



5 Key Qualities to Look for When Hiring a Professional Writer (So You Don't Make a Costly Mistake!)

By Michael J. Dowling

About the Author

Michael J. Dowling helps thought leaders and other professionals write and publish books to accomplish their goals and advance their careers.

When you hire a freelance writer, an element of risk is involved.

If you hire wisely, you'll accomplish your goals and save valuable time. But if you choose the wrong writer, you could end up wasting time, missing deadlines, falling short of your goals, and suffering diminished credibility in the marketplace.

How can you avoid a costly mistake? What qualities should you look for when hiring a writer?

I believe that outstanding professional writers are characterized by five key qualities: *proficiency, efficiency, creativity, productivity, and reliability*. This article tells you what to look for, so you'll get good work instead of bad headaches.

The Five Key Qualities to Look For

- **Quality #1 – Proficiency**

Every time you put something in writing, your image is on the line. A proficient writer will craft clear, concise, creative, and convincing writing that produces positive results and enhances your credibility. A mediocre writer can tarnish your image and waste your time and money.

Michael J. Dowling

Award-Winning Professional Ghostwriter & Editor



“Good writing creates a positive impression and gets the desired results. Poor writing can damage your image, waste your money, and undermine your success.”

While visiting a university’s website, I noticed the following sentence:

Our walking campus tour does not include a residence hall, however the Department of University Housing is proud to offer a special tour of one of our newest residential complex, Eagle Village.

Did you spot the errors? This sentence contains what high school English teachers call a “run-on sentence.” The word *however* is an adverb, not a conjunction. It should be preceded by a semicolon (or a period) and followed by a comma. Furthermore, the word *complex* should be plural.

The errors on this website actually diminish the university’s reputation and undermine its marketing efforts. Maybe the copy was written by a student earning \$10 per hour, but that doesn’t excuse the poor quality. The website represents the university, no matter who wrote it.

“A competent professional ghostwriter will free you up so you can concentrate on your primary responsibilities.”

Good writing will accomplish your goals and enhance your reputation. Poor writing will undermine your success.

To assess a writer’s proficiency, review writing samples.

- **Quality #2 – Efficiency**

Your time is valuable. An inexperienced, disorganized writer will consume your time and energy. A competent professional ghostwriter will free you up so you can concentrate on your primary responsibilities.

Choose a writer who has the skills and experience to work independently, so you don’t have to waste time looking over his shoulder. You should be able to trust your writer to do his

Michael J. Dowling

Award-Winning Professional Ghostwriter & Editor



job, just as you trust your doctor, lawyer, and accountant to do theirs.

An efficient ghostwriter will organize your project to minimize disruptions from your normal routine. He'll schedule phone interviews with you to suit your schedule. As you talk, he'll listen, ask questions, and record your thoughts.

"A creative writer can turn your good idea into an outstanding one. He'll craft your book so it stands out from the crowd."

Then, working from transcripts of your conversations and any additional documents you supply, he'll efficiently produce drafts for you to review. He'll revise these drafts based on your input until you're completely satisfied.

With the writing burden off your shoulders, you'll have more time to think about the content of your communication, which means you'll probably be happier with the final result. And you'll enjoy the writing process more, because you'll be less distracted from your normal day-to-day responsibilities.

- **Quality #3 – Creativity**

A creative writer can turn your good idea into an outstanding one. He'll craft your book so it stands out from the crowd. People will be more likely to read it, remember it, and respond to it.

Style can dramatically affect results. A good writer will use dialog, suspense, stories, case studies, humor, and other techniques to enhance readability. An unimaginative writer may get the basic content down on paper, but the finished book won't deliver the impact you desire.

A creative writer will structure your book to achieve maximum impact. For example, with two of my ghostwriting projects, I used fictional stories to communicate factual information. Commentaries at the end of each chapter amplified the key concepts in that chapter's story.

Michael J. Dowling

Award-Winning Professional Ghostwriter & Editor



Many writers do an adequate job of putting words on paper, but far fewer bring a strong creative element to the writing process. Look for more than just a wordsmith.

To assess creativity, review some of the writer's completed projects and inquire about the conceptual thinking behind them.

“A productive writer will help you generate a healthy return on your investment.”

- **Quality #4 – Productivity**

A productive writer will help you generate a healthy return on your investment. Before he even accepts the assignment, he will want to be sure your project makes economic sense.

Some writing projects produce revenues that are relatively easy to identify and quantify. Others primarily produce intangible benefits, such as greater goodwill, improved communications, enhanced prestige, and stronger branding. Although intangible benefits are more difficult to measure, they are no less real and valuable.

“When projecting return on investment, remember to consider hidden costs, such as the cost of your time.”

When preparing the budget for your book project, remember to consider hidden costs, such as the cost of your time. If you have to closely supervise an inexperienced writer, or if you waste time repeating instructions and correcting mistakes, the true costs of the project can soar. And what if you miss your deadline? How much will that cost you?

There's more to the writing process than writing. A writer who gives you honest feedback based on his knowledge and experience will add significant value to your project. The results you achieve together will far exceed anything you could have accomplished alone.

Michael J. Dowling

Award-Winning Professional Ghostwriter & Editor



An experienced writer who can guide you through the entire writing and publishing process can save you valuable time and help protect you from costly mistakes. Look beyond minimizing writing fees; aim to maximize your return on investment. Focus on value, not price.

To assess productivity, check the writer's references and find out what return on investment he has achieved on previous projects.

- **Quality #5 – Reliability**

“Don't simply try to minimize your writing fees; aim to maximize your return on investment. Focus on value, not price.”

Look for a professional writer you can rely on to deliver top-quality communication products on time and on budget. When your deadlines are at stake and your image is on the line, reliability is critical.

A reliable writer will provide you with helpful accountability. When you are working with someone who is conscientious and prompt, you will be inspired to give your project the attention it deserves.

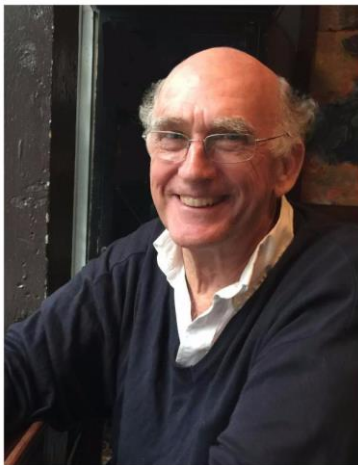
To assess reliability, evaluate attitudes and check references. A reliable writer communicates honestly, relates cooperatively, responds promptly, and serves cheerfully. He makes it *his* goal to help you accomplish *your* goals.

Michael J. Dowling

Award-Winning Professional Ghostwriter & Editor



About the Author



Michael J. Dowling is an award-winning author and the ghostwriter and editor of more than twenty non-fiction books for business leaders and other thought leaders. He offers turnkey services that make the writing and publishing process understandable, cost-effective, time-efficient, and enjoyable for his clients.

Mike earned an MBA degree from Columbia Business School, where he was a Harriman Scholar, and a Bachelor of Science degree with honors from the University of Florida. Prior to founding Wool Street Writers in 1999, he served as president of an educational publishing company, president of a national gift company, and administrator of a 1000-member church.

Learn more about Michael and his services at www.WoolStreetWriters.com.

Contact Michael at
MJD@WoolStreetWriters.com
912.230.5051