

Ghostwriter: Definition & Description

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghostwriter>

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A ghostwriter is a professional writer who is paid to write books, articles, stories, reports, or other content which are officially credited to another person. Celebrities, executives, and political leaders often hire ghostwriters to draft or edit autobiographies, magazine articles, or other written material. In music, ghostwriters are used in classical music, film composition, and popular music such as top 40, country, and hip-hop. The ghostwriter is sometimes acknowledged by the author or publisher for his or her assistance.

Role

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 nonfiction books or articles, a ghostwriter will interview the credited author and review previous speeches, articles, and interviews with the credited author, to assimilate his or her 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 nonfiction 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.[1] Literary agent Madeleine Morel states that the average ghostwriter's advance for work for major publishers is "between \$30,000 and \$100,000" [2] 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." [3]

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 clients ultimately keep all advances and post-publishing royalties and profits for themselves.[4]

In Canada, The Writers' Union has established a minimum fee schedule for ghostwriting. The total minimum fee for a 200-300 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.[5]

In Germany the average fee for a confidential ghostwriting service is about \$100.00 per page.[6]

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 nonfiction 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 him or her from revealing his or her ghostwriting role.

Types

Nonfiction

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 nonfiction 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. In several countries before elections, candidates commission ghostwriters to produce autobiographies for them so as to gain visibility and exposure. 2 of John F. Kennedy's books were almost entirely ghostwritten. Most recently American Presidential candidate John McCain used the aid of ghostwriters to produce his best selling book. Former President Ronald Reagan released a ghostwritten autobiography with the humorous comment that maybe he'd read it himself someday.

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.

Fiction

Ghostwriters are employed by fiction publishers for several reasons. In some cases, publishers use ghostwriters to increase the number of books that can be published each year by a well-known, highly marketable author. Ghostwriters are mostly used to pen fiction works for well-known, "name" authors in genres such as detective fiction, mysteries, and teen fiction.

Additionally, publishers use ghostwriters to write new books for established series where the 'author' is a pseudonym. For example, the purported author of the Nancy Drew mystery series, "Carolyn Keene", is actually a pseudonym for a series of ghostwriters who write books in the same style using a template of basic information about the book's characters and their

fictional universe (names, dates, speech patterns), and about the tone and style that are expected in the book (For more information, see the articles on pseudonyms or pen names). As well, ghostwriters are often given copies of several of the previous books in the series, to help them match the style.

The estate of romance novelist V. C. Andrews hired a ghostwriter to continue writing novels after her death, under her name and in a similar style to her original works. Many of action writer Tom Clancy's books from the 2000s bear the names of two people on their covers, with Clancy's name in larger print and the other author's name in smaller print. Various books bearing Clancy's name were written by different authors under the same pseudonym. The first two books in the Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell franchise were written by Raymond Benson under the pseudonym David Michaels.

Political

Public officials and politicians employ 'correspondence officers' to respond to the large volume of correspondence that they receive. The degree of involvement of the public official in the drafting of response letters varies, depending on the nature of the letter, its contents, and the importance of the official and the sender. At the highest level, public officials such as heads of state and regional governors typically have their officials approve the content of routine correspondence and autopen their signature with a signature machine.

However, if the response is being sent to a high-ranking official or member of society, a draft of the letter may be given to the head of state or their top advisers for approval—particularly if the letter deals with a politically sensitive issue. Public officials at lower levels, such as middle managers and department heads will often review, request changes in, and hand sign all outgoing correspondence, even though the initial drafts are composed by a correspondence officer or policy analyst.

Since members of the public are widely aware that politicians are not themselves writing routine response letters, it can be argued that these correspondence officers are not ghostwriters in the strictest sense of the term. Public officials may also have a speechwriter, who writes public remarks and speeches, or both jobs may be done by a single person.

Medical

With medical ghostwriting, pharmaceutical companies pay physicians or scientists to produce papers in medical or scientific journals on the outcomes of new medications. Medical ghostwriting has been criticized[8][9] by a variety of professional organizations representing the drug industry, publishers, and medical societies, and it may violate American laws prohibiting off-label promotion by drug manufacturers as well as anti-kickback provisions within the statutes governing Medicare[10]. Recently, it has attracted scrutiny from the lay press[11] and from lawmakers[12], as well. It is permitted at some institutions, including the University of Washington School of Medicine[13][14], while it is prohibited and considered a particularly pernicious form of plagiarism at others, such as Tufts University School of Medicine[15].

Professional medical writers can write papers without being listed as authors of the paper and without being considered ghostwriters, provided their role is acknowledged. The European Medical Writers Association have published guidelines which aim to ensure professional medical writers carry out this role in an ethical and responsible manner[16]. The use of properly acknowledged medical writers is accepted as legitimate by organisations such as the World Association of Medical Editors[8] and the British Medical Journal[17]. Moreover, professional medical writers' expertise in presenting scientific data may be of benefit in producing better quality papers[18].

