



HOW TO HIRE THE RIGHT COPYWRITER FOR YOUR BUSINESS

... and avoid misery, confusion, wasted time and money,
and other wretched tragedies.

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INTRODUCTION

Hi! My name is Alexandra Franzen. Most people call me “Alex.” Nice to meet you.



I've been a professional writer for about 10 years, and I've worked on all kinds of writing projects. I've written articles for magazines. I've done transcription and technical writing. I've had a couple of [books](#) published. I've written hundreds of essays—and one fairly awful, confusing one-act play that was never performed onstage, which is probably for the best. But primarily, I pay my bills through ghostwriting and copywriting projects.

Over the course of my career, I've collaborated with over 200 [clients](#) from a wide range of industries—health and wellness, fitness, beauty, creativity, productivity, personal and professional development, and beyond.

Over the years, quite a few people have tapped my shoulder to ask:

- “*Do you think I should hire a copywriter for my business? Or not?*”
- “*Isn't it better if I just write everything myself? Wouldn't that be more ‘authentic’?*”

— “I’ve burned through several different copywriters and nobody seems to ‘get’ me. They never capture my ‘voice’ accurately. It’s been a huge waste of time and money. Why does this keep happening?”

— “Also, um... what is a copywriter, exactly?”

These are great questions!

I put this booklet together to address all of those questions — plus a few others. If you decide to hire a copywriter at some point, I hope my advice helps you to create a successful and fun partnership... instead of a frustrating one!

-Alex

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WHAT IS A COPYWRITER?

A copywriter is...

— *A professional writer who specializes in writing materials for your business.*

Things like: your website homepage, your email newsletter, blog posts, promotional video scripts, product and service descriptions, and other business- and marketing-related materials.

Some copywriters are generalists. (“Websites, blog posts, podcast scripts, whatever! I can do it all!”)

Other copywriters are niche specialists. (“I specialize in writing short, snappy phrases for Facebook ads. That’s all I do.”)

Some copywriters don’t call themselves “copywriters.” You might see someone refer to herself as a “business writer,” a “promotional writer,” a “ghostwriter,” a “wordsmith,” a “writer for hire,” or simply a “writer.”

A copywriter is NOT...

— *A psychic who can read your mind.*

— *A magic bullet who can instantly fix everything that’s wrong with your business. (Sorry!)*

WHAT'S THE POINT OF HIRING A COPYWRITER?

Should you hire a copywriter right now... or at some point in the future?

To quote Bjork: "[Possibly maybe.](#)"

It really depends on your personality, what you enjoy doing and not doing, your budget, and your current business priorities and projects.

It might make sense to hire a copywriter if...

- You have a big vision / project / message that's really exciting, but you're struggling to express that message briefly and clearly. Maybe you've got an entire notebook filled with scribbles, but when someone asks you to "sum it up" in a few sentences, you freeze, panic, or start babbling incoherently.
- You've reached a point in your business where you're feeling financially secure and successful, and you're ready to start delegating to clear certain things off your plate. You feel like, "Whoa. It would be amazing if I didn't have to write my weekly newsletter all by myself every week. That would free up, like, 3 hours that I could use to do other things. Like develop new programs. Or coach clients and make money. Or have sex. And stuff."
- You love telling stories onstage, on air, on camera, and face to face, but sitting down and typing bores you out of your skull. It's just not your thing.
- You have tons of ideas—too many ideas!—and you'd like to sit down with someone to go through the massive pile and figure out which ideas and which stories are the "right" ones to share with your business audience right now.

IS HIRING A COPYWRITER “CHEATING”?

I've had clients say to me:

“I feel embarrassed about hiring a writer to help me sound better / clearer / etc. It feels like ‘cheating’. Shouldn’t I be writing everything by myself? Isn’t that more ‘authentic’?”

Here's my response:

Pretty much every powerful, inspiring, influential person on the planet has a writer—or a team of writers—working quietly behind the scenes to make their boss sound amazing.

You think President Obama writes all of his own speeches? Nope. He's busy running the country! He's heavily involved in his speechwriting—he has specific messages that he wants to share—but he also has a team of writers who help to shape his message until it's clear and concise.

Remember the historic “I Have A Dream” speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? Dr. King didn't write that speech all by himself. As reported in *NY Magazine*, “*The first draft was written by his advisers Stanley Levison and Clarence Jones, and the final speech included input from many others.*”

When Jon Stewart hosted *The Daily Show*, same dealio. He was heavily involved in establishing the show's voice and tone, but he also had a team of brilliant, hilarious writers supporting him, contributing jokes and fresh ideas, and making him sound amazing night after night.

Is it “cheating” to hire a professional hairstylist to style your hair before a photo shoot?

