



YOUR STORY HAS THE POWER TO
CHANGE LIVES

SO YOU WANT TO HIRE A **GHOST- WRITER**

What to Ask, What It Costs, and How to Choose



BY RICHARD LOWE, THE WRITING KING

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INTRODUCTION

Books are immensely powerful, and those who have published garner respect, confidence, and even awe. It seems that anyone who is famous or well-known has published a book, including every modern president, industry leaders, senators, and sports figures.

One of the best ways to define your brand—to put it out there for people to see and understand—is to publish a book. A book gives you a soapbox to stand on and shout out your expertise, vision, and history for anyone who cares to listen. It also lends credibility to your message. Better still, you can craft your story any way you want, to communicate exactly and only what you'd like people to understand. You are in control of the message.

A politician can explain their background, beliefs, and agenda clearly. They can define their legend, which can then support their campaigns and further their goals. A book of this nature gives their constituents information to help establish a bond and build an understanding.

A book works much the same way for a business, building understanding with potential customers, vendors, and employees. A CEO, for instance, might write a book to explain how they managed to pull themselves out from an impoverished childhood to become powerful, rich, and yet still caring. The manuscript can demonstrate that the CEO has empathy, understands the plight of clients and people, and has worked a lifetime to build excellent products and deliver superb customer service.

INTRODUCTION

One day a few years ago (before I became a ghostwriter), I walked into the office of a salesperson, sat down, and we began talking. I looked over his shoulder and noticed he had dozens of books on the bookshelf behind him, each with his name on the spine. He saw me looking, reached back dramatically, pulled one copy off the shelf, and handed it to me. His picture and name were on the front cover.

I immediately felt a sense of respect for the man - he had written a book, after all! I noticed he used it during his presentation to illustrate points he wanted to make. It was very impressive, and I walked out of there as a new customer. In fact, he made a great show of signing a copy, handing it to me, and showing me a few passages he felt might mean something to me.

The book defined his brand; including his life story, a description of his philosophy, and his services and why they were relevant and helpful.

If you, like many of us, don't have the time or don't know how to write a book, then you are in luck. You can hire a **ghostwriter**, **ghost collaborator**, or **book coach** to do most of the work for you.

What is the difference between **ghostwriting**, **ghost collaboration**, and **book coaching**?

In traditional ghostwriting, the ghostwriter interviews you (and perhaps others), looks at any notes or written materials you have, and then writes the book for you. You review what the ghostwriter delivers, make suggestions, and, at the end, receive a finished draft. Ghostwriting is priced per word and, in my practice, paid in monthly advances as the work is delivered.

Ghost collaboration is a very interactive process. Instead of performing interviews up front and examining your notes, the ghostwriter and you work together, usually over Zoom, several hours a week, directly on the book. This is the best way to create a book that perfectly catches your voice, tone, and

subject because you are intimately involved throughout the book writing process. This is typically billed in blocks of hours, purchased in advance.

In book coaching, you are responsible for writing the book, and your ghost-writer helps you by critiquing your story, your writing, and your message. This is a collaboration, but it is not as intense as ghost collaboration. The coach may be credited or may work as a “ghost coach” or without acknowledgement. The coach sells time in ten-hour blocks, prepaid, with a lower rate on later blocks.

WHY WRITE A BOOK?

One of the questions that I get all the time is, “Why on earth would anyone want to write a book?” What purpose does it serve to spend so much time, effort, and money to produce a hundred or even two hundred pages about a subject? Except for celebrities, politicians, and the super rich, does anyone have anything to say that deserves that much effort?

If you run a business—any business—then you need a book. A published book goes a long way toward ensuring the profitability and expansion of your enterprise because it establishes you as an expert and builds your credibility.

Entrepreneurs need a book to show off their expertise and establish their credibility. An entrepreneur can leverage their book to get venture capital (one of my clients used their book to raise over \$30 million) by proving they know what they are talking about.

That is not an isolated case. Books I have ghostwritten have helped clients raise over \$30 million in venture capital, earn a TEDx invitation, land paid keynote engagements, and get adopted for university coursework. One of my own books on LinkedIn sold 15,000 copies in three days. A book does not guarantee any of that, but nothing else opens those particular doors either.



Many people have led interesting lives and have a desire to let others know the lessons they've learned during their trials and tribulations. Writing a memoir and publishing it can preserve the best of those memories, thoughts, suggestions, and events for others, including family and friends, to read, enjoy, and be enlightened.

WHY DO PEOPLE WRITE A BOOK?

A person who runs a ministry can use a book to support their religion within the congregation. A book can include examples from real life to illustrate concepts and support conclusions. These manuscripts can be invaluable in helping a minister get the word out to those who are interested in learning more.

There are many other examples of people in all walks of life who could use a book to reinforce or pass on their message to others. Even those who do not lead exciting lives, such as workers on assembly lines or receptionists for doctor's offices, could pass on lessons to others about how they achieved their position, survived whatever life threw at them, and moved forward despite the worst.

WHY DO PEOPLE WRITE A BOOK?

BRANDING

A Books areA book is the most durable branding asset you can own. A website changes, a business card gets thrown away, an ad stops the moment you stop paying for it. A book sits on a shelf with your name down the spine, and it keeps working in rooms you are not standing in.

It also settles the credibility question before you open your mouth. Whatever you claim to know, the book is the evidence, and unlike a testimonial or a certification, you controlled every word of it. That is the part people underestimate: you are not just proving expertise, you are choosing which expertise to prove.



WHY DO PEOPLE WRITE A BOOK?

MEMOIRS

Believe it or not, everyone has a story to tell. Some people have lives that resemble a James Bond movie, and many have been through some fascinating or traumatic events. Others have invented something, traveled, survived many trials and tribulations, or have held captivating jobs.



Each of these people could write one or more books about their lives, events they have survived, or how they've enhanced or helped other people. These are not always famous individuals; in fact, some of the best stories come from your everyday person.

