



# Dream of Travel Writing

## Ghost(writ)ing on the Web as a Travel Writer

This week we're going to be talking about ghostwriting, specifically in the arena of travel writing. Now, have you guys ever come across a piece of writing in the past that was ghostwritten? Perhaps it was something that was written by a celebrity or it had a byline at the top of the book that was so-and-so with somebody else?

I think it's the kind of thing that we know about in popular culture but we don't always think about it happening in the world of travel. This is both a fun and lucrative and untapped area of travel writing. That's why I'm excited to talk to you guys about it today.

This is going to be really more of an overview because there's a lot that goes into doing the actual writing or ghostwriting. I'm going to talk about the process, but I'm also going to talk about how to get clients. I'm going to talk about what are the opportunities for ghostwriting in the travel world. This is going to be kind of a one-on-one type session. So if people want more, then we can look at going more deeply into this at a later month.

We're going to start by talking about why do you even want to go into ghostwriting in the first place? Often many of us writers have spent years developing our own voice and our own style and are very happy to have finally found it. So why would you want to do somebody else's voice and how does that pay really compare to other opportunities?

Then I'm going to look at more than a couple different types of businesses that can benefit from ghostwriting that I recommend that you start reaching out to. Then I'm going to talk about the process of how you reach out to them and also how to set up the procedures for that collaboration. Like so many freelance writing client relationships, the less that you leave to chance, the more of a long-term success opportunity you have with your clients.

I've mentioned this a couple times here and there, but it's particularly apropos to what we're talking about today. Before I was freelance writer I worked at a major university and I actually was brought in originally as a ghostwriter. I did a couple other things in my job: we also did events, I did a little bit of graphic design, but what I primarily did, and also everybody else in my area, was that we wrote things that came out under the signature or the academic version of one of the bylines. Under the signature of the president of the university I did a big project for the chairmen, we did things that came from the provost and the deans. So I actually had the opportunity to be trained and work in house in a setting where a lot of ghostwriting is being done.

That's one of the reasons why when I got into travel writing I started looking for these opportunities. The thing is that I mentioned in the newsletter and the blog post about today's



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webinar is that these are very easy contracts to close. Part of that is because when you reach out to somebody about ghostwriting their blog for them, first of all, they probably have a blog that they've been neglecting, so they obviously understand the importance of a blog, they tried to do it at some point and it just sort of fell off.

They know that they should be doing it and they're not and they probably have a little bit of guilt or anxiety about that. The other thing is that the type of companies that I'm going to tell you to get for this are really people who understand that having their voice and their expertise shared with their clients and their prospective future clients is a big boon for their business. The people who get back to you about these types of gigs tend to be pretty ready to say yes. It's just a matter of hammering out those details.

Let's talk more about that. I've got a couple quotes that I've pulled for you guys from some different sources. None of them are particularly about travel ghostwriting and that's good, because it's a field that's not overcrowded. There's a lot of opportunity and interestingly, I came from food writing myself and I know some of you, maybe not some of you on the call today, but a lot of you who might be listening at home later, also do food writing or travel or something combined. There's interestingly been a lot of discussion around ghostwriting in the food writing space.

Less so than in travel. Part of that I think is because it even happens with food blogging. If you look at the food blogosphere so to say, that really matured a lot faster than the travel blogosphere in terms of monetization. There were bloggers who got book deals very early on who went on to open restaurants who now do workshops.

I was just checking out a food writer and photographer that I really like and she has a workshop coming up in Brooklyn very soon and she's charging \$125 just to spend a few hours of the day with her. They really matured faster in terms of blog to business than the travel space.

It's very similar with food writing and the cookbook ghostwriting area. Also a little bit in terms of the magazine writing, in terms of article that appear in magazines but they say they're by the chef and these are their recipes and these are their stories growing up, but those are most often ghostwritten. We'll talk about some ways to do some similar things in travel as well.

I want to share with you some from the horse's mouths, words from people who are out there ghostwriting today. I can tell you about my own experiences, but it's really good to see



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varying people's opinions on this because ghostwriting is a huge field with so many different niches of ghostwriting beyond travel versus food or politics. There's so many different formats that your travel writing can take.

Something I say a lot when I'm advising people to look into setting up ghostblogging contracts with companies is that it's actually probably going to be some of the most interesting writing they get to do. In terms of having the latitude to really tell stories, to do narrative, to do it at a word count that you want rather than a word count that's dictated by what the magazine can manage to fit or the budget to pay you. It really gives you, this type of writing, the opportunity to dig into storytelling, which is something I know a lot of you want to do.

One of the articles that I was reading, somebody said something that, "Some of the best and most rewarding writing that I've done has been ghost. In my case anyway, the lack of a byline allows my normally rather obnoxious ego to take a nap. You don't have to worry about taking the public criticism of your content; you just write."

