How to work with copywriters

Matthew Stibbe Articulate Marketing

21 April 2021

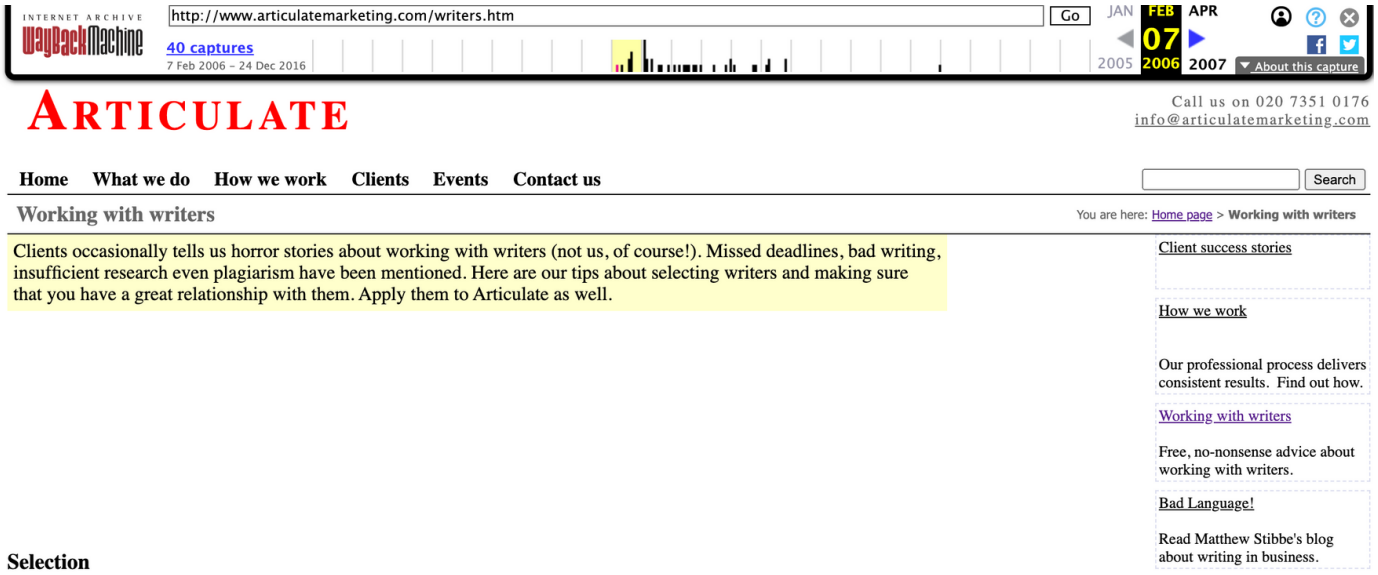




The history lesson

The first article I ever wrote on the Articulate website

(I also hand-coded the site in HTML)



INTERNET ARCHIVE Wayback Machine http://www.articulatemarketing.com/writers.htm Go JAN FEB APR 07 2005 2006 2007 About this capture

40 captures 7 Feb 2006 - 24 Dec 2016

ARTICULATE

Call us on 020 7351 0176
info@articulatemarketing.com

Home What we do How we work Clients Events Contact us Search

Working with writers

You are here: Home page > Working with writers

Clients occasionally tells us horror stories about working with writers (not us, of course!). Missed deadlines, bad writing, insufficient research even plagiarism have been mentioned. Here are our tips about selecting writers and making sure that you have a great relationship with them. Apply them to Articulate as well.

Client success stories

How we work

Our professional process delivers consistent results. Find out how.

Working with writers

Free, no-nonsense advice about working with writers.

Bad Language!

Read Matthew Stibbe's blog about writing in business.

Selection

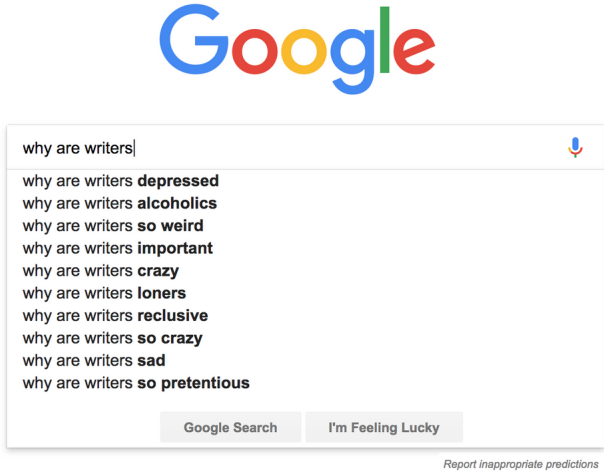
- Look for writers with a **track record** of work in a similar format or subject but don't get hung up if they haven't done exactly the same thing elsewhere. A good writer should be able to research new topics effectively.
- Meet the writer (not just the account manager) and make sure there's a good '**chemistry**.' Do they talk your language? Understand your requirements? Give constructive input about ways they might carry out your brief?
- Look for a **chameleon-like ability** to write in different styles. A good writer should be able to follow a corporate style guide and adapt their work to the audience and client.
- Ask for **references**.
- Check that your writer has **professional indemnity insurance**.