She was seventy-eight when she called. She wanted a book about Auschwitz, and she wanted it before her memory went, which is how she put it, without drama, the way you would mention a dentist appointment.

The first interview lasted two hours and produced almost nothing usable. She recited the camp the way you would recite a history lesson:

the dates, the transports, the numbers. It was all accurate and none of it was hers. That is normal. People who have survived something do not lead with the survival; they lead with the version they have practiced until it stopped hurting to say.

What broke it open was a question about food. She started describing a woman in her barracks who saved half a ration for three days to give a girl a birthday. She remembered the girl's name. She remembered what the bread looked like. Forty minutes later we were somewhere the history lesson could not reach.

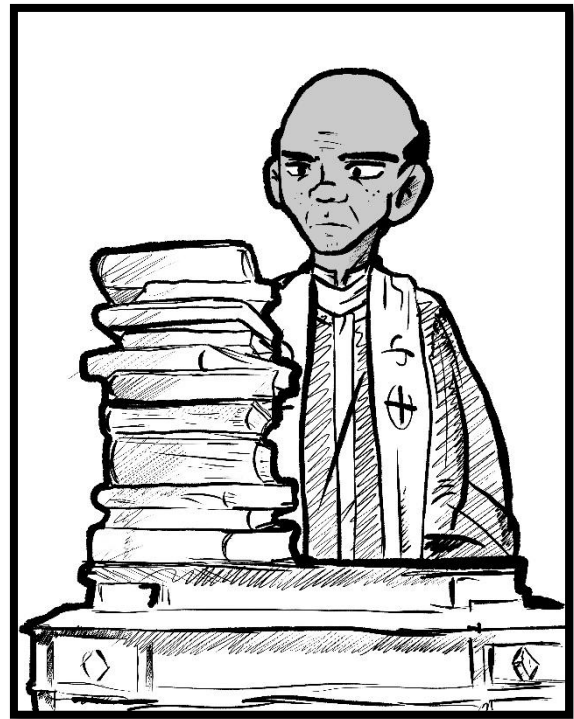
Her grandchildren have that book now. They will have it when she is gone, and their children will have it, and none of them will have to reconstruct her from documents and secondhand stories. That is what the work is for. Not everyone has Auschwitz in their past, but everyone has something that will disappear with them, and most people wait too long to write it down.

WHY DO PEOPLE WRITE A BOOK?

MINISTRY

A Christian minister might ghost-write a book so he could have something to give out to the congregation to help them find a way to Christ and the Lord. He could, for example, create a selection of a couple of dozen stories of people from different walks of life who improved themselves once they found the word of God.

Another minister came to me with a problem he could not solve from the pulpit. His congregation knew him as the man in the good suit who quoted scripture on Sundays. What they did not know was that he had sold drugs, drunk himself through most of his twenties, and done time.



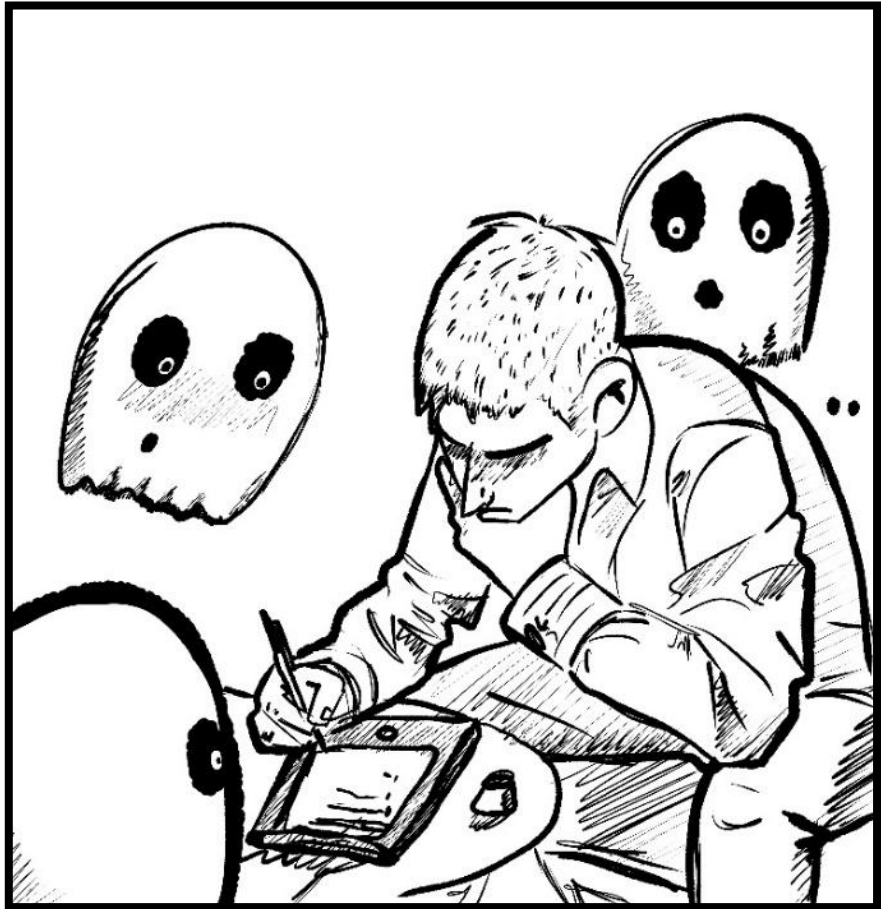
He believed the distance between those two men was the entire point of his ministry, and every Sunday it went unsaid. You cannot work a prison sentence into a sermon without it landing as either a confession or a performance. He needed a form where he could tell it once, completely, in order, and let people take it in privately.

That is what the book did. He did not soften the years he was not proud of, because a redemption story with the bad parts sanded off convinces nobody who has lived through their own. Congregants started handing it to family members they were worried about. It reached people who would never have sat through the sermon.

WHAT IS GHOSTWRITING?