For anybody who has a personal blog, especially a large personal blog, this probably really hits home. When you are writing to your audience, especially if you have a blog that's open to comments or generally you're in a space where you're in a lot of Facebook groups and there's a lot of opportunity for people to talk about the content that you put up, there's a lot of psychological stuff that goes into your posts. Whereas when you ghostwrite you have complete freedom to just focus on the content on hand. To just focus on putting the words together, describing the experiences.

The other thing of course, is the money. We all are here because we want to earn more from our travel writing and hopefully earn more in an easier way that we're already doing right now.

One of the things about ghostwriting is that it's not just better paid than many other opportunities, but the pay is easier to earn. I can tell you my own hourly rates about this, but I've got a great quote in here that I want to share with you. This comes from an article, I believe it's in Writers' Digest, that was written by somebody that I'm going to tell you about in a little bit that's really just made a killing ghostwriting generally. I have some great books on it.

This quote, which is from Marcia Layton Turner, who's a freelance book ghostwriter specifically, says, "I ghostwrite for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the steady



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stream of revenue. I also find that most cases ghostwriting is easier than authoring a book myself because there is less research to be done. The client/author is generally responsible with proving background material or for pointing me in the right direction.”

This is really key. We can talk about hourly rates and we can talk about the fixed rate of pay for a lot of these things, but it’s really important to remember, when you are both setting up these gigs and also quoting them, that ghostwriting should be easier than doing it yourself. Because somebody else should be giving you the ideas and direction.

That can also make ghostwriting really attractive in terms of if you have a lot of work that you’re doing or you really have to do a lot of strategy, coming up with a lot of ideas and you really have a lot of responsibility on your plate in that way, and you’re looking for a place to just sit down and do the writing. Ghostwriting can also offer you that opportunity.

Let’s look a little bit at the rates. I mentioned that this quote was from someone that I wanted to tell you about and her name is Kelly James-Enger. She’s got this lovely blog, Dollars and Deadlines, which has been around just for ages, I think for probably more than 10 years now. She used to be a big freelance writer for women’s magazines. She would write for magazines like Marie Claire or Elle. She would write a lot about fitness, she also became a personal trainer. She essentially opted out of these one-dollar, two-dollar-a-word-style publications to move into ghostwriting a couple years ago.

Here’s somebody doing what essentially we all want to do. Somebody writing for the big New York magazines, her byline is on newsstands every month, she’s getting paid several dollars for every single word that she writes, and she has chosen to opt out of that to do ghostwriting. Part of it has to do with that other quote that I shared with you about ghostwriting being easier in so many ways.

Part of it also has to do with the hourly rate. This comes from the Writer’s Digest article that Kelly James-Enger had written on ghostwriting, which is quite long and covers a lot of the same bases that we’re going to talk about today, but it’s also similar to this webinar; it’s a bit general. She does on her website go into a lot more detail and she also has a book on it. So if you want to dive more into ghostwriting I recommend checking out her book and her website.

Here’s some of the rates that she has. These are for books that are in similar spaces of writing to those she used to write about: health, business, nutrition, fitness. She has received \$20,000 for one book and that works out to .33 per word. If you think about it, she used to be writing



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\$1/\$2 a word for magazine articles, but there was a lot of back and forth, both in terms of the time spent corresponding with editors as well as the rewrites required for each of those pieces, which drives that actual hourly rate, even though it's a dollar to two dollars a word down quite a bit. In this case, she as the ghostwriter has a lot of trust put into her that she essentially can unilaterally do a lot of this writing.

Also with the kind of book-length works that she's looking at, you can get a lot of extra words in there that they don't scrutinize so closely as they would for a magazine article for a big New York publisher. If you look at that same per-word rate as a 500-word blog post, then you might be at \$165. I know for a lot of you that would be a great jump up from what you're receiving now for blog posts.

Another project that she worked on was a business book that was 40,000 words and for that one she had a .38/word rate, which would be \$109 for a 500-word blog post. She had another one—and this is important, I'm going to talk about this a little bit later—are the different types of ghostwriting in terms of whether the client has provided some writing in the first place. Kelly's given two different examples of that. I want to show you how that plays out in terms of the rate that you receive.

One of them here she had a memoir that the book had been written already but needed reworking. For that she got .22 a word, which would work out to about \$110 for a blog post. If you think about it, I'm sure a lot of you have been in the position where—In fact somebody who was at one of our recent retreats is doing this for About.com—where you've been in the position where you have a client where they have a lot of old blog content perhaps, that they want you to rewrite. Or other types of articles of that nature.

In this case, \$110 for 500 words is a lot more than most of you are getting for rewriting work. That's because of the premium that ghostwriting fetches. Another example that she gave here is that she wrote another book where the client wrote part of it and she wrote the rest. In that case she got about .31 a word, which would work out to \$155 for a 500 word blog post.

One of the things that you may have noticed from when I was talking about my days at the university, and also is evident in Kelly's examples here, is that the people whose names are on these books or in the case of what were talking about, tour companies, the person who is theoretically running the show has so much on their plate. The stark reality that matters is that that person is rarely doing all of the things that people think they're doing.