Mythbusting

Copywriters are NOT eccentric, depressed, introverted prima donnas

(Some of them are some of these things but so are some of you)



Everyone can write But they're not copywriters



Copywriters are not afraid of the blank page

If you can't write 1,000-2,000 words a day, you're not a professional writer.

It ain't easy being green.



Copywriters work for the reader

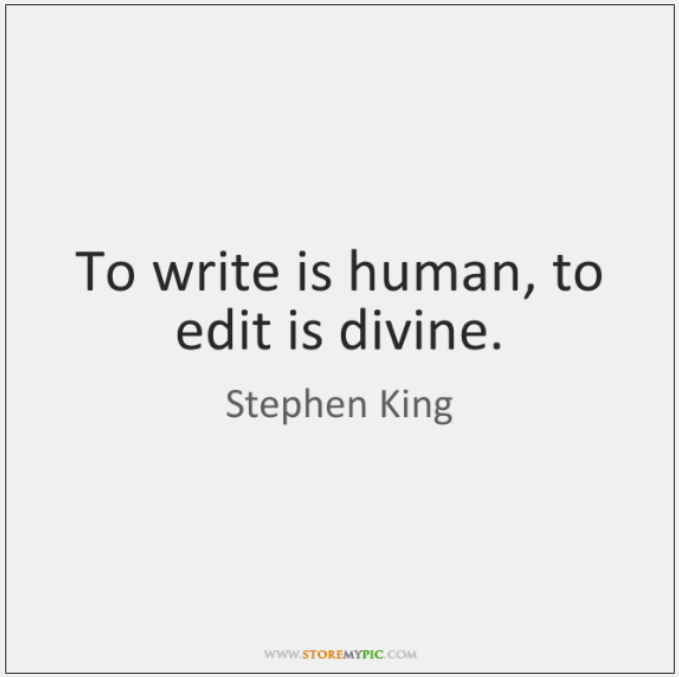
They control suspense,
understand the audience, answer the reader's questions, make things easy to understand

'My mind to your mind'



