

(Prior to a pivot, ContentBLVD was a marketplace that brought together owners of authoritative blogs in search of quality free content, and managers of brands looking for authoritative blogs willing to post non-promotional articles. The brands typically couldn't get the "non-promotional" part right, so we frequently authored the articles for the brands to ensure the articles would be attractive to the blog owners. It was a line across the sand against click-bait and listicle content, but Google soon decided authorship, guest blogging and PageRank weren't going to be the way forward. This was an internal webpage for the freelance writers I recruited, coached and supervised.)

## **Our Philosophy of Ghostwriting**

We cover the broad strokes and minute details of what makes a good blog post on our other resource pages. Here, we're going to take a look at the *idea* of ghostwriting.

All writing done for Content BLVD is ghostwriting. Nobody will ever know who composed a given article, as someone else's byline will appear after the article once it is published. Essentially, our writers offer their expertise and eloquence to someone else who is either too busy or lacks the skill to craft compelling blog posts.

Ghostwriting is a challenge on two levels. First, writers must withhold their personal opinions and voice when authoring each article. Second, writers must respect and honor the person whose name will be attached to the work. Both problems are partially solved by minimizing the use of first person perspective.

Stories about the writer's family, childhood, etc., are often too personal to make sense to include in ghostwritten articles. Instead, the salient bits of these stories can be extracted and shared in a new context, thereby delivering the important key points of a story without getting too personal. In a perfect world, every article would share the information that the individual attributed as the writer would share if he or she did the writing.

While it isn't possible to truly write from our clients' perspectives, it's critical that we make the voice of our article as professional and uncontroversial as possible. Nobody would write and attach the name of their business to an article that would turn off potential future customers. Instead, they'd try to be as genuinely helpful as possible, conveying the tips in an engaging format. They'd possess voluminous knowledge about the issues that pertain to their business, and wouldn't try to make up information to fill in the gaps. With their reputations at stake, they'd give only their best. This is often why they turn to us; they don't have time to write something they'd be happy to share, but still want to guest blog like a champ.

It's a great opportunity, but one that carries a great deal of responsibility. Keep the story below in mind as you're writing and you're sure to stay on track.

## Your Autobiography, By Someone Else

Imagine yourself browsing the shelves of a brick and mortar bookstore. It's a small independent shop – the kind with shelves and tables bearing the favorites and recommendations of the bookish staff. Near the front window, a book on the table of “Annie’s Favorites” catches your eye. It's a new autobiography, and it's yours. The spine trumpets your name, your picture and your college nickname. Your brow furrows as you snatch it quickly from the display stand, glancing suspiciously around the store for hidden cameras. Seeing none, you peer down at the book and take in the cover. It's you. The jacket reveals the broad strokes of your life in terms perfectly apropos, and elucidated with words you consider your secret affectations. Leafing quickly through, you see everything is as it should be, and think that someone reading this book might get a pretty good idea of who you are—a *very* good idea. It's almost as if your entire life was recorded on video, then subsequently described for the understanding of others. Had you written it after all?

Now return to the immediate and familiar. Brick and mortar bookstores are few and far between. You're online. All day. You've got Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and Twitter layered in tabs across the top of one browser while another window stacks a dictionary, thesaurus and AP style guide. Your blog is open, catering to your obsession with hit statistics, and you see a ton of new traffic coming from somewhere new. What could it be? You click and arrive at another blog—a nicer blog—that features a new post by you. But you've never seen this blog, and don't remember writing this post. It's a great article on a topic about which you're an expert, and it makes a few good points that you frequently like to make. Lots of people have shared the post, and you can see it's been linked to your Google+ account. You're the author. Had you written this too?

Autobiographies are typically penned to share lives deemed remarkable by others. Lives that seem to exemplify an uplifting message or that detail a triumph over special difficulty make the most compelling stories. But in the same way that bookstores and hardbacks have fallen in favor of online retailers and e-book tablet readers, autobiographies are making a transition. The stories of our lives are online, waiting to be discovered.

Facebook and Google maintain extensive profiles for all but the most careful Internet visitors. It's common practice to curate one's public profile on social media sites, as potential employers, exes, suitors and political opposition researchers delight in distilling a person down to one tequila-addled photograph from college. Doctors and teachers lose their jobs complaining about patients and students, and congressmen are shamed into resignation after foolishly tweeting late-night images of their eponymous man parts.

With a little attention, our public presence can stand out for good reasons rather than bad. Our discretion and good judgment with what we post online can boost our image, especially in relation to the proliferation of garbage that comprises most of the web. When we contribute positively to the betterment of the Internet, our efforts are noticed. These efforts, wrapped up with our many public profiles, emerge as a complete picture of

our life. Our autobiographies, seemingly filmed by someone else and written down, are currently awaiting our discovery with a bit of self-indulgent Googling.

Now go back to the bookstore. Imagine your autobiography was weak. Imagine it made flaccid points, if it made any points at all. It's comprised of simple, moralizing truisms that only the face-palm stupid could possibly not have gleaned by their twelfth birthdays. Worse, your autobiography is rife with someone else's stories—some stolen—that emphasize aspects of your life that aren't important. With horror you see the retreaded cliché “Nacho Cheese / Not your cheese” joke employed as though you'd actually had the experience yourself. You notice someone at the checkout thumbing through a copy and know you'll never have a chance to set the record straight. You'd never write this!

Return to your phantom blog post. It too is lifeless drivel, clogged with repetitive words and tedious blather. You struggle to extract a single good idea from the entire 800-word post. You'd never write this either!

You'd never write this.

As ghostwriters, we also must never write this. We're writing someone else's autobiography. Our words must respect the trust bestowed upon us by a client who may someday stumble upon her own words online. She should be proud. Strangers and friends researching our clients should learn something important and valuable, and come away impressed. We must be proud of each post, convinced of its worth and a bit sad to pass the attribution on to someone else. If we wouldn't put our own name on it, we certainly shouldn't put someone else's name on it.

We're crafting the eternal enduring identities of others. Let's get it right.