Writing a book is difficult. There are no secrets other than hard work, time, research, and understanding of language and how to string words, paragraphs, and chapters together. Writing the book is not the most difficult part of the process; the difficulty is making it compelling, easy to read, and simple to understand. Even more difficult is writing in such a way to enthrall readers, so they do not just continue reading, but cannot put the book down.

In school, students learn a mechanical type of writing to produce academic papers, pass exams and finish their doctorate. Unfortunately, this kind of writing is not useful for business books, memoirs, and so forth. Academic writing tends to be dry, boring to anybody not involved in the field and requires a bizarre and rigorous standard of citation and style.



WHAT IS GHOSTWRITING?

Outside of school, in the real world, most of the writing performed by the average person consists of email messages, texts, and a short memo now and then. None of these tasks has anything to do with writing a book.

The exercise of creating a book is labor intensive, difficult, and time-consuming. It also requires skills and training in the art of writing, the rules of grammar and style, excellent spelling, and the ability to work through issues such as writer's block and a lack of understanding of the subject.

The job of a **ghostwriter** is to write your story, whether it be about sales, your life, or even a ministry as if you were telling it. An essential skill of a ghostwriter is to tell your story from your point of view or to use your voice.

GHOST COLLABORATION

In ghost collaboration, you and your ghostwriter work directly on the manuscript together, usually over Zoom for several hours a week. Nothing is written off in a corner; every chapter takes shape in live working sessions, which makes this the surest way to capture your voice, tone, and thinking. Ghost collaboration is typically billed in blocks of hours, purchased in advance.

BOOK COACHING

Since you are often the expert on your subject, **book coaching** can be a more practical approach. In this case, you work with your book coach (a type of ghostwriting but far more interactive) over the phone or Zoom regularly to write the book. You do the writing with the help of a skilled professional.

When you contact a ghostwriter, discuss which approach would work best for you. For non-technical subjects, ghostwriting is an excellent choice. For subjects that are highly technical, book coaching is a far more effective way to get the book written.

Time and cost are also factors. Book coaching requires more of your time, since you will be working closely with your coach, usually on a daily basis, but is less expensive.

Ghostwriting requires far less of your time, but is more expensive since the ghostwriter is doing most of the work.

WHY HIRE A GHOSTWRITER?

Okay, so you've decided to write a book for whatever reason. Perhaps you want to brand your business, or you want people to know the story of your life, or maybe you have a longing to publish that novel that's been rattling around your brain for decades.



Hiring a **ghostwriter** can cut through everything in life that gets in the way of making the time for writing. You will still need to find the time to do interviews and give your ghostwriter the information necessary for your book, but the actual mechanics and effort will be done by someone else.

Let's say you have a novel that you've been toying with on-and-off for years, if not decades. You hold a full-time job, have a family, and maintain other responsibilities, leaving you little time to sit down and write the manuscript. You know what you want to write; you just can't seem to find the time to get it done.

A ghostwriter has the time to do that writing for you. He or she understands how to interview you efficiently and quickly to use your time wisely.

WHY HIRE A GHOSTWRITER?

You might be a business person, heavily engaged in the day-to-day work required to keep your company or your department operational. You know you need a book to help brand your business, services, or products, but just don't have the time or the skills that you need to write a manuscript.

You can outsource your book to a ghostwriter, and the only time that you will need to spend is to give the ghostwriter information required for your manuscript and to review the completed chapters. This is still a lot of work, but nowhere near the amount of effort needed to actually write the manuscript.

Memoirs can be particularly overwhelming, as the assembled papers, notes, writings, and everything else associated with a person's life can be quite voluminous. The job of a ghostwriter, in this case, is to interview you and help you focus on the important points to make the book readable, exciting, and vibrant.

Thus, a ghostwriter engages you, uses interviews and research to find out about the subject, and creates a manuscript presenting that information in an appealing way.

WHY HIRE A BOOK COACH?

One option for completing your book is to work with a **book coach**. This is a form of ghostwriting because the coach is invisible - you don't have to give them credit or acknowledge their help.

In book coaching, you and your coach work together to research and write your book. The process is very collaborative, with a lot of discussion about each point you are trying to make.

Book coaching is charged at an hourly rate, sold in ten-hour blocks of \$2,000 to \$3,000 depending on the rate, paid in advance. The coach tracks the hours as they are used and invoices the next block as one runs low, with a lower rate on later blocks. This process proceeds until the book is done.

This is very different from ghostwriting in that it is a far more interactive, hands-on process. The finished book will be far more “you” than one that is written by a ghostwriter, since you’ll be involved at every step of the way.

Typically, a book coaching project is far less expensive than a ghostwriting project. You spend a lot more of your time working with the coach, which reduces the cost.

If the price of a straight ghostwriting project is beyond your means, then book coaching is an excellent alternative for many reasons:

- Ghostwriting is a larger monthly commitment, since the advances track the pace of the writing.
- Book coaching is paid in ten-hour blocks in advance of work. This means the payment for the work is spread out over a much longer time. Coaching is a “pay as you go” method of getting the work done.