Is it “cheating” to hire a web designer to make your website look and function beautifully?

In my opinion: *nope*.

Hiring a writer to help you communicate more clearly and effectively isn't cheating, either.

Much like a hairstylist or a web designer, a copywriter is just another service provider who can help you to look, feel, and sound your very best—someone who can take your communication from “good” to “great,” or from “great” to “legendary.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A COPYWRITER

As you're prowling around the Internet looking at different copywriters' websites and thinking about who to hire, consider the following factors:

— Voice.

Most copywriters have websites, blogs, and lots of articles that you can check out. Some type of "portfolio" or "body of work." Poke around and read a few pieces. Try to get a sense of this writer's "voice."

Does this writer's voice feel soothing and serene? Brash and bold? Goofy and hilarious? Crisp and direct? Warm and comforting? Something else?

Ideally, you want to find a copywriter whose voice feels similar to your own.

If you're goofy and hilarious, hire a writer who is similarly goofy and hilarious—someone who will be able to "channel" your voice with relative ease.

— Belief system.

Do you believe that angels are real and that they're guiding us all the time? Do you run a program that teaches women how to have explosive, spine-tingling orgasms? Are you committed to bringing self-defense classes into every high school in America?

Look for a writer who shares your belief system, and who seems to share your interests, passions, and goals. (Or at least some of them.)

You'll have a much more successful experience if both of you like the same things, believe the same things, and are generally "on the same page."

— Experience.

Do your due diligence.

If you're visiting a copywriter's website, poke around to see where this person came from, and if they're a total newbie or a seasoned pro.

Has this person been a professional writer for many years—or did she slap up this website last week? What kinds of client testimonials does he have? Does she have a significant “body of work” (client projects, personal projects, media appearances, etc.) that proves she’s the real deal?

You can also reach out to past clients and ask, “What was your experience like working with [name of writer]?” to get even more info.

— Working style.

If you decide to hire this writer, what happens? What’s the process?

Are you going to meet face to face? Have a meeting on the phone? Multiple meetings? Or communicate solely via email?

Does this writer typically turn projects around within 48 hours? Or is it a multi-week process with lots of revisions and additional conversations?

Will this writer require lots of input / feedback from you—like daily email conversations? Or will she be able to work fairly independently without much input from you?

Will this writer bill you by the hour? By the project? Will there be a quote so you know what you’re getting yourself into? Will you pay in one lump or installments?

Try to get a feel for this writer’s working style and process, and find someone whose process feels good for you.

If you’re feeling unsure, email the writer and ask, “What’s your typical process when working with clients?” A good copywriter will be able to lay it out for you very clearly.

SMART QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR COPYWRITER

When you're thinking about hiring someone, consider asking:

- What made you want to become a copywriter?
- Who / what is your favorite type of client to work with?
- If I hire you, what's the process? How do you work best?
- Looking back on your career: which project was your greatest success, in your opinion? What made it such a success?
- Looking back on your career: which project was a crazy calamity / disaster / failure, in your opinion? What went wrong?
- What's your pricing system? Do you charge by the hour? By the project? Do I pay at the beginning of our work together or at the end? Will you send me a quote? Or... something else?
- Could we do a small “test run” to see if we've got “creative chemistry” before we both commit to a larger project?
- What do you need from me in order to do your job successfully? How can I be an awesome client for you?

HOW TO SET YOURSELF UP FOR A SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

Once you've found a copywriter that you're excited to hire...

— Do a test run.

If you find a writer that you think might be a good fit, hooray! If possible, see if you can hire this writer for a small “test run” to see how things go.

Ask, “Could I pay you to do a small one-hour project so that we can see if this feels like a good ‘match’ for both of us?”

If the test run goes well and you decide to proceed into a larger project...

— Organize your thoughts using the FEEL. KNOW. DO. process.

If you’re hiring a writer to help you craft language for your new website—for example—try to organize your thoughts in advance.

To get organized, I recommend using what I call the FEEL. KNOW. DO. process.

Here’s how it works:

For each page of your website, ask yourself:

- *What do I want my website visitor to FEEL?*
- *What do I want my website visitor to KNOW?*
- *What do I want my website visitor to DO?*

Think it over. Write everything down. That way, when it’s time to meet with your copywriter, you can hand over very clear instructions for what needs to happen on each webpage. (Instead of saying, “Um... make me sound smart and stuff! OK byeee!”)

Here’s an example of what you might say to your copywriter:

Hey! I’m excited to get started on the new website project.

For the HOMEPAGE of my website...