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This is actually from a New York Times article that's on ghostwriting in the food world, which is very interesting and I recommend that you check it out. But in this case somebody is a recipe developer for Rachael Ray who works in her television show as well as her magazine and cookbooks said that, "The team behind the face is invaluable. How many times can one person invent a new quick pasta dish?"

Obviously this is very apropos to Rachael Ray, but the thing is that it comes down also to people who run tour companies or who do travel planning. I used to say this a lot: that I wrote all about Italy, only Italy for years and years. I got out of that because I had gotten to the point where I couldn't say how to order a cappuccino or a latte that wasn't an American latte at an espresso bar one more time. I didn't have any new ways to say the same thing.

This is one of the reasons that a lot of small business owners, they may have started blogs and they may have not continued with them because since they aren't writers and it's their job every day to talk to clients all day all the time, they feel like they don't have anything left to say on this topic.

Our job as the ghostwriter is to help them find those words. Something that I heard, I believe it was either in university when I studied literature or perhaps sometime in the writing class, but I couldn't find a specific quote, but I wanted to share it with you. It's that "the job of the writer is to make things that everybody feels and everybody knows but they don't know the words for to put that down on paper."

I think that applies especially in fiction and often in poetry, but that really has a lot to do with the work of the ghostwriter. We want to find things that our client thinks, knows, feels, what have you, and translate them in a way that that person thinks is magic. This is the thing that I know can make it a little hard if you want to get into ghostwriting: It seems like that process from taking something out of somebody else's head somehow – we'll talk about how – and turning it into something on the paper than they never possibly could have said seems a bit magical. The thing is, we want that to seem magical to the client. We want it to look like something that they just don't understand.

In a way, it is magic. It takes a lot of psychology and knowledge of the industry and what not, but just because it looks like that to non-writers doesn't mean it needs to look like that to you.

Let's get into this. I also wanted to say, by the way, that we've used these examples of people in different industries and part of the reason that I wanted to show you how pervasive



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ghostwriting is, generally across the board in other industries, is to show you the breadth of the types of people in the travel industry that you can reach out to for ghostwriting.

Kelly James-Enger, who I've mentioned before, had said that, and this is pulled from the article in Writer's Digest, "What you might not know is that most authors who hire ghostwriters aren't big egos or household names. Instead they're professionals (think physicians, attorneys, financial advisors) who want to publish books to attract clients and establish themselves as experts in their field, but lack the time and/or ability to actually write the manuscripts."

She's zeroed in on physicians, attorneys and financial advisors here, but we're going to look at what the types of people with those needs in the travel writing space. You probably are familiar with quite a number of these types of organization and types of people, but you just might not thought of them as potential ghostwriting targets.

There are three basic groups that I want to look at here. The first is tour companies. I've just put a couple on here because these are ones I wanted to give you some examples for, but the types of tours out there, they're just, it's mind boggling now how many tours there are. I've been sharing this quote a lot lately, but I'll bore you with it one more time. It's that the tourism activities market is just blowing up. As you may have seen, AirBnB has moved into the tourism activities market with their Experiences. Viator has recently become a huge name in the market. The tourism activities market just in the U.S. alone is estimated to have 60,000 businesses that are valued at \$20 billion or more.

Just the tour businesses that are that size, or even the ones smaller, that alone is more clients than the whole pack of us that are listening to this webinar would ever need in an entire lifetime. So the tour market alone is just enormous. The thing is that tour companies tend to start small. They tend to be started by an individual, maybe a couple, maybe a partnership that's not a couple, who have an interest in something, see a gap in the market (as in that other people are interested in this thing but nobody's giving a tour about it). Then they start small.

Maybe they give a tour one Saturday a month, then they're doing it every Saturday. Then they're doing it Saturday and Sunday. Then it's Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Now they've quit their jobs because they're getting requests on other days from private groups and they have to set up a company where they can do it sometimes and they can hire other guides to do it for them other times.



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These tend to be companies that, if not now, then once upon a time, were driven by the skill, the panache, the expertise of that person who started the company. These are really great, really ripe targets for this type of work because of that.

Also, because what they are doing, as in what they're doing as their product, which is tours, inherently has both a lot of stories and also a lot of questions that consumers have. "Why should I book this tour? What happens if it rains? What kind of shoes do I need? Should I eat something beforehand?" There are so many questions that customers have.

With tour companies, particularly because they're so customer-intense – as in you have, not just so many customers that are coming in and out every day, but so many customers that interact very directly with somebody from the company who are getting questions. Questions or FAQ's (Frequently asked questions) are a fantastic place to start with ghostblogging for these types of companies.

Quite simply, they're easy to capture, to polish up, to put out there and to answer for prospects before they come in. This is a very easy sell to tour company owners. Where do you get the questions is the next question you might have. But the thing is that in almost any case, the people who are interacting, who are having questions from customers, are doing so in a way that can be very easily recorded.

