How To Hire A Blog Writer?

narrato
MARKETPLACE

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INTRODUCTION

Serious about promoting your blog and gaining traction from it? Then you know how important it is to create new, useful, and relevant content for your audience. Good blog content is catchy, interesting, revisited, and increases readership, followers, and customers.

However, it's an uphill battle hiring good blog writers. Especially so because every blog's goals, audience, and voice are different. In addition, the content writer should also be knowledgeable in your domain or at least have the capability to comprehend, research and produce valuable content.

A part of the battle can be won by laying out clear guidelines on what are the overarching goals of your blog content, and precise yet succinct guidelines on expectations from every blog piece. This is especially helpful while working with freelance blog writers, who may or may not be a part of your team for a long duration.

With this guide on how to hire a blog writer, we aim to provide you with a practical and workable process to get rich content for your blog on a consistent basis.

HOW TO HIRE A BLOG WRITER IN 4 STEPS?

Good blog writers are not very hard to find if you know where to search for one. Once you do find content writers who fit your needs, it's equally important to hold on to them and get them to create rich content over and over again.

Here's how you can hire a blog writer:

- Set your blog goals
- Choose the right channel to hire writers
- Evaluate, select and establish relationships with a regular set of writers
- Pay your writers and invest in regular training programs

1. SET YOUR BLOG GOALS

Blog goals give an organization clear direction, make the blogging process effective, and help discern the next steps regarding how to hire a blog writer. Your blog goals could be one or more of the following:

CONTENT STRATEGY GOALS

Content strategy goals are mandatory goals that must be in place before the blogging process begins. Identifying these goals and sharing them with your writer(s) is the key to a successful blog. These are critical for hiring good and relevant blog writers:

1. Identify the right audience for your blog and convey this to your writers

Identify your target audience and determine what type of information they expect to receive from your blog – the blog must cater to the interests and needs of your target audience. Segregate your target audience into personas and target each persona with a different set of blogs.

2. Lay clear guidelines in terms of voice and the technical level of the blog

Your audience will determine the blogging style, tone, and level of technical information required in order to maintain consistency and relevance.

3. Decide on broad content themes

Decide on key themes or areas of content aiming to become a knowledge powerhouse on these. Avoid falling in a generalist trap.

4. Decide on the format of the blog posts

Determine the format of the blog – its length, use of images, graphs, lists, interviews, text callouts, and subheadings.

5. Create and provide your writers with a clear set of instructions

Create a clear set of instructions for your blog posts informing your blog writers on exact themes or topics, the format of the blog, SEO requirements, voice and tone, and any other such requirements. This is especially important if you are not working with an in-house writer.

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BLOG SUCCESS GOALS

As a corporate or business blogger, your blog must ultimately increase inbound leads at the very least. A higher goal would be to increase blog-driven sales and revenue. Keep your goals realistic. Some realistic expectations include:

- An increase in search engine visibility
- More traffic to the company website
- Better relationship with existing customers
- An increase in brand awareness
- An increase in the company's online presence on social media sites

Goals are not achieved overnight, but setting goals based on the following parameters will steadily lead to your ultimate goal of driving sales and increasing revenue.

- Traffic to the blog
- Number of page views
- Time spent on the site
- An increase in engagement
- Search engine rankings
- Ad revenue from the blog (if relevant)

Further, your goals should work like an inverted pyramid – starting with a broad outline of long term blogging goals and working down to short term blogging goals (monthly, weekly, and daily goals).

Long Term Blogging Goals: A primary set of goals that define where you want your blog to be in the long run when your blog is established and you have created lots of content

Short Term Blogging Goals: Smaller, more immediate goals that all lead up to achieving long-term goals.