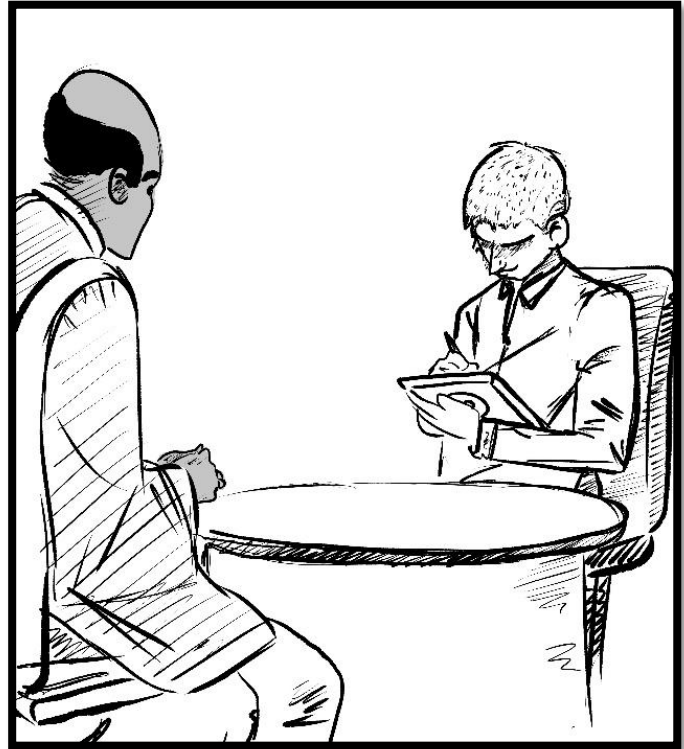
In both ghostwriting and book coaching, there are no refunds. But since the payments for book coaching are smaller, your risk is reduced.

HOW DOES GHOSTWRITING WORK?

Ghostwriters and book coaches are consultants, which means all work is done on a work for hire basis. You own the rights to the book; it is important that you ensure that any contract you sign states that explicitly. Ensure the contract specifies that you own the copyright to the finished manuscript.

Before you lay out any money, sit down with your prospective ghostwriter or coach, in person, by phone or Zoom, and discuss the project. This initial consultation should be free of cost. More work may be required to scope out the book, in which case the ghostwriter may ask for a small fee.

Following the consultation, the ghostwriter or coach will put together a proposal, called a Statement of Work, which is a legal document that specifies all the terms of the project. Take this document seriously. Read it from top to bottom, several times if needed, and question the ghostwriter on any clause that you don't understand.



HOW DOES GHOSTWRITING WORK?

As mentioned previously, book coaching is paid in blocks of time, often 20 hours. The price of the completed work depends on how much time is spent. Because of that, there will only be a general estimate for the cost. However, you have the freedom to terminate the project, extend the timeframe or put it on hold as needed.

On the other hand, for ghostwriting projects, it is difficult to come up with the price of your project based on a one or two-hour interview. To resolve this problem, I offer the Book Feasibility Intensive: a flat \$5,000 engagement covering ten hours of structured interviews, a complete book strategy report, and a sample chapter, typically delivered in thirty days. You end it knowing exactly what your book is, what it will cost, and whether it should be written at all. If you proceed to a full ghostwriting engagement within sixty days, the \$5,000 is credited in full toward that project.

This method allows a ghostwriter to make a bid on the project before all of the data is known, while allowing for the opportunity to change that estimate once all the blanks have been filled in. If the ghostwriter came back with a price that is higher than you're willing to pay, both of you shake hands and go your separate ways. All monies paid are non-refundable, but you should get all the materials that the ghostwriter created or researched during that first part of the project.

For example, during your initial consultation, it appears that the book will be 20 chapters long. After the first phase, the ghostwriter concludes that several hundred hours of research are required, and thirty chapters are needed to do justice to the topic. A change in the cost is needed, as well as your approval to continue at the higher cost.

HOW DOES GHOSTWRITING WORK?

Once you have a signed contract, the ghostwriter will perform some interviews, do any research necessary, and write your book. My preference is to write one chapter at a time, send it to the client for review, and incorporate any revisions. By the time the last chapter has been written, everything has been completed and signed off. Some editing of previous chapters may be needed, but the work will be light.

A ghostwriter understands how to hook the reader into the manuscript. Each paragraph naturally flows into the next one. Each chapter practically forces the reader to proceed to the next one; the reader must move forward to find out how it ends.

Interviewing skills are a requirement for any ghostwriter. A primary purpose of interviews is to narrow the subject to cover the important points and discard those that do not support the theme and conclusions of the book.

While a ghostwriter has many skills, there are some tasks that you will need to do yourself or outsource to others. Your ghostwriter will discuss those with you as needed.

WHAT DOESN'T A GHOSTWRITER DO?

The purpose of hiring a ghostwriter is to write your manuscript, and the job of a book coach is to assist you with writing. There are other things that you will need to do to make your book ready to publish. Note that if you are publishing your book via traditional methods, your publisher will take care of most of these for you. However, if you are self-publishing, then you will need to ensure that these tasks are completed before you publish it.

These additional responsibilities include:

- ✓ Proofreading and copy editing
- ✓ Formatting for paperback or hardcover
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Sales
- ✓ Creating a cover
- ✓ Creating the index
- ✓ Graphics, spreadsheets and so forth

Once your manuscript is finished, you must send it to a professional to be proofread and copyedited. Don't leave this in the hands of your ghostwriter, even if they profess to have these skills. It's important to get a second (and possibly even a third) person to review your manuscript from top to bottom to ensure that is of the highest quality possible. Proofreaders and copyeditors are trained specifically to perform these functions and will do a much better job than any ghostwriter.

Your book may require formatting, especially if it is going to be in paperback or hardcover format. This is another specialized talent that a ghostwriter is most likely not the best resource to perform.

WHAT DOESN'T A GHOSTWRITER DO?

Marketing the book is a whole different ballgame, requiring a specialized set of skills and talent. Books do not sell themselves. They are promoted to the appropriate groups of people, and marketers entice those people into purchasing your book. As a rule, ghostwriters and book coaches do not do this.

You will need to produce a cover for your book. In fact, if you want to sell a Kindle eBook as well as a hardcover, softcover or even audio version, you may need more than one cover. Hire an artist or designer who understands how to make a cover appeal to readers so that your book sells.

Non-fiction books often require an index. While anyone can tag words inside of a document, you should hire trained indexing professionals to perform this task. A ghostwriter or coach is probably not trained in how to put together the index for a book.

If your book requires any graphics, spreadsheets, tables, or artistic design, then you will need to hire a specialist to create these for you. Ghostwriters generally are not expert in the creation of these graphic elements.