FEEL. *I want my website visitor to feel welcomed, comforted, peaceful, like this is a soft, safe place to land.*

KNOW. *I want my website visitor to know, immediately, that I am an Addiction Recovery Specialist, that I have worked in this industry for 12 years, and that I don't judge anybody... ever.*

DO. *I want my website visitor to take action to start the recovery process by contacting me to set up a free 15-minute consultation.*

If you can give your copywriter clear instructions like this, your copywriter will cry with joy and do backflips of happiness.

Your copywriter will be able to deliver exactly what you want instead of trying to “guess” or “read your mind”... which usually doesn’t pan out very well.

As the project continues...

— Give specific feedback.

If your copywriter whips up something for you—like a blog post, webpage, or video script—and it’s just not feeling “right,” it’s up to you to steer the project back on track.

You need to give specific, constructive feedback.

Don’t say:

“*It just doesn’t feel right.*”

Try saying:

“I really like the opening line. It feels strong. But I don’t want the entire opening paragraph to talk about how I’m a cancer survivor. That’s an important part of my story, but it’s not my defining characteristic. Instead, in that first paragraph, I’d like to emphasize my credentials—my training and degrees—to let the website visitor know that I’m a seasoned professional. We can mention my cancer story later—like further down towards the bottom of the page.”

Don’t say:

“*It just doesn’t sound like... me.*”

Try saying:

"I typically don't use words like 'bodacious' and 'juicy' and 'nutballs'. Can you strip some of those words out? My dream is that this website will feel like a Japanese haiku. Bare bones language. Very stripped down. Zen. Serene. As few words as possible. Can you do another draft and aim for that kind of feeling? Thanks!"

Be as specific as possible. Try to give precise suggestions ("Could we try ____? What about ____? I definitely want to mention ____.") to steer the project in the direction you want it to go.

— Be patient.

Try to remember that your copywriter is not a magician or a mind-reader.

Just like any other professional relationship, it might take a few projects—and several rounds of back-and-forth tweaking—before your copywriter really “gets” what you’re trying to say to the world and how you want to say it.

Try to be patient with yourself—and patient with the process.

— Keep your expectations sane, humane, and realistic.

If you’re thinking to yourself:

"Hiring this copywriter is going to change EVERYTHING. My sales are going to explode through the roof. My phone is going to be ringing off the hook. Beyoncé is going to invite me to hang out on her yacht off the coast of Capri..."

... Whoa there. Watch yourself. Your expectations might be a tad unrealistic.

Hiring a copywriter can absolutely help to entice new customers and boost your sales. But having the “right language” is just one piece of your business empire.

Consider these other factors:

- Do you have a product / service that actually works? (Do you have evidence—in the form of client success stories, happy testimonials, and endorsements—to prove that?)
- Do you have a functional, attractive website?

- Do you have clear business policies and systems?
- Do you have a strong professional reputation—lots of people who know you, trust you, and who would happily vouch for you?
- Is there “word of mouth” buzz about your work? Do people rave about you to their friends?
- Do you courageously march out into the world to market yourself? Or are you hanging back, doing nothing, hoping that people will just “stumble across” your website and “discover” you?
- When you make promises to your fans, clients, and customers, do you keep them? Do you do what you say you’re going to do?
- Do you believe in yourself? Do you firmly believe that your services really help people, and that your products truly enhance people’s lives? Do you feel grounded and confident in your abilities?

If you’re thinking “No, no, no, definitely no, nope, yikes, no, no...” to those questions, then you’ve got some work to do. You could hire the ghost of Shakespeare himself, but if your business is full of logistical cracks and confidence gaps, then “hiring a copywriter” probably isn’t going to create the overnight transformation you’re hoping for.

There are lots of factors that need to lock into place in order to create a thriving business. Your written materials are a very important factor. But not the only factor.

Keep that in mind—and try to keep your expectations sane, humane, and realistic.

FIVE AWESOME COPYWRITERS TO CHECK OUT

Here are 5 copywriters to check out and consider hiring.

FYI: I don't "get" anything for recommending these people. They're not paying me a commission fee or anything like that. I'm recommending them simply because... they're awesome. And because... sometimes I get fully booked up and I can't accept any more clients myself! When that happens, I always refer folks to these people.

