

How to Hire a Book Ghostwriter

10 VITAL QUESTIONS
FOR YOUR FIRST
MEETING



By Carol Tice

Do you have a book idea that you've been struggling to write? If so, don't feel alone.

Many CEOs, philanthropists, investors, founders, and other brilliant people have great ideas that they'd like to get out in the world. They want to make a positive impact.

But writing is hard! Most first-time authors quickly discover it's a struggle to weave their ideas into a fascinating narrative.

If you haven't been playing with words as your full-time career, there's a long learning curve to get the hang of it. Nobody's born writing concise, compelling prose.

That's why there are book ghostwriters like me. A talented book ghostwriter will take this chore off your plate and work hard to create the book you want—a book that reads exactly like you sat down and wrote it.



Why Hire a Business Book Ghostwriter ?

There are two main reasons to hire a ghostwriter for your book: You don't feel you're able to write the book you want yourself, you don't have the time to make it happen quickly-or both.

Why might you need a book, and soon? Common reasons for fast-tracking a book with a ghostwriter include a need to:

- Build authority and level-up your career or brand
- Raise your profile and get invited to speak
- Sell a 'book in the back of the room' after speeches
- Create awareness of your skills to book more consulting clients
- Position yourself as the go-to expert in your field
- Share your amazing journey to inspire and uplift others

In short, a book is the ultimate reputation enhancer. No short-form content imparts the gravitas that a book does.



Many thought leaders hire a ghostwriter because they've reached the point where they feel, "I've got to get my book out there, or I'll explode!"

If you've got a burning desire to become a book author, but realize you're unlikely to produce a masterpiece on your own, and you need your ideas out there now... it's time to hire a book ghostwriter.

Hiring a pro puts an expert wordsmith in your corner and makes your book happen fast. The alternative is that your book happens many years from now—or possibly never. Or it doesn't turn out as great as you'd hoped. You're simply not a professional writer.

How to Find a Business Book Ghostwriter

How can you find the perfect ghostwriter for your book? The process is a little like dating. You're looking for someone you hit it off with personally, who has the skills to make your book a must-read that's authentically 'you.'

One easy way to find book ghostwriters is to search for ‘freelance book ghostwriter’ on LinkedIn. Visit writers’ profiles, looking for past titles in the Featured section or in their Experience entries, and at LinkedIn Recommendations for raves from past clients.

Your dream date has ghostwritten books before.

When you’ve found a few promising ghostwriters with experience in your topic, it’s time to schedule a meeting. These days, most happen on Zoom, as the author needs a sense of your personality.

This is a mutual interview. The ghost has to love what you’re doing, and you have to feel confident this ghostwriter will create a compelling book that feels like you wrote it.



Your First Meeting With a Book

Ghostwriter:

Be Ready to Answer These 10 Questions

What is your book ghostwriter going to ask you? Here are the top questions you'll likely be asked, when you first meet:

1. Tell me about your book. What's the title or concept?

If you can't answer this one, you're simply not ready to hire a ghostwriter. You need to have your basic book idea crystallized in your head.

Struggling to summarize it? If so, imagine you're at a cocktail party and everyone has had a few.

A stranger asks what you're doing, and you say you're looking to create a book. "What's it about?" they ask. Your answer is: _____.

If you can't fill in that blank, you're not ready to work with a book ghostwriter yet.

2. Why is this the book you're writing, and why is it needed now?

As with most big projects, there needs to be a 'why.'

Why do you feel driven to create this particular book, of all the topics you might share? What do you know that you feel others don't, but that they urgently need to hear? What's happening in the culture or the world today that makes your idea of the moment?

Creating a book takes months—usually 4-6 months for a full-length business book. Without a strong reason why we need to do this, the project is likely to flame out before the book is completed.



3. How do you plan to publish your book?

There are two basic ways books come into the world: You pitch and land a traditional print publishing deal, or you self-publish, using one of several available approaches. Your book ghostwriter needs to know which lane you plan to drive down, right at the start.

Why? Because the first project you'll do with your ghostwriter is totally different, depending on which way you plan to publish.