Most pharmaceutical companies have in-house publication managers who may either manage the writing of publications on the company's drugs by a team of in-house medical writers or contract them out to medical communication companies or freelance medical writers. Reprints of the articles can be distributed to doctors in their offices or at medical meetings by drug company reps in lieu of product brochures, which might be illegal, if they were to otherwise advocate use of the drug for nonapproved indications or dosages. Payments to medical ghostwriters may be augmented with consulting contracts, paid trips to teach continuing medical education courses, and sometimes "research" or "educational" grants that afford additional avenues for pocketing kickbacks. The colluding academics or doctors are known as "KOLs" ("Key Opinion Leaders") or "TLs" "Thought Leaders").

Blog

One of the newer types of ghostwriters is the web log, or 'blog' ghostwriter. Blogs are websites where a person keeps a journal of thoughts and holds online discussions with other web users, typically on political, social, or cultural issues, and current events. As well, many blogs cater to special interests ranging from handgun collecting to knitting. Blogs are rated according to how many web 'hits' they get from users viewing the page, and this rating is used by advertisers considering paying for ad space on a blog website.

New blog operators hoping to generate interest in their blog site sometimes hire ghostwriters to post comments to their blog, while posing as different people and using pseudonyms. With more posts and more comments, it is more likely that a blog will have more key words which will bring up the blog during a search engine's search. Once a blog gets more traffic, eventually the number of 'real' posts may increase, and the blog ghostwriters may no longer be needed. While companies providing blog ghostwriters claim that falsely attributed postings

are a legitimate marketing tactic, the practice has been deemed unacceptable by a major US paper, The Los Angeles Times. The Times fired Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Michael Hiltzik for fabricating postings in his blog using alternate 'identities' ("sockpuppets", in internet jargon). [citation needed]

Some celebrities, CEOs, or public figures set up blog websites as a marketing, public relations, or lobbying tool. However, since these individuals are typically too busy to write their blog posts, they hire discreet ghostwriters to post to the blog under the celebrity or CEO's name. As with nonfiction ghostwriting, the blog ghostwriter models their writing style, content and tone on that of the credited author.

Academic

Some university and college students hire ghostwriters from essay mills to write entrance essays, term papers, and theses and dissertations. In the 2000s, many essay mills began offering online services. The most basic 'essay mill' service is the sale of a previously written essay. However, since submitting a previously written essay is risky, a 'customized' essay-writing service is available for a higher price. Essay mill services do not violate the law by providing ghostwritten papers; the act of academic fraud and misrepresentation only occurs when the student submits the ghostwritten paper as their own work.

Universities have developed several strategies to combat this type of academic fraud. Some professors require students to submit electronic versions of their term papers, so that the text of the essay can be compared against databases of essays that are known to be plagiarized, 'essay mill' term papers. Other universities allow professors to give students oral examinations on papers which a professor believes to be 'ghostwritten'; if the student is unfamiliar with the content of an essay that they have submitted, then the student can be charged with academic fraud.

Music

Wolfgang Mozart is an example of a well-known composer who was paid to ghostwrite music for wealthy patrons. More recently, composers such as the UK-based Patric Standford (born in 1939) have ghostwritten for symphonic recordings and films such as the Rod McKuen Cello Concerto.[19] In the film industry, a music ghostwriter is a "person who composes music for another composer but is not credited on the cue sheet or in the final product in any way." The practice is considered one of the "dirty little secrets of the film and television music business" that is considered unethical,[20] but has been common since the early stages of the film industry, e.g. in the case of David Raksin, who worked as music ghostwriter and orchestrator for Charlie Chaplin, who was considered to be a so-called "hummer." John Barry has repeatedly claimed to be not only the orchestrator, but also the original composer of the famous James Bond Theme, which is however credited to Monty Norman, possibly due to a ghostwriting assignment or a special work-made-for-hire contract.[21]

Musical ghostwriting also occurs in popular music. When a record company wants to market an inexperienced young singer as a singer-songwriter, or help a veteran bandleader coping with writer's block (or a lack of motivation to finish the next album), an experienced songwriter may be discreetly brought in to help. In other cases, a ghostwriter writes lyrics and a melody in the style of the credited musician, with little or no input from the credited musician. A ghostwriter providing this type of service may be thanked, without reference to the service provided, in the album credits, or they may be a true 'ghost', with no acknowledgement in the album. Legal disputes have arisen when musical ghostwriters have tried to claim royalties, when an allegedly ghostwritten song becomes a money-making hit. Canadian singer Sarah McLachlan had a lengthy legal dispute

with a musician, Darryl Neudorf, who claimed that he had made a significant and uncredited ghostwriting contribution to the songwriting on her debut album *Touch* in the late 1980s.

In hip-hop music, the increasing use of ghostwriters by high-profile hip-hop stars has led to controversy, because "Rapping is about you expressing yourself through your own words, not someone else's." [22] *Eye Weekly* reported that MC Rhymefest did ghostwriting for Kanye West and Ol' Dirty Bastard, Texan rapper The D.O.C. did ghostwriting for Dr. Dre, and Jadakiss did ghostwriting for Puffy, who later bragged "Don't worry if I write rhymes, I write checks." [23] Critics view the increasing use of hip-hop ghostwriters as the "perversion of hip-hop by commerce." In hip-hop, the credit given to ghostwriters varies: "silent pens might sign confidentiality clauses, appear obliquely in the liner notes, or discuss their participation freely." In some cases, liner notes credit individuals for "vocal arrangement", which may be a euphemism for ghostwriting [24]

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