Either it's people who are in some sort of, not call center, but who work in the office for the company and they answer calls, or better yet, it's over emails so the responses to the questions are already written up and all you need to do is polish them. Or the questions are happening with a tour guide who might be very easy to record. All of these sources of text, so to say, once text is written down, can very easily become blog posts.

Furthermore, like I said, the expertise of the person who started the company is a very specific selling point for the tour company. That's also easily captured because tour guides you can get somebody to record a tour. You can take an hour or an hour and a half tour and pull easily 50 blog posts out of just one recorded tour in terms of anecdotes that are little interesting snippets of the history of the place where they're leading the tour or the back-story of a place that they stop if it's a food tour. Or descriptions say of different types of Italian hams in a place that they visit on a food tour.

There's so many different little easily compactable and selectable and dice-able stories that happen on tours that this is both an easy place to start and one of the ones that I recommend in terms of if you're looking for a very long-term collaboration. There's just so much to do





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and the ROI is very easily demonstrated for the business owners. In the case of a tour company, it's not at all uncommon for somebody to be looking through the website and clicking through the blog post in a very direct path to book a tour.

This is the kind of thing where, opposed to a lot of different types of content marketing where they might be exposed to different mentions of the company in various places and then in a new browser session go to book, it's very common because this is an activity that people book quickly. It's sort of a low spend as far as hospitality spent on somebody's vacation goes. It's a very easily trackable process.

A couple other options here: I mention outdoor adventure tours and this is largely because during the Travel Content Con, there was somebody that was specializing in this. I have looked at quite a few of these recently and one of the companies that we looked at—and this isn't the first time I've seen this—was essentially using their blog as a dumping ground for customer testimonials.

That's bad for two reasons. Because the testimonials should be somewhere where people who are looking for testimonials or who are about to book would be looking. Whether they're looking for testimonials or they could be influenced by testimonials at that time. Testimonials would be much better served in a different location.

Second of all, when somebody goes to a company's blog, they're looking for more curated information. One of the things that can really work for a lot of these different types of companies that we're going to look at but is especially good for tour companies, is a case-study style blog post where you might say—and I'm using the outdoor adventure tours here because it had some good examples—you might have some people who are afraid of rafting or skydiving or something who come into it feeling like they aren't sure.

You can take the testimonial and rewrite it as a case study of how people in the tour company that you're writing for helped this person to then have that great experience and wrap up the blog post with the testimonial. These are posts that don't have to be very long. They can be 300-500 words depending on how long the testimonials are. You as the writer can write them very fast. This is another type of blog post that you can do from the voice of the company owner.

Rather than saying, "So-and-so wanted to go on blah blah tour and wasn't sure," and writing it all in this very third person kind of way that case studies are often written, you write it in the first person and you say, "When so and so called me..." because you're writing as the



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company owner "...about rafting with their family because it was their wife's favorite thing to do when she was small, he told me that he personally had never been rafting and was afraid of it and wanted to make sure we went on some docile rapids. Over the course of planning the private trip for this family we were able to work out a path that showcased this natural attraction and that scenic viewpoint while still keeping in the boundaries of what my client's husband was OK doing."

Then you include the testimonial from the husband saying that he never knew he would enjoy it, this was the best experience he's ever had with his family and he plans to come back every year.

That's how you can take another type of text that's already written, which is a customer testimonial, and still turn it into a first-person story.

One question that often comes up with ghostwriting is, "You don't know what was said on that phone call or you don't know exactly what the exchange between those people was so how can you write it up? This is the same question we have when writing articles. "What if I didn't take notes on what the barista said to me about the coffee and I just kind of have some general notes but I don't have his exact words? Can I still call it a quote from him?"

There's various ways to do that in journalism, but when you're ghostwriting a blog for a company, as long as a company owner signs off on it or the person you're ghostwriting for, it's totally fine to put words in their mouth and to essentially make things that you don't have first hand knowledge of into a proper narrative arc, into an interesting story.

Let's look at the next subsection of organization that you can do ghostblogging for as a travel writer. These are brick and mortar travel locations. We think a lot about boutique hotels because when we go on press trips we are often either visiting them or staying in them. I can't tell you how many site visits where they kind of parade you around a hotel and tell you about all of the square-footage of the ballroom and the amenities and the spa I personally have been on, but these are really great options for us as ghost travel writers.

Because all these venues are competing in this incredibly crowded marketplace whether they're wedding venues or hotels or attractions. For them both to stand out once someone is interested in them and particularly to stand out for people who don't even know about them and can't find them, a blog is an incredibly valuable asset to show the expertise of the staff as well as the unique opportunities and amenities of the location.



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Especially with hotels, but also with venues and attractions, you can ghostwrite as more than one person. This is kind of an interesting trick. Rather than just ghostwriting as the owner, let's say we're talking about a wedding venue that's a dude ranch. Rather than just ghostwriting as the owner, who has had this property for four generations, you can also ghostwrite as his wedding planner and you can also ghostwrite as his wrangler, who helps the bride and groom get on the horses for their adventurous wedding photo shoots. You can ghostwrite for more than one person in one business.