The Self-Publishing Journey

If you're self-publishing, the first step is to outline the book (unless you already have). I often do an outline project first off, with authors who are struggling to find the right structure for their ideas.

Book structure is massively important to getting the book read. So unless you don't care if anyone actually reads through your book, you'll want a killer outline.

This is one of the big assets pro ghostwriters bring to the table. We know the options for a structure that'll work for different types of nonfiction business books. A good ghost makes sure your book is structured for success.

The Long and Winding Road to a Book Deal

If your dream is to land a traditional book deal, the first step is to create a book proposal. That's what agents who pitch publishers and editors at traditional publishing houses want to see, to consider signing you as an author. The book proposal consists of:

- A table of contents
- Three sample chapters
- Market research about competing titles and how your book is different
- Your bio, ideally stressing your established authority and pre-built audience that's dying to buy the book
- A marketing plan for how you will promote the book (yes, usually that task is still on you)

The book proposal is a project unto itself. Many ghostwriters charge \$5,000-\$10,000 just for writing the proposal.



How to decide

Here's one important question to help you choose your publication route: Do you need your book out soon?

If so, you're going to want to self-publish. A traditionally published, print book usually takes nearly 2 years to see the light of day, from the moment you start writing. The editing process alone can take a full year.

That timeline assumes you find a publisher the minute you want one—and that's unlikely. The timeline from creating your book proposal to getting a deal extends from now until... potentially, forever.

Most aspiring business authors who hold out for a traditional book deal will never get one. It's harsh to hear, but it's reality.

Maybe you have publishing-industry connections or already have interest from a traditional publisher. If so, great—it's always wonderful to pay for your ghostwriter fees out of your publisher's advance. Otherwise, I strongly advise you to consider self-publishing if you need to build authority now.

4. What is your goal for this book?

This simple question helps your book ghostwriter understand why we're doing this, and what success looks like. It might be anything from helping you get your first CEO job to landing more consulting clients, to simply leaving a legacy and making sure your ideas are preserved for posterity.

5. Who is the audience?

This is a question you want to discuss, because you want a ghostwriter with experience writing to your target audience. If your ghostwriter has been working on children's books but your book is for C-suite executives, you're not a good fit.



6. What's your deadline?

This question should come early in the discussion, because if your schedules don't line up, you can wish each other well and move on. If you need this book in your hand at a conference that's 6 months out and a draft in 90 days, but the ghostwriter is too busy to start for the next 3 weeks, you probably can't work together.

A note about timeframes for ghosted books: The writing either happens on a fairly short, defined timeline, or the timeline is open-ended.

I'm firmly in the first category. I want to drive to completion in 4-6 months. I'm results-oriented. I want your book to see the light of day!

If creating the book is a low priority for you and could be completed any old time 5 years from now, you want a ghostwriter who's willing to roll with that.

A warning: You'll tend to pay more on an open-ended timeline, because if you take forever on the book, there will likely be lots of rewrites. Most book ghosts who work open-ended will charge you hourly, and the bill will keep racking up, sometimes over many years. You also may see some delays, as your project won't be top priority and the ghost will need to fit you in-between more pressing deadlines.

7. How will we write this book together?

This question covers a lot of ground, laying out the mechanics of how we're going to get the ideas out of your head and onto the page.

It might be that we talk for a single hour to give me a sense of your voice and then I do a lot of research and write. I've done one book that way.

You might have a stack of blog posts you've written or speeches you've done, that I'll use to build some of the chapters. Or a list of experts you're friends with who are willing to be interviewed and quoted in your book (and your ghost will want to know how many of these interviews are expected, as they take time, and it does impact pricing). Maybe you've done much of the research and have a stack of data ready to go.

Most often, I've worked from scratch with authors who need the ideas pulled out of their head. If that's you, I've found regular, 1-hour weekly Zoom meetings are usually enough for me to go write a chapter or two. We lather, rinse, repeat until your book is drafted. The regular meetings give you deadlines for thinking through sections of the book, and help keep things moving along.

