

## **Don't be afraid of ghosts!**

### **A good writing consultant can give lawyers' content that extra edge**

Lawyers and law firms often consult with outside writing consultants – or ghostwriters -- for important projects. The lawyer provides legal expertise and the professional writer contributes speed, news context and clear, persuasive style.

*A ghost helps lawyers meet deadlines.* Most lawyers are decent writers. Given enough time, they can compile the law and the facts and pull together an acceptable article.

But lawyers are not always given enough time.

The article, chapter or white paper opportunity that seemed like a great way to enhance your reputation three months ago starts to spark panic attacks as the deadline looms. You know what you want to say, and have a file-folder full of notes and research, but “real” work obligations are pressing and you simply lack the time to pull it all together.

When deadlines loom, a ghost can be a rescuing angel. A good professional writing consultant can interview the lawyer, review the notes and research, and pull together a good draft in very little time. The draft goes back and forth until the lawyer is completely satisfied that the final product accurately and ethically represents his or her knowledge, opinions and professional voice.

*A ghost helps lawyers select topics and venues.* A professional writer keeps up with legal news and can help you choose (or fine-tune) a topic so that it will catch the attention of print and electronic publishers – along with clients and potential clients. Most ghosts are trained and experienced journalists.

A good ghost reads the major national newspapers each day and uses an online aggregator to follow important legal blogs and online legal news sites. The ghost uses this information to provide clients with story ideas regarding both breaking news and emerging trends, or to provide an attractive “news peg” for an article in progress.

*A ghost helps lawyers translate into clear, persuasive language.* Lawyers are schooled in *Bluebook* style, which sets the rules for legal communications. Professional writers are schooled in the *AP Style Manual*, which set the rules for virtually all business and consumer publications – and many legal publications as well.

Often, the greatest value a ghostwriter provides is “translating” a draft from legalese into a clear, persuasive article that will resonate with mainstream publishers and their audiences. Publishers are much more likely to accept an article that complies with their style guidelines (especially length guidelines) right from the start and saves them the task of heavy editing.

Publishers want articles that relate to a breaking news story or a relevant trend. They want articles that focus on providing useful information to their readers rather than “puffing” about the author. They want articles with short, active sentences and paragraphs, broken into sections with interesting headlines and sub-heads.

Finally, publishers want articles with plenty of interesting and timely examples that illustrate abstract concepts in a clear and compelling manner.

A good ghostwriter does not create a lawyer’s article from scratch. A good ghostwriter works closely with a busy lawyer to quickly “translate” legal expertise into clear and persuasive language that resonates with publishers and their readers.