieds

Unlike an auction, which on the eBay model will have all sorts of built-in management mechanisms for both buyers and sellers, along with fees, interfaces to learn and so forth, classifieds online are not much different than classifieds

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