As you can see, writing the book is just the beginning. There are many other parts of the puzzle. The ghostwriter is the consultant who writes your manuscript; that is their expertise. Just like you wouldn't ask an auto mechanic to paint your car, you shouldn't ask your ghostwriter to produce a cover for your book. They are two entirely different specialties requiring different skills.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Before hiring a ghostwriter or book coach, take the time to understand their working process. By asking a few questions, you can eliminate candidates who are unqualified or incompatible with your requirements. Ensure any agreement, especially those that are important to you, are written into the contract.

ARE THEY RESPECTFUL?

During the sales process, ensure your ghostwriter or coach shows proper respect for you and your time, story and goals. Meetings should start on time, run for the prescribed length, and be productive and useful. The writer should come prepared, ask lots of questions, and be taking notes.

The ghostwriter should have his attention on you, not on their cell phone or laptop (unless they are looking something up for you.) They should turn off cell phones before meetings – if they text or accept calls during those sales meetings find a new ghostwriter.

Also, judge how quickly email messages and voicemails are returned, the quality of questions, and the depth of the answers you receive.

CAN THEY PROVIDE REFERENCES?

Since ghostwriting and coaching is, by its nature, confidential, most ghostwriters will not be able to provide you with samples of their ghostwriting or even references. However, you can ask to see a portfolio of their work, which can consist of published books, articles, and so forth. Always get several samples of their work to see how they write in different voices and situations.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

Ghostwriting and coaching is not just a matter of sitting down and writing a book. It can be a lengthy process requiring several months (or even years) with multiple steps, deliverables, and interactions.

Project management skills are essential to successfully completing a ghostwriting project. A well-managed project will have defined milestones, deliverables, and procedures for each step. A ghostwriter should be able to detail this process.

Ask questions to make sure you thoroughly understand and agree to the procedure. The ghostwriter should be able to provide this procedure in writing, and you may even want to include it in the contract or Statement of Work.

By understanding the procedure, you will go a long way to avoid misunderstandings and ensure your book gets written in a timely and quality manner.

WILL THERE BE AN OUTLINE?

One of the first tasks performed by a ghostwriter or coach is to create a rough outline of the book. An outline is necessary to define the size and scope of the work so that a reasonably accurate estimate can be given.

What is the involvement of the client in creating the outline? Is it done entirely by the ghostwriter or in collaboration with the customer?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

WHEN ARE DRAFTS REVIEWED?

Does your ghostwriter plan to send your drafts for review chapter-by-chapter, section-by-section or only when the book is complete? For a very personal project, such as a memoir, weekly reviews may be vital. Other projects may need approvals less often.

Keep in mind that it can be frustrating to receive a draft of an entire book only to find it went in the wrong direction near the beginning. My recommendation is to ask to approve drafts more often, perhaps even weekly or chapter-by-chapter.

WILL THE GHOSTWRITER BE WORKING REMOTELY OR IN-PERSON?

Most of the time, in-person visits are not required to write a book. The advantage of working remotely is you can use ghostwriters from anywhere on the planet, while in-person visits allow for more interaction and can be very productive.

Ensure you understand the process thoroughly.

It is normal for a client to pay for travel for in-person interviews, and these costs are in addition to the contract price. This means the time it takes for a ghostwriter to get to and from your location is billable, usually in addition to the contracted amount. Ensure you and your ghostwriter agree on the charges for travel, as well as payment for any direct expenses such as gas.

Note that time spent going to and from pre-sales meetings, before the contract is signed, should never be billed by a ghostwriter (or any other consultant.)

QUESTIONS TO ASK

WHAT IS THE INTERVIEW PROCESS?

Some kind of methodology is required for the ghostwriter to get information from you (and others) so the book can be written. Some ghostwriters send out a long and complicated questionnaire, others do in-person interviews, and most will talk with you remotely either by phone or an application such as Zoom. Make sure you fully understand and agree with this process before signing the contract.

HOW FREQUENTLY ARE INTERVIEWS DONE?

Your ghostwriter will need to do interviews of you and perhaps other people as well. Will you and the writer spend all day together working out the details, or will the interviews be spread out over time? Will they be daily, weekly or even monthly? What determines when interviews are needed?

WILL INTERVIEWS WITH OTHER PEOPLE BE REQUIRED?

If other people are involved, are they available and willing to be interviewed? Will those interviews be remote, in-person or even via email? What is the plan if those people are not available or are unwilling to be interviewed?

WILL THE GHOSTWRITER PROVIDE AN AGENDA FOR INTERVIEWS AND MEETINGS?

Agendas are useful for meetings and interviews, even if they are just a few lines long. These define what information is needed or decisions are to be made and set limits on what the meeting or interview is about.

Meetings and discussions should always be set for a specific amount of time.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

HOW ARE REMOTE INTERVIEWS HANDLED?

Ask your ghostwriter what tools will be used for remote interviews. Ensure you test those tools before signing the contract and paying any money.

Will the phone be used? Zoom? Teams? Something else? Whatever is used, make sure it works on your type of computer.

Are the interviews audio-only or will they be done in video-chat as well? Video interviews allow for hand gestures and facial expressions, which can be significant.

WILL THE INTERVIEWS BE RECORDED?

Generally, it's a good idea to record interviews, as they can be referred to later if something is missing from the notes.

If the interviews are to be recorded, ask if they will be transcribed, and if you will receive copies of those transcriptions for review.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RESEARCH?

After the initial pre-sales interviews, the ghostwriter should have an idea of how much research will need to be performed. Sometimes research is carried out by the client (or has already been done), and sometimes by a third party. Make sure this is understood up front and spelled out in the contract.

If the amount of research needed cannot be determined quickly, it may be necessary to specify it be done as a time-and-materials cost. In this case, set a limit in the contract for how much is permissible.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

ARE SUB-CONTRACTORS USED (OUTSOURCING)?