What's very cool about that on the one hand is that it's fun for you as the writer because you get to play with different voices. It's kind of like you get to be an actor-writer in a way. On the other hand it also gives more depth to the company's blog because it looks like more people are involved in the customer-facing aspects of the business. And they are! They are involved with the customers who actually show up on site, but now you're making those people accessible to people who haven't yet been to the venue.

It also shows that the company has a lot going on. When you're ghostwriting as just one person, or when you have a blog even that's not bylined by anybody and it's just the corporate tone, the reader is interacting with one person. They're interacting whether it's in the corporate tone or with the actual owner of the company and they don't know what the size of the company is. They don't know how established it is. But when you're giving multiple voices in that blog, it creates this community feeling that from a psychological perspective can be very powerful at calling people in in terms of them wanting to be part of something.

Here are a couple opportunities, especially for types of blog posts that you can do for these things. I put wedding venues on here because I cannot even tell you how many wedding locations are just springing up out of nothing in tiny communities all over the place. When I used to write for a lot of travel trade magazines I was often looking up meeting venues in places that were very rural locations where I thought, "I'll be surprised if I can find anything halfway decent besides the Springhill Inn and Suites hotel."

But there was just an enormous number and variety of people who were opening up formerly not used or only privately used venues for weddings. Part of that is because it's a big business. So when you're blogging for wedding venues, it's also a great monetary opportunity for you because they really do charge enough and you can go on their websites and check how much they charge. They definitely charge enough to pay you to be doing their blog. And when you're ghostblogging either as the owner of the venue or a wedding planner, it's so important for brides who are coming in to feel like they really have a connection to a place.



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That voice, that personal voice rather than a company voice on the blog is a huge step toward doing that. But then what should you be writing about? When you have a wedding venue blog, which is first person as opposed to third person, that gives you the opportunity to take those case-study style posts that I was talking about and put them into a fact.

For instance, in this case with the wedding venue, you could talk about how somebody wanted to plan their wedding and it had a unique challenge. Maybe she was going to have more people or she really wanted to have the wedding in one part, the reception in one part, and the dinner in another part and they were quite far away. Then you can talk about how you met that challenge using horse-drawn carriages and all these different things.

What happens, how you sell to the client, is that by showing these case studies, you're showing potential bookers, potential clients, what they could do. Also how you work with them to customize things.

I used to have a lot of venues tell me, if I would ask them what they do for a tour—this is less so in the wedding area and more just in terms of attractions—what they do with the group on a private tour, they would always tell me, “Whatever you want,” or “They're all completely customized.” I used to get this from so many museums.

OK, fine, I understand that you customize it, but I need some example that I can tell people in this article I'm writing about what they're going to see on your tour. You need to tell me something.

That's the same feeling that a lot of customers, especially with weddings. You have perhaps on Instagram or Pinterest or whatever, your own personal look book of what you're thinking of, but you don't know if that's possible or what's possible or how flexible the venue is at the place you're looking at. So having those sort of case studies for a wedding venue is a huge selling point. Like I said, they totally have the money for you.

With weddings, as well as boutique hotels and also with attractions, there's another type of really great blog post that I recommend pursuing, which is the back-story blog post. This is the kind of thing where you take a tiny, tiny seemingly insignificant detail in the site, in the physical space, and talk about how it got to be there.

Perhaps it's an interesting sculpture or other interesting architectural element. Or perhaps it's the furniture, which was sourced from somebody's grandmother and so on and so forth. But



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you take, essentially, a snapshot, a tiny slice of something in the physical space and dig really deep into its history.

This is also called an object lesson. This is the kind of thing that works much better as a first person blog post than as a third-person blog post because when you write as the owner saying, “When we found out that we were going to get this property it was very sudden and we weren’t prepared to fill it with all this furniture, so my wife’s mother said, ‘Well, let me talk to our great aunt because I know she has all of these antiques that she is probably going to get rid of at some point. Maybe she’ll just give it to us early.’”

And you can essentially just go through the story of how something in the venue came to be. These stories don’t have to be completely complex and incredibly narrative, they just need to be giving personality and life and three-dimensions to the venue.

With boutique hotels, these are often in historic spaces where the stories might not be specifically those of the current owner, but perhaps they’re stories of the past owner or people who used the space for different purposes before. You can still do that story in the first person voice of the present owner.

With stories, the way to get them from the owners or the staff members is either by hopping on a quick easy phone call and interviewing them the same way you would interview the people for any article that you would be doing, or you can also, similar to with the tour guides, have them record themselves when they’re telling these stories to other guests. There’s a lot of different ways that you can source these stories.

Another thing that I put on here under attractions, I specifically put especially small and quirky ones and I wanted to qualify that a little bit. When we think of attractions we tend to think about one of two things. Three things. We think of major landmarks, for instance here in NY we have the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building. We think of natural attractions in terms of Mount Rushmore, the Grand Canyon. Then we think of theme park sort of attractions. Something in a Harry Potter World kind of thing.

