

## Ten Good Reasons to Be a Ghost

I'm a ghostwriter, and have been for more than ten years. For many years before that, writing was something I did "on the side." It didn't pay the mortgage or put my kids through college; that's what my day job was for. I didn't actually start making a living writing until I began to write for others. Now I no longer live on the sidelines of my own life. Ghostwriting is the vehicle I used to get in the game.

Other writers ask me about ghostwriting, often with an undertone of sympathy, as if ghostwriting was a last resort. When I tell them I love ghostwriting, I don't think they really believe me. But although there are downsides to ghostwriting, there are plenty of upsides. Here are ten of them.

1. You can make money doing what you love – writing. Now I must admit I'm not raking in the dough and getting filthy rich. But I am making a comfortable living, and I am hundreds of times happier than I used to be while making twice as much working for corporate America. There were a few lean years in the beginning, but I'm still here, over ten years and nearly 40 ghostwritten books later. There are many people who long to write a book, but lack the skill or the time to do so – but that doesn't mean they lack the money to pay you to do it for them. It takes time, skill, and effort to write a book, and you can charge accordingly.
2. You will learn many new things. I now know what it was like to fight in the Korean War; how to cure a nasty digestive condition; how to telepathically communicate with a horse; theories of modern parenting; how to make a good compost pile; why not to use male enhancement products; and a history of sauerkraut making. Just to name a few.
3. Your mind and your heart will be stretched, and your tolerance and compassion will grow. You will learn how others think – even others radically different than you. Like actors, ghostwriters play many roles, just on the page instead of the stage. Unlike an actor, I'm not constrained by my gender, age, race or culture. I am a middle-aged white American woman from the West Coast. But as a ghostwriter, I've been an African-American man from New York, a Japanese-American woman, an Iranian immigrant, a self-described redneck from Oklahoma, and oh yes, some middle-aged white American women. I've been any age from 20 to 90. I've been a doctor, an accountant, an entrepreneur, a cop, a scientist, a shaman, a gardener. Etcetera.

4. You will hear and tell great stories. It's a cliché that everyone has a story, but it's true. Everyone's life matters. Everyone knows some interesting things. You can even help people find the stories they didn't know they had.
5. You can give a written voice to those who can't write, or who think they can't. Just because they can't write well doesn't mean they don't have good stories. (See #4.)
6. You don't have to come up with all the ideas all by yourself. You just have to ask questions and listen for the answers. Your listening skills will improve mightily.
7. You can help ideas and wisdom get "out there" that otherwise wouldn't. Perhaps the book you write for someone will change the world in some fantastic way. Books have a long and distinguished history of doing just that.
8. You can help eliminate the stigma of self-publishing if your clients are going that route. Many self-published books are written by amateurs and you can tell. Your skill can make them professional creations instead.
9. Ghostwriting is good for your ego. You don't get any glory or credit. Nobody knows it was your writing that made a book sing, or caused people to weep, or others to cry "aha!" as an idea illuminated their life. Your writing does not belong to you. It belongs to the author, who is not you. Yes, this is a positive thing. It keeps you from getting puffed up with self-importance.
10. You can use your inborn artistic talents in a way that helps people. You were given a gift – you can write – and by ghostwriting you can use that gift to give back. What is more fulfilling than that?

If you are interested in becoming a ghostwriter, my new online interactive program, "Living as a Ghost" ([www.primary-sources.com/learntoghost.html](http://www.primary-sources.com/learntoghost.html)) teaches writers how to be successful ghostwriters and provides a resource for ongoing support. We ghosts should stick together – it can get lonely out here in the ether.

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