Ask your ghostwriter if any of the work is going to be outsourced. Sometimes work is farmed out to other writers, often less skilled, and occasionally even bid out on sites such as Thumbtack or Fiverr. Get the details and include any limitations in the contract.

HOW OFTEN WILL YOU RECEIVE UPDATES?

Some ghostwriters will complete the entire book before sending it to you for review, others will send you one chapter at a time. Regardless, ensure you understand and that it is written into your contract.

HOW MANY REVISIONS MAY BE DONE UNDER CONTRACT?

It is impossible for any ghostwriter to guarantee an unlimited number of revisions of the work. However, he should be comfortable with performing two or three revisions as part of the contract price. Further revisions may require additional fees.

My tendency is to deliver one chapter at a time and allow two revisions per chapter. Once a section has been approved by the client, it may no longer be revised under the contract price.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CHANGES IN SCOPE?

Changes are inevitable. They happen in every project whether it be building a house, manufacturing a fighter jet, or a ghostwriting project.

Don't be surprised if, during the project, changes occur. You might want to add a few additional chapters, an appendix, a glossary, more revisions, or change direction entirely.

Ensure your ghostwriter has a process for handling change, and you should ask questions to pin down what happens when the inevitable happens.

Who pays for the change? How is it documented? When are changes done (immediately or after delivery?)

It is entirely reasonable for your ghostwriter to increase (or even decrease) the cost of the project for changes. For example, if the contract specified 12 chapters, and you decided to add two more midway through the project, then you should expect to be charged additionally. The ghostwriter needs to get approval for the changes before starting the work.

WHAT HOURS DOES THE GHOSTWRITER WORK?

Does the ghostwriter work on a 9 to 5 schedule? Evenings? Weekends? Early Mornings? Knowing the hours worked will help you gauge when to expect drafts, updates and answers to emails and phone calls.

Also find out the time zone where the ghostwriter lives and works. It can be helpful when waiting for replies or making calls to know that he or she is several hours ahead or behind you.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

HOW MUCH TIME BETWEEN DELIVERIES OF DRAFTS AND REVISIONS?

Will you receive a draft of a chapter weekly, twice weekly or monthly? Or will the ghostwriter deliver the whole document when complete? Ensure you know the delivery schedule and include those terms in the contract.

WHAT ARE THE PAYMENT TERMS?

Ghostwriters should always be paid up front for the work they do. Sometimes they are paid up front for the entire project, and other times the project is split into multiple phases, with payment due at the beginning of each phase. My own projects are paid in monthly advances at \$1 per word, so payment tracks the pace of the writing. Just make sure payment terms are explicitly written up in your contract.

Some ghostwriters will ask to be paid for each chapter, some will split the project into quarters, and others will come up with some other formula. Make sure this is specified in the contract.

WHAT ARE THE CANCELTION TERMS?

Sometimes things just don't work out, requiring the cancelation of the project. Ensure you understand the cancelation terms and include those in your contract.

I prefer termination clauses that allow either party to cancel at any time with written notice. This makes it simple to cancel if things are just not working out.

In this case, most ghostwriters will keep any payments they have received to date, but will receive no further money. They will be expected to hand over any materials they have completed to date.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

WHEN IS THE BOOK PROJECT COMPLETE?

It is vital to understand the definition of complete in a book project. You and your ghostwriter must have the same understanding.

Is the book complete with the delivery of the first draft or are a certain number of revisions allowed?

If your ghostwriter sends you drafts for your review and approval a chapter at a time (highly recommended) by the time the last chapter is delivered the book is complete.

WHAT ABOUT EXTERNAL REVIEWS?

What are your options if you send the draft to friends and family for review, and they don't like it or make many revisions?

It can be highly unfair to your ghostwriter if you accept each chapter as the project proceeds, and then send the whole book out for review by several people. Generally, changes of this nature should be handled as a separately billed project or on a time-and-materials basis.

HOW DO I KNOW THEY ARE ANY GOOD?

“One of the conundrums of being a ghostwriter is everything written is confidential, which makes it difficult to provide references and build a portfolio. Ask for samples of their works, but don’t expect them to show you books they have ghostwritten. —Richard Lowe Jr

One of the interesting things about ghostwriters and coaches is they typically sign a nondisclosure agreement that states that they cannot disclose they had anything to do with the book. As far as the rest of the world knows, the author of the book is the person who hired the ghostwriter.

This creates a conundrum, in that it can be difficult for a ghostwriter to produce samples of their work, provide references, or even name the projects that have been done. How do you validate the experience and competence of a ghostwriter before you lay out the money and time to produce a book?



HOW DO I KNOW THEY ARE ANY GOOD?

OTHER WORKS

Personally, I would want to see samples of the work of the ghostwriter has created. Since, in general, the ghostwriting work cannot be disclosed, I would expect to find books that the ghostwriter published or self-published on Amazon® or similar sites. Even if the ghostwriter only had a couple of short Kindle eBooks, fiction or non-fiction, self-published on Amazon, it would give you something to look at and judge their writing skills.

Sometimes, a ghostwriter is given credit for their assistance in writing a book. In these cases, the ghostwriter is not under non-disclosure and may use those works as references and samples.

Thus, you can ask the ghostwriter if they have published works under their name, or if they have ghostwritten books that are not under nondisclosure. These can give you some samples of their writing style.

Occasionally, a client will give a ghostwriter permission to use a couple of pages from a book they've written as examples of their work. A ghostwriter should provide these as part of their portfolio.

Be cautious if a ghostwriter cannot offer samples of their work, or they have not published or self-published books of their own. Any ghostwriter who's been in the business very long should be able to provide *something* so potential clients can judge their skills.

DIFFERENT STYLES

You want to be sure to get samples of different kinds of books or excerpts that a ghostwriter has written. It's important that they can show that they can create works from the viewpoint of their clients.

HOW DO I KNOW THEY ARE ANY GOOD?