But there’s a lot of attractions that people visit or have interest in that really don’t get so much attention from travel writers, especially travel writers who are doing content marketing. These are often things that are very rich with stories. It might be a pottery workshop that has since the 1930’s hosted some of the country’s top potters in residence or has perhaps been in the same family for four generations and now the four different siblings of this generation each have a different pottery style.



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Or it could be a historic home. In that case there are often tours going that you can record to get great stories from very easily. But with attractions, it can often be very useful to take this multi-ghostwritten author approach. Some blog posts might be from the guest-relations coordinator. Some blog posts might be from one of the tour guides. Some blog posts might be from the group activities planner. This multi-author ghostwritten approach can be a lot more fun for you as the writer, but it also has the added benefit that you can charge a premium for it.

As I mentioned in the blog post and the newsletter that led into today's call, there's a lot of things about ghostwriting that you can charge a premium for. One of them is when you aren't allowed to mention that that person is your client. Another one is if they want to buy exclusive rights to the words. Another one is, and this is a great options to add because it's fun for you and it's a lot more useful as well for businesses of a certain size, is this multi-author ghostwritten blogs. That's definitely something that I recommend that you guys look in to.

The last category that I want to talk about in terms of companies you should approach are travel planners. So there are different people, and when I say people I mean organizations, but there's several different types of companies in this arena. Like the other lists, this is not a complete list. I wanted to start by talking about reward travel planners. Award travel bookers.

Largely because a lot of them already have their own websites so it's a really good way for you guys to go and see the type of content that a company that does travel booking of some sort should have on its blog in order to entice customers.

Award travel blogs are this area of the travel industry that is so far ahead of most travel blogs in terms of monetization, and I mention this often. Similar to many travel blogs, they talk about destinations, they do reviews, they do trip reports, they do round-up posts, they do travel tips, but then they also do a lot of monetization of the service variety. That is often award travel booking.

What award travel booking is means that, say you have accumulated points for years and years and years that you want to use on your honeymoon and you want to get first class round trip tickets for you and your significant other to the Maldives. You want to stay in an over-water villa. This is the Maldives dream. I did this on my own honeymoon and I got food poisoning in India and didn't really see any of it, but it's the Maldives dream.



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Say that's something that you've always thought of, you have your points, you go to book it and you look on Delta and it's going to cost you half a million points each for those flights. You say, "Oh my god, I don't have that many points! Why did I think this was possible? I saved all those points for years! What am I going to do?"

These award travel bookers, what they'll do is you tell them all the points you have and what you want to do and they have an incredible amount of knowledge in terms of exactly which flights have how many award seats. That you need to book this flight on Delta through Air France rather than directly through Delta because it will only cost 1/3 the number of miles. All of things they just have at the tip of their fingers. They'll charge you \$100 a person and it'll take them five minutes to book those flights for you.

They have the monetization completely down and they've built up these enormous blogs to funnel business to them through this expertise. One who has quite a lot of people writing for him and also a large amount of destination content that's not around travel bogging is The Points Guy, also referred to as TPG. But another really great one that I recommend is by Gary Leff. Another one is Million Mile Secrets.

Those three are really some of the bigger travel bloggers out there who all have concierge businesses that I recommend you check out to see the breadth of the type of blog posts that can be done for people who have various types of travel booking businesses. But there's several other types of travel booking businesses.

One that I mention a lot, because these are a really great target for ghostwriting, is the sort of subset out there known as concierge travel planners. This is always a term that kind of confuses people who aren't familiar with the group, so I want to explain it in a little bit.

Somebody who is a concierge travel planner acts as a concierge sort of in the same way that a hotel would, except not on demand all the time. If you think about the concierge at the hotel, they're somebody who has a lot of information about different activities, the best person to go to if you need your shoe fixed when you're on your vacation, the person who can get you theatre tickets, who can get you restaurant reservations, all of these things. Who can recommend a driver to you if you're in India and you need to be driven around for the day.

These concierges in hotels are very similar to concierge travel planners in terms of the different types of knowledge that they have. However, concierge travel planners tend to do more or less in one go often through a couple different phone calls with the client, the entire



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trip plan for clients. Usually it's individuals, sometimes it's groups, but essentially these are people who plan trips for people of a certain income level who can pay for those things.

Sometimes they're really not as expensive as you think. They're charging similar to the award travel bookers; they're charging a flat fee for the conversation and then they take a commission off of the things that they book for you. These people trade on their expertise, on their personality and on more or less their black book. I looked at this in one of the other calls, but they're often a bit reluctant to share the things in their black book, but if that's the case, there are still a lot of things that you can do in terms of ghostblogging for them.

You can have them talk about experiences that they've had in the region, you can do something more along the lines of not exactly an itinerary, but them talking about their perfect day in a place and not name exact venues, but talk about how they would go to this garden and then they would have this sort of pasta for lunch and then they would have a gelato of this flavor in this season because that's the best time to get this flavor and they would check out the Uffizi at this time of day because that's when there are fewer people, things like that.

