

# SEVEN THINGS SIX WRITERS WANT YOU TO KNOW

BY COPYOPOLIS

> The project has been approved. The next step is to get started. But will you (the agency/designer) hire a professional writer? Or bite your tongue while the client sticks someone on staff with the job? Worse — will you stifle it when the client insists, “I can write it myself. Nobody knows this stuff better than I do!”

## TOP FIVE THINGS WRITERS WANT TO HEAR

### 1. Take your time.

Of course, we know you'll really need it tomorrow. Or yesterday. Just remember, it's better to bring a writer in early. You can't always cut stress with caffeine.

### 2. You nailed it!

A good, strategic writer will probably get it right on the first draft with a little tweaking for language or to correct facts.

### 3. Here's your deposit.

Most writers expect phased billing — for example, a third up front, a third on delivery of the first draft, and the balance on final approval.

### 4. We've processed your invoice.

But expect an inquiring call if the check doesn't arrive within a few days. Writers need cash flow, too.

### 5. Are you available?

There's nothing a writer likes better than to prove his or her worth and establish an ongoing relationship with you.

Yes, we all wrote papers in school. But writing a brochure, ad campaign, newsletter, Web content, etc., is something else. A professional writer is accustomed to writing for an audience, not identifying with the client's point of view. Clients need to know this: writing it yourself is like talking to yourself. And only crazy people talk to themselves.

Copyopolis, a virtual community of six marketing writers, was formed because clients told us they couldn't find copywriters who could actually write. That is, they couldn't find copywriters who write so that an audience understands the message and is motivated to buy the company's products or services. That's why, as seasoned writers, we offer these seven tips to help you:

1. Bring a writer in early. You want someone who can think strategically from the outset, not just take an order for 3 1/2 inches of copy under each photo in the layout and for headlines where there are squiggles. The most effective pieces are the result of having a writer work with a designer from the beginning, when you're just hatching a concept.

2. Don't just look at the price. You can buy coffee and jellybeans by the pound, but not words. The writing is actually a small part of the whole job, and for a writer, the easiest. Before a writer cranks out any words at all, he or she formulates probing questions, listens to your needs, may conduct research and organizes background material, which may take the form of binders, boxes of loose files, videos, lists of Web sites, a pile of old and current literature and some hideous scribbling on a piece of paper with a coffee ring.

3. A little fine-tuning is a natural part of the writing process. But a good writer will get you most of the way home on the first draft. The second draft will be more of a “tweak” than a rewrite.

4. Hiring a writer actually makes your job simpler. You're off taking charge of what you need to do; the writer's writing, talking to the client or conducting interviews.

5. Think of hiring a writer as hiring a partner. You're not just locating someone to do a job for you; you want someone who'll work with you, collaborating to execute your ideas.

6. A good writer understands the proper use of trademarks and is attuned to verbiage that can shorten the shelf life or usefulness of your material. It might be names, claims, or verb tenses.

7. A good writer is always aware that the real job is selling, not writing.

Isn't that easy? Now you're ready to hire a writer who can help make you, the job and your client look good. ■



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Copyopolis is a joint marketing venture of six Atlanta copywriters operating individually. Together, they have experience in every aspect of marketing communications for agencies, non-profits and Fortune 500 companies in industries from agriculture to utilities, writing everything from sales literature to scripts to sweepstakes promotions. Their virtual community also includes designer Leslie Line, a studio veteran who's added Web and interactive design to her repertoire, and Jim DiVitali, award-winning, world-recognized digital photographer, computer photo illustrator, instructor and columnist. If you don't have a staff or you just don't have the right in-house talent for a specific project, take a trip to Copyopolis at [copyopolis.com](http://copyopolis.com).