8. Are you open to an ‘as told to’ or ‘with’ co-author credit for your ghostwriter?

This isn't something I care about, because I've already got two traditional print titles and about 15 self-published e-books that carry my byline. I don't need more credit, and am perfectly happy to stay entirely behind the scenes.

But some ghostwriters would like recognition, possibly because they're still building their portfolio and it'll help them get more book-ghosting contracts.

Consider whether or not you're willing to grant a 'with' or 'as told to' credit, or to maybe give your ghost a 'thank you' in your acknowledgements at the end.

9. Are you aware of professional rates for ghostwriting a book?

Most business leaders looking to become authors have never hired a book ghostwriter before. That means you have no idea what ghostwriters earn. So the fee conversation can get pretty awkward.

Let me help: The basic range for a professional, experienced book ghostwriter to create a full-length business book of around 225-250 pages begins around \$30,000-\$35,000 and goes up from there to \$75,000 and more. Obviously, a shorter book will cost less.

What you'll pay depends in part on the services and track record you want in your ghostwriter.

The \$75K earners usually have a proven track record of selling book proposals to traditional publishers. That fee may cover both the proposal and writing the draft. If you're self-publishing, your ghostwriter should be more affordable (yet another advantage to going that route).

You may be thinking: "But wait, I've heard I could get my book written for \$3,000." And you certainly could. There are plenty of websites online where you can find desperate people willing to write for a pittance.

But this is a serious 'you get what you pay for' situation. If you're trying to build authority with your book, it needs to be great writing, not hackwork. You're asking someone to spend roughly 6 months of their life dedicated to turning your ideas into a fascinating, compelling read. This person holds your future and legacy in their hands.

You want them to care that this book is amazing, life-changing, and impressive to readers. And \$3,000 does not buy a lot of care. Don't be shocked if the resulting book isn't even grammatically correct.

If getting a brilliant book written for tiny money sounds too good to be true, that's because it is. But if you want to try it, go for it. Feel free to call me after you see the result and still need a book that builds your authority.

10. What additional services might you need?

A book is a business launch. Most first-time authors have a million questions about how they will actually sell their book and make money with it. You may be looking for additional help such as:

- Introductions to agents or publishers
- Marketing or PR help
- A referral to a book editor
- Tips on affordable cover design or book-production providers
- Insights on building successful Facebook/Goodreads/Amazon ads
- Help publishing your book file on Amazon & other platforms
- SEO expertise
- Content strategy or blog-post writing

Big thing to know: None of these things are included in the book ghostwriting fee. That fee covers writing the book. Period.



Your ghostwriter may not offer any of these other services—or they may have some additional skills.

For instance, I usually throw in an hour of book-marketing tips from my own experience, and can refer you to editors and PR people. I also have a long track record driving traffic with blogging and SEO, so I sometimes contract to write promotional content around the book's publication.

Ask a few questions to get a full picture of whether this ghostwriter could be a useful resource beyond the writing phase, for getting your book produced and marketed.



I Can't Afford This. What Now?

If you're having a bit of sticker shock right now, take heart. There are a few budget ways to work with a pro writer on your book.

For instance, you might do an outline project with a pro, to make sure you have a great narrative structure and know your book will get read all the way through. I've done this with authors who then went on their way to write the book themselves.

I usually charge \$2,500 for an outline, with a portion of that fee creditable towards the writing if you decide to have me write the manuscript.

You might also write a rough draft of your book and hire a writer to do a rewrite or polish. Alternatively, you could work with a developmental editor to improve the first draft. These options will be more affordable.



Ready to Hire a Book Ghostwriter?

If reading through this list of questions made you realize your moment to hire a book ghostwriter has come, then I'm excited for you! Getting your book out there is an amazing feeling—and can be transformative for your career and your life.

I hope you find the perfect ghostwriter for your book, and that you're able to realize your dream of becoming a published author.

Wondering if I'm a fit for your book ghostwriting project? Let's talk. Check out my books at <https://www.caroltice.com>, or email me at carol@caroltice.com.

