



Invisible ink

Ghostwriters might not see their name in print, but the work is varied and in demand

I AM A GHOSTWRITER. I am often on the job writing articles and books for someone else. For example, writing as a military wife, I dished out heartfelt feelings in a woman's magazine about my husband's service in Iraq. Writing as a witty English doctor, I prescribed anti-aging secrets in a self-help book. Writing as my sensitive mixed-breed cat, I dispense advice to pets and humans in a bimonthly horoscope column.

Sound like fun? For writers who don't mind losing a byline, ghostwriting is an interesting and potentially lucrative career option. Here are five reasons why you should consider this often overlooked writing path.

1 Interesting assignments
Ever wish you were someone else? As a ghostwriter, you can live your dream vicariously—without having to get credentials or be reincarnated. Being a “ghost” is like channeling into someone else's body and mind. For example, I write for my 5-year-old cat, Kerouac, who pens the column “What Do the Stars Hold for Your Pet?” for *Pet-Folio* magazine. Not only is his name on the masthead, each column pays \$50. In addition, I sold an article “by” Kerouac to Pet-Place.com for \$100 (which should keep Kerouac in cat food and kitty litter for months).

Eric Neuhaus, a New York City ghostwriter, did the writing



and more for the book *The World's Fittest You* by Joe Decker. As part of the assignment, Neuhaus and a diet consultant cooked up healthy versions of traditionally unhealthy dishes such as meatloaf and fajitas. “The kitchen in my one-bedroom apartment became the test kitchen,” Neuhaus says. “I bought another book on how to write recipes. All of this was trial by fire. I never thought in my wildest dreams that I'd be testing recipes.”

Ghost tip: “If you enjoy people, ghostwriting is a way to delve into some of the most unusual

people on the planet,” says Marc L. Weber, president of Ghostwriting Unlimited, Colorado Springs, Colo.

2 Big-money potential
There is more to ghostwriting than just having fun. Neuhaus will tell you that being a ghost pays well, as it did with *The World's Fittest Man*. After writing a 60-page book proposal, his agent shopped it; an auction followed. One day, “my cell phone rang and she told me, ‘You are going to be a published author. We got our first bid.’ ... The final bid from Dutton was [in the] six figures.”

Judith A. Habert of San Diego, Calif., has ghostwritten books, brochures and informational booklets. “The money can be very good,” she says. “One reason is that they have to pay for your silence.”

Kidding aside, some book advances can make you smile. Case in point: I just signed a book contract for a five-figure deal, travel expenses and bonuses. For the next five months, I will feel financially secure as I ghostwrite about a fascinating and controversial topic. How rich is that?

Ghost tip: “If you think the book isn't going to get that six-figure advance, settle on a fee upfront for your services,” Neuhaus says. “If you think it is going to be a blockbuster project, then