For example, the style and tone of a business book will be much different than that of a novel or a memoir. A business book might be very formal, a novel could be very informal, and a memoir might stick to a strict first-person point-of-view. Each of these styles is very different, and a good ghostwriter is well-versed, and an expert at using whatever style of writing is necessary for the project.

REFERENCES

Because of non-disclosure clauses, it is difficult for ghostwriters to produce references. However, some clients will allow themselves to be called or emailed. In these cases, the ghostwriter may not tell you anything about the book that was written, leaving that up to the discretion of the reference.

However, don't be surprised if a ghostwriter cannot provide a list of clients. That's common due to the nature of the business.

WHAT ABOUT AI?

The first question almost everyone asks now is whether a machine can do this instead. It is a fair question and it deserves a straight answer.

AI writes competent sentences. What it cannot do is know what happened to you. It was not in the room when the deal collapsed, it does not know which of your stories your audience needs to hear first, and it has no way to tell the difference between the version of an event you tell at parties and the version that is true. A book built entirely out of a language model reads exactly like what it is: fluent, agreeable, and empty of anyone in particular.

The tell is voice. Readers cannot always name what is wrong, but they feel it, and the damage lands on you, since your name is on the cover. A book that sounds like everyone sounds like no one, which defeats the entire purpose of publishing one.

Used honestly, though, AI is a good tool in a professional pair of hands. I use it for research triage, for organizing transcripts, for suggesting structures I then argue with. What I never do is hand a client sentences a machine wrote and call them theirs. If you are talking to a ghostwriter, ask directly how they use AI and what they will disclose. Anyone who gets cagey about that question is telling you something.

For clients who want the economics of AI assistance with a professional running it, I offer AI-Assisted Books: a focused authority book of roughly 30,000 words starting at \$15,000, at about half the per-word rate, with the interviews, the structure, and the final pass still done by me.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

“Be very cautious about ghostwriters who do not charge enough for their services. A warning sign that you’re dealing with an amateur, a newbie or someone who is desperate is a rate that is too low.” —Richard Lowe Jr

BOOK COACHING

Book coaching is charged in 20 hour blocks of time, billed in advance. The coach will track the time on a spreadsheet, and send a new invoice when those hours have been used up. The cost is entirely based on time, and only a general, non-binding estimate is given up front. You have the freedom to slow down your project, terminate it or even speed it up as desired.

GHOSTWRITING

Presumably, you want your book to be of the highest possible quality. Nothing screams amateur more than a poorly written manuscript rife with grammar errors, poorly constructed sentences, and content cut and pasted from other books.

Your book will list you as the author, and because of that readers will judge you—not your ghostwriter—on the content. Since your book is part of your brand, whether it’s personal or business, the quality directly reflects on your professionalism and abilities. A well-written book demonstrates professionalism and knowledge; conversely, a bad book tells your readers that you don’t care about quality.



HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The same is true with memoirs or any other type of manuscript. You could think of them as a personal brand for you and your life. You want to present that with quality and in a professional manner.

Of course, finding inexpensive ghostwriters is not difficult. You can find them at many networking events, and hundreds can be discovered online at various freelance websites. Any of these will offer to create your book for hundreds or a thousand dollars.

You would be wise to avoid these writers like the plague, as your product will be of inferior quality. The writing you receive will scream “amateur” in big, blinking lights.

How much should you expect to pay to write a book that shows off your business or the story of your life in a quality manner?

You should plan on paying a quality ghostwriter a minimum of \$1 per word. That’s for writing only and does not include research, proofreading, copywriting, graphics, and more than a single pass of revisions. That price should include interviews and one round of revising.

Thus, you can expect the following rates:

- A short Kindle eBook of 10,000 words - \$10,000.
- A larger eBook of about 20,000 words - \$20,000.
- If you want your book to appear in paperback or hardcover, it will need to be longer, 50,000 to 60,000 words. Prices for this length should range from \$50,000 to \$60,000.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Shorter books cost proportionally less, so a focused authority book lands well below those figures. What does not change is the rate per word, because the work per word does not change.

You will certainly find ghostwriters who are thrilled to charge significantly less than these rates. Be cautious. Professionals with experience charge more because they know what they are doing, and they will do it right. Any ghostwriter who charges significantly less is an amateur, a newbie, or is desperate.

Your brand is important. The story you want to tell is significant. You deserve your book to be high quality and well-written. Don't settle for hack writers who plagiarize from other sources, do poor research, have no interviewing skills and write like third-graders.

CONCLUSIONS

Writing a book is a major effort. Many of us would like to write a book, and some of us have dabbled in it over the years. Usually, however, nothing comes of it, and the book languishes on a computer, never to be finished.



All businesses can use a book to brand themselves and demonstrate their competency and expertise to their customers. Nothing does that better than a book since the message can be precisely defined and controlled to say exactly what is intended.

A ghostwriter or book coach can help create a manuscript that can be produced into a top-notch book that you can publish or self-publish. These can assist you with your business, record events of your life, or deliver your message exactly as you want to be told.

As with any consultant or contractor, check references, ask for samples of previous works, and interview more than one ghostwriter until you find the one that can work with you to produce your manuscript as you intend.

YOUR NEXT STEP

If you have read this far, you are past wondering whether a book is worth it. The question now is whether your book in particular is worth it, and what it would take.

That is what the Book Feasibility Intensive answers. It is a flat \$5,000 engagement: ten hours of structured interviews, a complete strategy report covering your audience, your angle, the structure, and the market position, plus a sample chapter written in your voice so you can see what your book would actually read like. It typically takes thirty days.

You end it owning the plan whatever you decide. If the answer is that you should not write this book yet, you get that verdict in writing with the reasons, which is worth more than a polite yes. If you proceed to a full ghostwriting engagement within sixty days, the entire \$5,000 is credited toward that project.

It is the difference between a free consultation, which is a sales call, and a paid engagement that leaves you with a deliverable either way.

To start one, or to talk through whether it fits, get in touch at thewritingking.com/contact.