These people really trade on their personality and their recommendations. So they're a very good place to start, a good target group. However, and I'm going to mention this a little bit when we talk about the process, is that you need to have either a very high level of expertise as a ghostwriter or a lot of experience in the place where they operate.

Concierge travel planners tend to have a specific geographic area of expertise, whether that's the English countryside or there're some travel planners that are adventurous even though they're high end. So Banff National Park in British Columbia, but they typically have a certain geographic area where their M.O. is that they know everybody and all of the best things.

You can start looking for things that match up to geographic areas you know well and reaching out to that.

Another subset of travel planners is group tour operators. There is an astounding diversity of group tours out there right now. I don't just mean by age or by interest group. There are group tours that are operated by banks, there are group tours that are operated by alumni groups. AFAR does group tours, there are so many types of group tours. There are a lot of companies that specialize specifically in group tours.





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A lot of the different types of blog posts can apply to blogging or ghostblogging for group tour operators. Also the technique of blogging as multiple people so you can blog as different tour guides as opposed to just the company owner.

But another thing with group tours is that there are often a lot of questions. This is the same with the award travel bookers and the concierge travel planners of course, but traveling in a group inherently has more uncertainty than when you have a specific itinerary that's designed just for you, which is the case for the other two. Those sort of customer service FAQ-style blog posts can really do very well with the group travel operators as well.

With travel agents, this is an interesting thing. I'm sure some of you have been in the situation where you're on a press trip sort of thing, which is called a FAM trip or familiarization trip, and you're on it not just with writers but you're on it with travel agents. Travel agents tend to take a lot of trips themselves to check out places, to see the hotel, to figure out which are the best rooms, what they want to recommend to their people.

One of the things with travel agents is that a very good type of post that you can do for them is the type of trip report post or the "hidden gems I uncovered here" type post. Similar to what I talked about with the weddings, this is the kind of the thing that by showing some examples of what you have in your repertoire, you're showing potential customers what the options are for them, while at the same time inviting them to come and discuss with you what would work best for them specifically.

I've talked a lot about ghostblogging because it's easy to get into, especially if you've had your own blog in the past and have some expertise in blogging, but I want to point out that we talked a lot earlier about ghostwriting books because books tend to be a more well-known field, but there's so many different types of ghostwriting in travel that you can do.

I've mentioned apps on here because this is something that I've seen a lot of companies getting into, but in terms of ghostwriting, one of the big ones is often newsletters. Many companies, especially small companies, really like to have that come out under the signature of the business owner. But you also have to think, "how do people get on the list to get these newsletters in the first place?" Sure, it's past customers, but what about people who aren't customers yet? You can also ghostwrite books or email series to get people to sign up for the newsletter in the first place.

Then of course there's the area of books, which can be authority or vanity. A vanity book would be the kind of thing that a hotel or wedding venue or an attraction might have on site,



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on venue, which is talking all about the place itself. Whereas an authority book would be more written by a concierge travel planner about the region that they're familiar with in terms of travel tips that establishes them as an authority in that area.

Other things that are more or less blogging but not on one's own blog that are also authority building are articles of medium length which you can do using the same blog posts that you're already writing for people. Then social media posts; this is another one. I always caution you to be quite careful about getting into social media writing or social media posting for companies just in terms of the time involved, but if you're already doing ghostblogging, it's a very easy, large squidge sideways to pull some text out of there to put into a social media post for your client.

Another one is trade magazine articles. This is one of these areas where I mentioned earlier that Rachael Ray has her own magazine and a lot of those are "written by her" whereas they're actually written by other people. There are a lot of the trade magazines that we looked at that aren't really open to freelancers because they're written for free by people who work in the industry for exposure.

For them they're happy to have that exposure because they're not professional writers, but the interesting Catch-22 here is because they're not professional writers they're not very good. So a lot of the time they will have professional writers ghostwrite those pieces that they're having published for exposure. So that's another thing you can get into as well: writing for magazines as a ghostwriter under the pen name of the people who run these travel companies.

I want to talk a little bit about the process. How you break in is very similar to what we've talked about in other types of blogging, especially those of you who caught the webinar a few weeks back about how to sell blogging as a service. You'd be pitching these people cold. I don't think I've ever seen in travel this kind of thing advertised for you to be ghostwriting for a company owner because they don't want their competition to know they're using ghostwriters. So you'd be cold pitching the owner as you would with other blogging gigs, but your prospect list needs to be quite focused around companies that would benefit from ghostblogging.

Meaning that the personality of the company is important as a selling point to prospective customers. Particularly ones that already have blogs or newsletters if you want to that route, in place. Because the process of getting that set up for a small company can take a very long time even if you're doing it in the off season if they haven't already started down that road.



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As I mentioned, authority in the field that the company operates in or in ghostwriting, you can go one or the other, so if you have a background in ghostwriting or blogging you can kind of move sideways into some different things, but I really recommend for your first gig that you approach like this, to take companies that specialize in the same things that you specialize with or your prospect list.