INDIRECT OR BRANDING GOALS

A blog is a powerful means to reach out to an audience and not just for business purposes. Non-business goals or branding goals could be to:

- Voice ideas, thoughts, and beliefs
- Inspire change or simply touch the lives of people in a positive way

With all this in place, you will now have an idea of the type of content you need to create, and how many and what kind of blog writers you need.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT CHANNEL TO HIRE WRITERS

Where to hire blog content writers? Here are the three main channels to find your blog writers:

- Freelance writer platforms
- Content agencies
- Job advertisements (to hire in-house or freelance writers)

There are pros and cons associated with choosing each of these channels. Understanding these pros and cons will help you make an informed decision regarding which channel to pursue.
The decision to pursue a particular channel will also depend on your blog goals and how best they can be served with these options.

A good strategy, if you have the time and bandwidth, is to do small trials using all 3 options and see what suits your requirement the best. The best way to do this is to schedule these trials in order of your preference. If a particular channel works well for you, you needn't waste time pursuing other options.

FREELANCE WRITER PLATFORMS

Freelance writer platforms are websites or applications that allow businesses to get content from a large pool of writers, and a place for freelance writers to find writing work.

How they work:

Different freelance platforms have a different approach to connecting businesses and writers:

- Some platforms like Upwork and Freelancer.com allow you to post projects and get fixed cost or hourly bids on these projects.
- We at Narrato let you order blog content and use smart algorithms to match you to the best and most qualified writers from a large pool of experienced content writers. Our key value propositions are the speed of content delivery, competitive pricing, and ease of ordering content.
- Platforms like Scripted and WriterAccess also allow you access to a large pool of writing talent. You can also make casting calls for writers on platforms like Upwork.
- Skyword and Contently offer workflow solutions along with other content marketing tools while connecting you with a large community of freelance writers. These are expensive and mostly enterprise aimed solutions.

Pros of freelance platform

- Freelance writer platforms allow employers to choose and pick from (or get matched to) a limitless pool of worldwide writers ranging from newbies to experts.
- Freelancers are often SMEs in more than one field.
- You get started almost immediately with freelance platforms and start receiving content in no time.
- A freelancer frees up valuable office space and gives you great flexibility in terms of managing your workforce.
- A lot of the freelance writer platforms let you pay only for the content that you approve and like. This hedges you against bad quality content.
- You have access to a big talent pool ready to work for you anytime.
- There are no long term commitments or contracts.
- Scaling up content production is usually easy.

Cons of freelance platform

- Freelancers might be unavailable to work solely for you on a regular basis or until your project is complete.
- Since freelancers are not tied down to a single job, there is no guarantee that they will stay to complete your writing project.
- Employers have very little or no control over a freelancer's work.
- Many freelancers charge extra for additions and deletions to the content they create
- Freelance writers may not understand how your company's writing tools or software work, slowing down production.

Costs involved:

This varies a lot depending on how the platform operates. Some are more open-ended hiring platforms that allow you to set your own price. Some let you invite bids, while others work on fixed pricing depending on the level of expertise of writers. You can get content for as low as 1 cent/word or pay 20 times this rate. It's a wide range and you can decide how much you want to pay based on your marketing budget and blog goals.

CONTENT AGENCIES

Writing agencies are a boon to companies that don't have the resources, skills, or budget to manage a content creation team. Agencies, depending on their service focus, can offer only content production or also additional services like ideation, content strategy, dedicated account managers, and content success measurement.

How they work:

Businesses can approach content agencies with their requirements and someone from their team gets in touch to understand what they are looking for. The client representative then offers a custom quote/proposal. If the business decides to go ahead, then the project is executed according to agreed terms. The services and solutions offered can be both long or short term (or even ad-hoc) depending on the agency's focus and the business's requirement.

Pros of content agencies

- Content agencies have their own team of vetted expert writers. Hiring an experienced agency will negate the need to hire and train new hires.
- A reliable content or relationship manager is often provided to handle your account.
- Content agencies, depending on their size, can scale up content production quickly.
- Most agencies offer quality control through experienced editors, which is a big plus.
- Writing agencies often offer value-added services like ideation, blog management and creating a content strategy.
- A managed service allows you to be less hands-on and gives you more time to focus on a broader marketing plan.