ADDITIONAL READING

Here are some additional articles for you to read about **ghostwriting** and **book coaching**.

- *How to Hire a Ghostwriter: 5 Questions to Ask First*
- *How to Interview a Ghostwriter: Reading the Consultation Call*
- *Writing Coaching Service*
- *The Ghostwriting Guide: How the Process Actually Works, Start to Finish*
- *Ghostwriting in the Digital Age: The Tools Changed, the Craft Did Not*
- *How to Write a Memoir*
- *Books Build Trust, Not Just Revenue: Why a Book Is Your Best Business Asset*
- *How a Book Builds Your Personal Brand: From a 54-Book Ghostwriter*
- *How a Ghostwriting Project Works from Start to Finish*
- *How to Choose Between Ghostwriters: A Decision Framework*
- *Ghostwriting Confidentiality | What Clients Should Know*
- *How to Structure a Thought Leadership Book That Wins Clients*
- *Ghostwriting FAQ*
- *Eight Ghostwriting Misconceptions That Stop People From Writing Books*
- *Book Coaching: What It Actually Looks Like and Who It's For*
- *The Business of Ghostwriting: Pricing, Positioning, and Getting Found*
- *I Don't Know What It's About*
- *The Story That Made Me a Storyteller: Why I Became a Ghostwriter*
- *Publishing Types: Traditional, Self-Publishing, and Hybrid Compared*
- *How to Write 10,000 Words a Day*
- *Ghostwriting Cost Breakdown: What a Book Actually Costs*

Contact *The Writing King* today to discuss your book.

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- *Why Hire a Ghostwriter | What You Get and What It Costs*
- *Ghostwriting Speeches: Writing for the Ear and the Moment*
- *Ghostwriting a Book About AI Without It Going Stale*

WHAT I DO

Everything I offer starts from the same place: you know something worth putting in a book, and the book is not getting written. Where you fit depends on how much of the writing you want to do yourself.

- ✓ **Ghostwriting**. Your expertise interviewed out of you and written as a finished book you own outright. \$1 per word, paid in monthly advances.
- ✓ **Book Coaching**. You write the book; I coach you through every stage of it. Sold in ten-hour blocks, a fraction of full ghostwriting, and the authorship stays entirely yours.
- ✓ **Writing Coaching**. You are handling the writing yourself and want targeted help on a specific problem. \$200 an hour, prepaid, no ongoing commitment.
- ✓ **Book Feasibility Intensive**. Ten hours of structured interviews, a full strategy report, and a sample chapter, so you know what to write and how before committing to a whole book. \$5,000, credited toward a full engagement within sixty days.
- ✓ **AI-Assisted Writing**. AI-assisted books from \$15,000, plus AI content systems for businesses. The voice stays human and so does the judgment.
- ✓ **Book Proposal Development**. A submission-ready proposal to sell your nonfiction book to literary agents and publishers.
- ✓ **Self-Publishing Support**. Guidance and production to get your finished book into print and ebook properly.
- ✓ **WordPress Services**. Website work for authors and businesses who need their site to actually do its job.

If you are not sure which fits, the Feasibility Intensive is designed for exactly that uncertainty. Details are at thewritingking.com/services-twk/professional-writing-services/ or write to rich@thewritingking.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Feel free to send a connection request

After spending 33 years in the computer and information technology industry, Richard decided to take an early retirement to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional writer and published author. Richard is a leader in the computer industry, serving as Vice President of Consulting at Software Techniques and Beck Computer Systems before settling down as Director of Computer Operations at Trader Joe's. During his twenty-year tenure at that esteemed company, he focused on computer security, disaster recovery, warehouse logistics and retail merchandising.

He began publishing under his own name during those years, starting with books on computer security and emergency preparedness. The catalog has grown well past a hundred titles since, across cybersecurity, business, writing craft, and fiction.

A few of the current ones: *Focus on LinkedIn: The Complete Professional Playbook*, *The Ghostwriting Advantage: How to Get Your Book Written for You*, *Publish Your Book: The Complete Self-Publishing Guide*, *Make a Living as a Self-Published Author*, *Family Cybersecurity: Protecting the People Who Live in Your House*, and *The Enshittification of America*. On the fiction side there is *Buttercup*, among others.

The full library is at coolauthor.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



In addition to creating hundreds of articles for the web and blogs, Richard actively works as a professional ghostwriter. In that role, he has completed books on a wide variety of subjects including memoirs, business volumes, and novels. Because of his in-depth background in software management and computer security, Richard has ghostwritten a number of major books in those areas.

A partial list of his freelance works includes:

- KnowBe4's book *Cyberheist*, a 300+ page book about cybersecurity.
- A major book about the Internet of Things.
- Three books about Artificial Intelligence.
- Three books about digital transformation.
- A book about the Metaverse.
- A book about Retirement.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- A book about Office Cleaning.
- A book about Dentistry.
- A book about Scrum and Agile.
- A memoir of an Afghani politician.
- A book about Sales.
- A book about Property Management.
- A series of blog articles on the effect of technology on the trucking industry.
- A series of whitepapers about Augmented Reality.
- A series of blogs about HVAC.
- A series of blogs about Finances.

Today ghostwriting is the whole practice. Richard has authored 113+ books under his own name and ghostwritten 54+ more for clients, covering memoirs, business books, novels, cybersecurity, and technology. The results of that work are described earlier in this booklet.

He hosts three podcast series, including Leaders and Their Stories, and has appeared as a guest on 100+ shows. He has optimized 100+ LinkedIn profiles for executives and professionals, and his own book on LinkedIn sold 15,000 copies in three days.

Outside the work, Richard is a lifelong photographer with an archive of 980,000+ images from renaissance faires, festivals, and events across the country, which is its own long story and occasionally a useful reminder that everyone has more material than they think.

To discuss your book, visit thewritingking.com or connect on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/richardlowejr](https://www.linkedin.com/in/richardlowejr).