I mentioned that we'd get into this and there are really three levels of ghostwriting. Similarly in editing you'll see people talk about structural edits, developmental edits, line edits. There are a lot of different types of editing, and that's very similar to the different levels in ghostwriting. It's important to note here, that you should be charging differently for different things. Oddly, it doesn't just go up or go down, the middle should actually be the least expensive part.

If somebody fashions themselves a writer and has a 1,700-word stream of consciousness, sentences aren't complete, beginnings of sentences are in lowercase. I say this by personal experience; this isn't just me making things up. Things that they think are blog posts that they want you to polish up for them or rewrite, that can actually end up taking you much, much longer than just writing a good post in the first place.

Part of that is because the idea that started that piece of ineffectual writing is inherently flawed. This is the same problem that comes up and that I've no doubt talked to several of you who are on the call about, where when you start to pitch an article idea to an editor, and they look at that pitch, we often end up not discussing the words of the pitch at all because the idea isn't right for the magazine. It's not narrow enough, it doesn't have a good enough time peg, it needs to be in a different format, something like this.

If somebody has a bunch of things that they've written and they want to write it and give it to you, I recommend declining that. You're much less likely to generate blog posts that are effective in their aim – which is to get people to book whether it's an attraction or a travel planning session or a tour – if the ideas aren't generated in the most effective way in the first place.

What I really recommend is this second category. I've sort of edited it to say it's less their ideas and your words than collaborated ideas and your words or ideas that have their input. Because the last category on here – Your ideas and their words, kind of the reverse of their ideas and words – inherently is a little tricky because two things can happen.



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If you are essentially coming up with the ideas and writing the blog posts with a very high degree of autonomy, there can either be a lot of micro-management, which makes your hourly rate go down, or lack of micro-management, which makes the end result not so palatable to the client. Both of these are slightly dangerous things. You can manage the process, but I've always found the happiest medium to be where there's some collaboration in terms of the vein of the ideas, how they're sourced, perhaps a shared list that you work from together, and then you write the words based on that and based on their style.

I've done this both in travel and also I ghostwrote a blog on freelancing for several years as I mentioned at the university. I've always found that when there's that bit of input, a buy-in, an ownership – but not too much – from the person who gets the author credit, they tend to be much happier with the end result because they think it was their idea even if you're managing it and really changing their idea to really be in line with what will resonate with people.

In that vein, like I said, the most important thing that makes the difference between their ideas and words, their ideas with your words, or your ideas and words, is the division of labor and the process. It's really important in your discussions, but particularly in your proposal on your contract, to be excruciatingly clear on who provides what to whom and when.

What that means is how far before the posts come out do the ideas need to be agreed upon and how long before that do you need to present the ideas to the client? Do they need to review the post before it gets scheduled? If so, how much time do they need in advance to make sure they get it back to you in enough time for you to make the edits? Who is putting the posts into the content management system? Who's finding the photos and selecting the tags and the categories? Who's responsible for the final editing?

When I do ghostwriting, I'm typically responsible for the final edits and I schedule it and it goes out. What that means is that I work with an editor or a copywriter or a proofreader or whatever to edit those things for me so that I can always say to the clients, "This gets a second pair of eyes before it goes out." That also kind of saves me from being ultimately responsible for that text.

I really recommend that you do your ideas in batches rather than going back and forth every week about what the idea is going to be because you're going to want to kill yourself at the end of the process. You're going to spend so much time on email with this client and you're also encouraging them to be more involved in the process and more communicative which makes sense for your hourly rate.



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Similarly, it's really important to clarify how many revisions are allowed. I think with my clients I usually do one round of revisions, perhaps in the early stages I do up to two and that's on the posts, not on the ideas. The ideas need to be essentially back and forth and we're done. I see this a lot with graphic designers because they have a codified way of doing the back and forth. With writers I essentially think you just have a lot of emails and you don't really think about the stages and the number of rounds of revisions you have.

But with graphic designers, say you're working on a logo, they tend to give an array. They would first give the client some very different logos. The next step is to take the ones that the client liked and to give a couple similar ones. Then they have to pick one. Then they get 5 or 6 versions that are similar but very slightly different. Then they have to go with that and that's it. They don't get any more rounds than that. I've seen graphic designers essentially cut off clients who want that first stage, the many options stage, to go on for too long.

It's very important with your clients to not only set clear expectations, but to have them in writing and in something that's signed and agreed upon like your contract. Similarly with the technical tasks: who selects the photos, who uploads the photos, who puts the entire post into WordPress in the first place? Those are some points in particular and if you have the Six Figure Travel Writing Roadmap, my book, or if you don't have it yet, I recommend it for this purpose: in the back, in the appendix, I have 4 different examples of proposals. Several are for ghostwriting to show you how to delineate and negotiate and spell out these different aspects.

That's all that I've got for you today. Thank you guys so much for joining me today and I hope that you guys had a lovely labor day if you're in the U.S. and that you have a great weekend.