Cons of content agencies

- Agencies can be expensive, especially if they offer complete content marketing solutions.
- Hiring an agency for a long-term partnership can be prolonged by procedural delays.
- You can expect delays if the agency doesn't have enough writers.
- The content turnarounds are usually slower.
- As you normally don't have direct contact with the writers or content creators, feedback and revision requests are processed slower than expected. Occasionally feedback can even get lost in communication.

Costs involved:

There's a wide range here. The more services the agency offers, the more you pay. For example, an agency like Godot Media offers content writing services at very reasonable prices, but a content marketing company like Brafton would be a lot more expensive. As a thumb rule, you can expect this to be a more expensive option than the other two options; however, the advantage is that your company can do with fewer or no content folks on the core team.

IN-HOUSE AND FREELANCE WRITERS THROUGH JOB ADVERTS

Good old job advertisements are still a popular way to hire in-house writers or even freelance writers. Advertisements can be placed in newspapers, magazines, on the internet, or even at the local coffee shop.

How they work:

Employers put up advertisements stating their writing requirements, years of experience the candidate must possess, the job description, as well as the compensation they can expect. Prospective candidates apply for the position and undergo an evaluation and selection process.

Pros of in-house and freelance writers through job adverts:

- As you work directly with content and blog writers hired this way, you have greater control over the content creation process.
- Even the most inexperienced in-house blog writer or freelance writer will eventually become a subject matter expert over a period of time.
- In-house writers can gain valuable insight from employees.

Cons of in-house and freelance writers through job adverts:

- You may not have the time to wait for newly hired writers to hone their limited skills.
- When new hires join an organization, employees are expected to double up as SMEs and provide them with company and product/service information. Work suffers when they are dragged out of their regular routine to help out in the writing department.
- Freelance writers can be unreliable and may leave suddenly or without completing the project.

Costs involved:

Freelance writers are often inexpensive to work with. In-house writers have additional overhead costs besides their fixed salary.

3. EVALUATE, SELECT AND ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH A REGULAR SET OF WRITERS

No matter what writing channel you invest in, it is important to choose potential writers by a process of evaluation and selection. Simultaneously, it is necessary to establish a relationship with them. Following a process saves time, money, and other company resources that can instead be used for revenue-increasing purposes. The evaluation process differs slightly with each channel.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR HIRING THROUGH A FREELANCE WRITER PLATFORM

If you have chosen to go about hiring writers through a casting call or asking for bids for your project, chances are that you will receive several bids and/or proposals. Although the budget might be a constraint, avoid choosing the cheapest bids.
Review the profiles of the writers who seem to match your requirements. Review previous works and if possible, ask for a small sample of their work on a topic that is relevant to your blog – even if you have to pay for this sample. Work ethics, deliverables, communication skills, and ability to meet deadlines are other evaluation criteria that must be considered. Do not commit long term right away and try to have options before settling on the final set of writers for long term.

If you decide to use a freelance writer platform that directly matches writers to your posted content jobs, then use the preferred writers' option or float the project to only your preferred writers to get the best output. Provide regular and encouraging feedback to this set of preferred writers to build a long term flexible team of writers you can work with. Always keep adding new names to this list by small experimentations outside this set, so that if a few writers stop working because of their personal reasons, you always have new ones to fill in the void.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR HIRING A WRITING AGENCY

Google search and ask for referrals for content agencies. Go through their websites in detail and look at their sample works. If sample work is not provided on the website, ask to see some samples when you get in touch. Make a shortlist of agencies that seem like a good fit, and request proposals for your requirement.

Try to be as specific in laying out your requirements as possible to set expectations right from the beginning and to get an accurate quote.

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When in the discussion, ask questions like – how many writers they have at their disposal, their expertise, types of projects done, turnaround time, and whether there will be a dedicated point of contact. Request a small project to be done as a sample – it is okay to pay for it so you can test before taking the plunge.