Alison Chino. Alison is an American living in Scotland with her husband and their 4 kids. In addition to writing, she's also a gifted photographer. She loves quiet pursuits—wandering with her camera, reading, reflecting on life's big questions. I would describe her as: spiritual, kind, and brave in a "quiet" way. She charges \$60 per hour. Learn more: <http://alisonchino.com/hire-me/>

Laura Belgray. Laura is a highly respected copywriter who has worked for some of the top entrepreneurs in the world, as well as in the TV industry. I would describe her as: hysterically funny, outspoken, and not afraid to express unpopular opinions. Packages range from \$350 to \$4000 depending on the project. Learn more: <http://talkingshrimp.com/work-with-me/>

Sally McGraw. In addition to doing copywriting, Sally also runs a highly successful fashion / style blog for women called [Already Pretty](#). She's interested in: women's empowerment, body positivity, learning how to love yourself the way you are, and of course: beauty, fashion, style, self-expression, and lots of related topics. She's happy to work on a 4-sentence artist statement, a 200-page memoir, and just about everything in between. Learn more: <http://sallymcgraw.com/services/>

Cher Hale. Cher loves to write and edit materials for business owners, but that's just the beginning! She can also be your "virtual assistant"—answering emails for you, scheduling your social media posts, creating Standard Operating Procedures to tighten up sloppy areas of your business, and managing projects to keep things on track. Basically: she wants to help you look good. Learn more: <http://cherhale.com/work-with-me/>

Woz Flint. Woz does writing, editing, and proofreading. She charges \$35 an hour. She's very kind, caring, and typically offers a fairly quick turnaround on projects. She's interested in lots of different topics, but she's particularly passionate about: animal welfare, children's education, parenting, personal development, and human rights. Learn more: <http://thereshewoz.com/>

WORDS MATTER

Words are so powerful.

Words can change minds, open hearts, spur people into action, even start a revolution.

The right words can help to turn a curious website visitor into a new fan, then a loyal fan, and eventually a paying customer.

Words matter. That's undeniable.

But to revisit one of my earlier points:

Your business isn't constructed with words and words alone.

Consider... Your professional reputation. Your capacity to follow through and keep the promises that you make. Your confidence level. Your marketing strategy. Your Amazon and Yelp reviews. The way you make your clients feel when they're in your presence. The "word of mouth" buzz about who you are and what you do.

All of these factors matter, too.

If you decide to hire a copywriter, that's great! Choose with discernment, do a test run, give clear feedback, and hopefully, it will be a highly productive relationship.

Just remember: your copywriter can't magically "save" or "fix" your entire business—or magically "make" you feel confident in yourself.

Having amazing language is just one—of many—factors contributing to your success.

When hiring a copywriter, ideally, you'll be thinking to yourself:

"I am already awesome. My business is already pretty solid. I'm already making money and influencing people's lives in a positive way. And now, this copywriter is going to help me take my communication from 'good' to 'great'—or from 'great' to 'legendary'. YES! Let's do this!"

If you're in that position—and in that frame of mind—you'll be setting yourself up for a beautiful collaboration and tons of success. Good luck, happy creating, and have fun!

ABOUT THE CREATOR OF THIS BOOKLET



Alexandra Franzen is a writer based in Portland, Oregon. She's a published author whose projects include **50 Ways To Say You're Awesome** (Sourcebooks), **Our Q&A A Day: A 3-Year Journal for 2 People** (Potter Style, a division of Random House / Crown), and several self-published projects, including a novel called **Milk & Honey: A Love Story** and a novel called **So This Is The End**.

Alexandra's writing has also been featured on websites like **Time**, **Forbes**, **Newsweek**, **HuffPo**, **BuzzFeed**, and **Lifehacker**, as well as in song lyrics, on product packaging, and stenciled onto fine art paintings. She has led writing workshops in 17 cities around the world, and one of her events was named one of the "**50 Best Conferences to Attend This Year**" by The Muse.



Additionally, Alexandra works as a ghostwriter and writing coach / consultant. She has worked with tech companies like **Hewlett-Packard**, celebrity-driven brands like **Rachel Zoe's DreamDry**, and hundreds of small businesses and start-ups. She runs a popular newsletter (13,000+ subscribers) and website (just shy of 1 million visitors per year) where she shares personal stories and advice on writing, creativity, motivation, and how to create a positive ripple in the world.

Alexandra lives inside a converted restaurant loft-space with a chef named Brandon and a fish named RuPaul. When she's not typing on her laptop, she's typically running, lifting weights, or fantasizing about her next peanut butter-related snack. You can learn more about Alexandra's current projects at:

AlexandraFranzen.com.

THANKS FOR READING! HAVE AN EXCELLENT DAY.

A few things you can do next:

- Get more FREE STUFF. Free workbooks, free coloring sheets, all kinds of neat things.

<http://www.alexandrafranzen.com/free-stuff/>

- Visit my SHOP to see my collection of books, paintings, jewelry, and more.

<http://www.alexandrafranzen.com/shop/>

- Register for an upcoming WRITING RETREAT. Writers of all experience levels: welcome.

<http://www.alexandrafranzen.com/retreats/>

- Step away from your computer, tablet, or phone. Go outside, feel the sunlight on your skin, take a walk, or head to the gym. Because maybe your brain could use a break from the Internet. The non-digital world is pretty amazing, too.