

Ten Questions To Ask Before Hiring A Freelance Writer

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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Finding quality writers is not easy. As with hiring any employee or contractor, be sure to get the facts first.

1. What am I looking for?

Before you begin your search for a writer, make sure to outline your needs. Do you need a marketing writer that does brochures? A technical writer who knows Visual Basic?

2. How do you charge?

Many freelancers work on a per-project basis and require one-third to one-half of the fee upfront. Others work on an hourly, per-day or per-week basis. Make sure you get the details before you hire the writer.

3. When will payment be due?

It is a good idea to check with the writer about payment scheduling. Freelance writers are often sole proprietors and reluctant to extend credit to new clients. If your accounting department has a history of late payments, you will lose a talented writer quickly.

4. How will you communicate and deliver?

Be prepared for a virtual relationship with your writer. These days, more and more writers are working via email and instant messaging. In fact, you may not deal with the writer face to face at all! Most writers also work by phone, fax and overnight mail.

Since it is not often profitable to meet in person, writers may not be willing to come to your office.

However, they should be flexible enough to attend meetings if it is necessary for the project. If you require it, be ready to be charged for the writer's time.

5. What type of writing do you do?

Ask to see samples of the writer's work. While most professional writers are talented, they may not have the experience needed to complete the project you need.

If you are confident in the writer's abilities and are willing to give them a shot at your project anyway, be sure to get references. Past clients will be able to confirm that the writer is professional, prompt, and courteous, keeping in close touch with the client throughout the project.

6. What is your turnaround time?

Let's face it, deadlines rule. If writers cannot meet your deadline or fit you in, they are probably too busy to handle your project with care. True, you may have to wait for a qualified writer who is in demand - and it will be worth it if you have a flexible deadline. But if you are on a time limit and the writer cannot meet it, do not expect a miracle.

7. Who will be doing the writing?

Busy, successful writers often outsource writing projects to other writers. Any businessperson who does this will be sure to send the work to someone he or she trusts to do the work to your specifications. However, if you are used to working with one particular writer you may not want your job farmed out. Think about it before you decide.

8. What is included in the price?

Revisions? How many? Will the writer expect to get reimbursed for travel time or long distance phone calls for research? Will s/he charge for meeting in person?

9. What other services do you provide?

Sometimes writers offer graphic design services as well as freelance writing. If this is the case, they might be focused on more than writing your piece - they also have to worry about design, layout and production. If you want a top-notch copywriter, stick with someone who concentrates on writing.

If, however, the writer is teamed up with other professionals or can refer you to designers or printers, feel free to take advantage of this service.

10. I have another project for you. Will you accept?

If you like the writer's work, by all means, hire her/him again! It is good to establish long term relationships with writers for several reasons:

*Reliability and dependability are hard to come by. If you find somebody that works well with you, that you can count on to be professional and meet your deadlines, it is wise to hire that person again.

*Style. A writer, or any contracted vendor, will get to know your company and its products over time. The better they know you and your needs, the better able they are to help you.

*Consistency. If you are using the same person to write all your materials, you will send a

consistent message throughout your internal and external communications. Your corporate image will flourish as a result.

Ask these questions and you are sure to find a talented, hard working, creative and dependable freelance writer with whom you can build a lucrative relationship.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander is a business writer and marketing consultant specializing in web and sales copy. Improve your business writing skills - new ezine coming soon! Call or email today to discuss your freelance project. <mailto:athena6173@qwest.net> <http://www.write2thepointcom.com>

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