When selecting a writing agency, keep an eye out for those companies that are willing to answer all your questions and are proactive about communication. Previous experience in your niche and the ability to provide the same writers for your project repeatedly are an added bonus.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR HIRING AN IN-HOUSE WRITER AND FREELANCE WRITER

The evaluation process should include an interview process where you discuss your expectations as well as review some of the candidate's work. Conduct a writing test that has been divided into at least two parts, with each part testing them on a different parameter. For example, writing headlines could be a parameter that determines their creativity, while writing a blog on a given theme could be an indicator of their ingenuity.

The final selection must be based on their writing experience and the results of the written test. For a freelance writer, selection criteria should include the number of hours they can dedicate to your project, other obligations they are expected to fulfill, availability during your business hours, and the expected turnaround time of blogs.

Eagerness to begin work with you, timeliness in producing sample work and answering your emails are non-verbal cues to look out for.

Establish a relationship with your team of writers

Establishing a relationship with a writer or a team of writers – be they in-house, freelancers, or a writing agency is necessary to retain them.

When you retain good writers, you have the advantage of knowledge retention, lower turnover, faster turnaround, and lower overhead costs. You will also be guaranteed quality work delivered to you on time, every time so you can achieve your blog goals within the desired timeframe.

Here are some tips on how to establish and maintain a relationship with a team of writers:

- Set expectations so there are no misunderstandings.
- Communicate clearly and regularly on changes in guidelines and deadlines.
- Don’t ignore project communication.
- Share your goals and values so there is mutual respect.
- Provide information when it is asked for and be ready to answer questions regarding projects.
- Provide regular feedback.
- Avoid making post-contract changes.
- Avoid late payments.

4. PAY YOUR WRITERS AND INVEST IN REGULAR TRAINING PROGRAMS

PAY YOUR WRITERS

It's tempting to hold back on payments when content is not up to your standard, or you might prefer to hold off payments until you get all your writing work done by an agency. Some companies are even known to hold back on payments until their goals are achieved.

Withholding payments might be convenient for you but it doesn't help your writers. In fact, untimely payments are known to discourage writers, lead to the loss of good writers, and send a message that you and your organization are unprofessional. Eventually, this will lead to mediocre blogs that will lessen your chances of reaching your blog goals.

Here are some tips on how to pay your writers:

- Pay well – you get what you pay for
- Pay on time
- Don't haggle over the price

Don't shy away from occasional rewards. Rewards are incentives to work better, harder, and continue to produce excellent writing material for a sustainable blog. Let your writers know that they are valuable to you and show your appreciation with regular praise, rewards, and incentives.

INVEST IN REGULAR TRAINING PROGRAMS AND FEEDBACK FOR WRITERS

To churn out quality content a writer must understand your business language, products, services and industry, and the business's objectives and philosophy.Depending on the type of training provided, regular training will make writers knowledgeable on the latest information, improve their writing skills and pave the way for new ideas, thoughts, and topics.

How to provide training for writers:

Writers like other employees benefit from training programs.

- Provide regular feedback – and be precise and specific.
- Conduct regular training programs and assessments, especially for in-house and long-term freelance writers.
- Provide opportunities to attend business conventions and interact with the production team.
- Let writers work with the sales team and customer service representatives to obtain firsthand knowledge and information, where possible.
- Provide up-to-date information on products, services, and the industry.
- Provide a mentor to check brand consistency, authenticity, accuracy, and relevance.
- Share company information such as brochures so they can write consistently and with authenticity.

CONCLUSION

There are certainly differences between hiring freelancers, writing agencies, and in-house writers and freelance writers.

At the end of the day, what works for one company may not be the right choice for another. So your choice must depend on your organization's requirements and individual projects.

Superb content will lead to increased traffic, better leads, increased buyer engagement and increased sales regardless of the channel you hire your writers from.