

Pierre Nozières
Biography writer
www.lavoixetlaplume.com
www.scribiomemo.com
pierre.nozieres.vp@gmail.com

« *From voice to paper* »

Training in the job of Private Biography Writer

The program
(usually parted in six *Skype* sessions)

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*Choose a job you love, and you will never
have to work a day in your life."*
Confucius

Introduction

Nature of the book:

- Biography, social account, political statement, etc.

Style of the book:

- Pure biography or part fiction.
- Chronology of the story.

Writing technique:

- Collaborative biography, coaching, plain rewriting, ghost-writing.

Cautions:

- Potential for libel and family disputes.

Pen name:

- Pros and cons.

How to combine material success with passion:

- Inspiration and organization.

How it begins

Initial telephone contact:

- Type of questions asked by a prospective client.
- How to answer correctly.

How to follow up with possible clients:

- Use of dashboards.

The first meeting:

- What is the best location, and why.

Terms and conditions:

- Explaining the quote, the schedule and the different production phases.
- Signing the contract (a model contract is provided).

Work time and payment schedule

How to measure work time:

- Meetings, voice collection, writing.
- Correlating work time with number of words written.

Payment:

- Price rating, according to assessed difficulties.
- Schedule of payments.
- Safe way to avoid non-payment: ensuring a retainer.

Voice collection

Voice recording versus note-taking:

- Pros and cons.
- Practical use of the digital recorder.
- Length of the recordings and how to reference and save them.

How to conduct the interviews:

- Preparation, plain and suggestive questions.
- Usual number of meetings and duration.

Transcribing

From voice to text:

- A demonstration with the *Audacity* application.
- Exercises with a real client's recording.

The text writing process

Two steps:

- The rough draft (raw transcription) and the intermediate draft (fine writing).

Target ratios for time spent:

- How to measure them and analyse the results.

Consecutive deliveries:

- Process, quantity, client's approval.
- Importance of the first delivery ("trial run").
- How the book grows along the deliveries. Color-coding.
- Client's feedback and subsequent editing.

Text completion

The final touches:

- Final proof reading (orthography, grammar, typos, elimination of repeated words).
- Reading aloud and proof readers.

Book layout

Make it yourself, or subcontract?

The main know-how:

- Transfer text to the chosen book format: size, margins, spacing, indent, header or footer, etc.
- Insertion of scanned pictures and documents: within the text or at the end of the book
- Text blocks to insert title, author's name, etc.
- Full use of word processing.
- Conversion to pdf files for the publisher.

Publishing

Nature of the publishing contract.

ISBN Number.

Ways to pay the publisher.

Consignments in libraries, e-books on Internet or private publishing lists.

Management

Importance of systematic classification and archiving.

Setting-up accounting formats.

Benchmarking: Introductory pricing?

Systematic measuring of one's work time: Analysis of possible important variances with prices charged.

Classification of invoices.

Advertising strategies.

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