



## THOMAS HAUCK COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

22 PLUM STREET

GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

thomashauck@hotmail.com • (978) 283-3910 • www.thomashauck.net

### *Ideas Into Words*

#### **Your Guide to Ghostwriting, Editing, and Proofreading**

Since the days when monks wrote on parchment, people have needed documents to be written. You may require a full-length book, a business white paper, or the text on your company website. Sometimes your book or report must be written from scratch; other times you may have existing text that needs improvement. You may be an accomplished writer who needs a second set of eyes on your document. But in every case, you want your words to be the very best they can be. You need to find a professional who can help you.

Here's a quick guide to ghostwriting, editing, and proofreading that can help you to determine whom you need to hire and what you can expect.

#### **Ghostwriter**

When you either don't have the time or the expertise to write a lengthy document such as a book, you can hire a ghostwriter. This skilled professional collaborates with you to bring your ideas to the printed page. The ghostwriter will write the book based on your input, and depending upon the agreement you will retain full copyright. The book may be sold or offered under your name alone, or you may choose to credit your ghostwriter.

Ghostwriters are usually hired on the basis of a word count. For example, if you were to hire a ghostwriter to write a book about how to start a law firm, you would need to specify the word count. Non-fiction books, such as self-help books and memoirs, can be nearly any length above 25,000 words. E-books can be as few as 10,000 words. For fiction, a short novel is generally between 50,000 and 80,000 words. A full-length novel is above 80,000 words.

Specifying the number of pages can be difficult, because the page count will vary depending upon size of the text, margins, and chapter breaks. However, for a typical document in 12-point Times New Roman with one-inch margins, you can expect to get about 500 words per page. So a document of 200 typewritten pages would be about 100,000 words. But when hiring a ghostwriter, it is always better to agree on a word count. It is measurable and there is no ambiguity.

A ghostwriter may give a price estimate based on a flat rate for the project, or based on a price per word (say, ten cents per word, which is average). Good ghostwriters do not get

involved with graphics or cover art; writing is a highly specialized occupation and most good writers just write.

### **Editor**

You hire an editor when you have a complete or nearly complete book or report. The editor reads the entire document and helps you to organize and present your thoughts as effectively as possible. The editor may suggest adding material or deleting passages that aren't effective. In this process it pays to have an open mind, because many authors are sensitive about their work and it can be difficult to be objective. You want an editor who is easy to work with. You do not want an editor who is bossy and won't explain why he or she favors certain changes. It's your book and your name on the cover!

Editors can be paid a flat rate for the project, or can be paid by the hour. A good editor will gladly give you an estimate in advance. Then, as the work progresses, you should review the results and only when you know you are in agreement should you continue. There should never be any surprises. Ask your editor to use the "track changes" feature on your word processing application.

At the end of the process you can expect a polished document. But if the work is substantial (say, over 5,000 words), minor mistakes may remain. This is because no matter how skilled, human beings tend to read what they *expect* to read, and will miss mistakes. Quality documents, such as published books, professional websites, and business reports, are often read by several different people.

### **Proofreader**

When you have a finished book or document, you hire a proofreader to check for mistakes of grammar and spelling, to fact check, and to correct typographical errors. A proofreader will not interject his or her editorial opinion about the content of your work.

Do not think that proofreaders are not highly skilled. A good proofreader will know correct punctuation (when to place a semicolon instead of a comma, for example). A good proofreader will have a thorough knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar (when to say "ensure" rather than "insure," or "farther" rather than "further"). In addition, if your document is industry-specific, such as a financial advisor website, your proofreader must be familiar with the technical language. These details are very important to any professional document. One needless mistake on your business website or in your book may cause a reader to go elsewhere.

Like editors, proofreaders can be hired on a per-word basis or by the project. You should get a firm estimate in advance. Unlike editing, which can be highly subjective, proofreading is more straightforward and therefore it's easy to give an accurate estimate.

### **What You Can Expect**

The most important thing to remember when hiring a ghostwriter, editor, or proofreader, is that the job will go much more smoothly if you are very clear in your instructions and expectations. Agree on the word count. Do not ask an editor to "add something if you

think it needs it.” The fact is that any document of any length can be expanded into a book. And any book can be made into a longer book.

An editor is like a taxi driver. You get in the cab and the meter starts running. When you arrive at your destination you pay the agreed-upon price. If you say, “Can you drive me another ten miles?” that’s fine, but the cabbie will keep the meter running. It’s only fair.

Choose a provider who has a flawless working knowledge of American and/or U.K. English. You get exactly what you pay for. Countless clients have hired cut-rate editors and writers only to receive poor-quality work that is riddled with elementary mistakes. Then they have to hire a professional to do the work again, and the job ends up costing more than if they had hired the pro in the first place.

Remember that your website or report or book may be read by thousands of people. It’s your reputation and your name on the cover. It’s worth it to make sure that every word is perfect. I invite you to contact me to discuss how I can help you bring your project to completion.