Writers know what words to leave out

Editing is 50 percent of writing

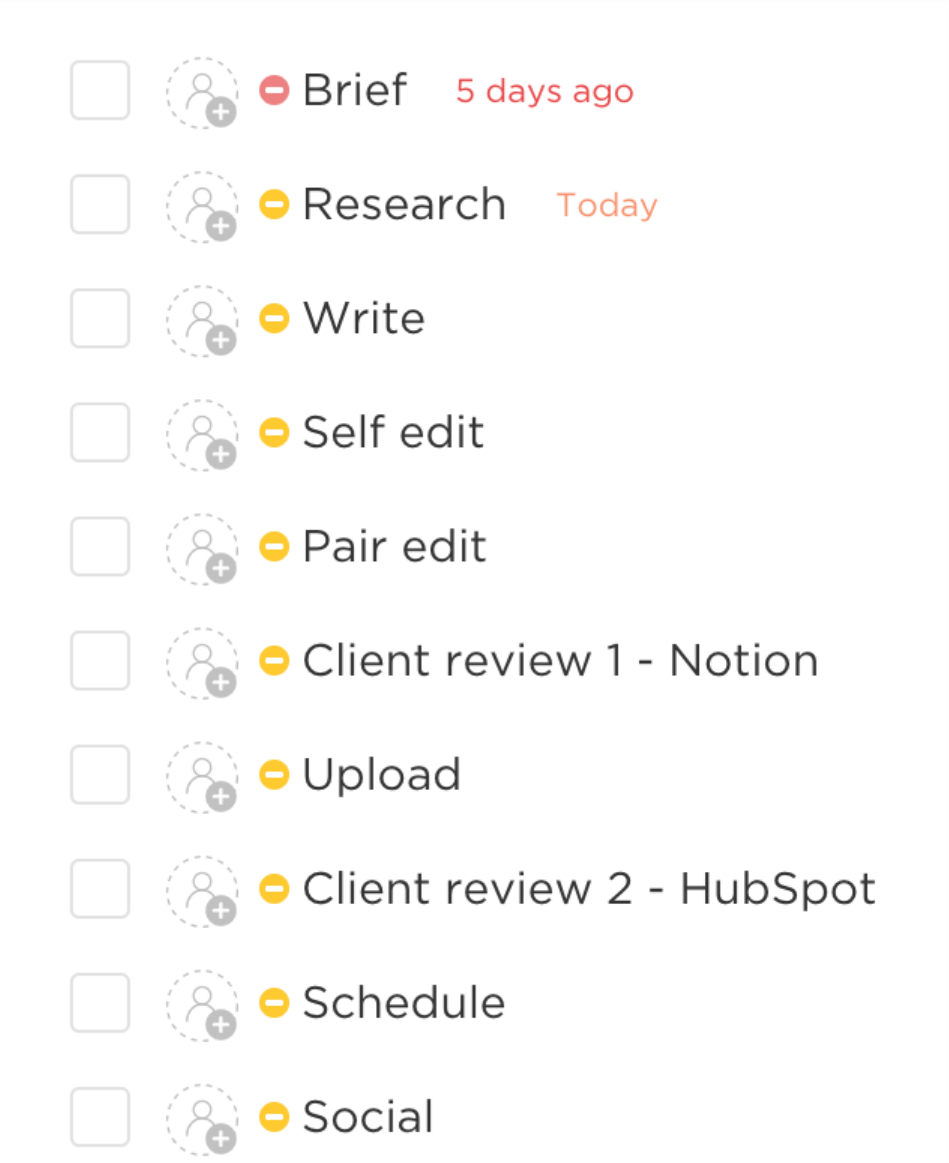


Copywriting is not one thing, it's lots of things



Copywriting is more than 'typing words on a keyboard'

- Interviewing
- First draft
- Self-editing
- Final draft
- Editing
- Subediting
- Proofreading

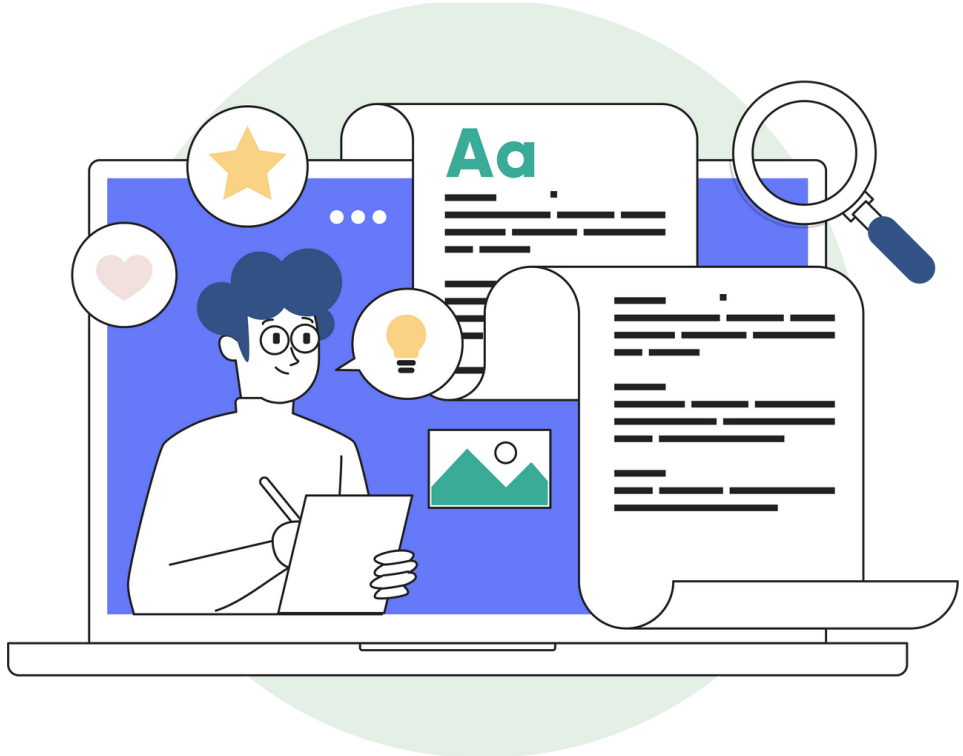


What a (good) copywriter knows about

It takes us about 6-12 months to train up an intern and about 2-3 years to become a really good writer

Skill family	Parent category	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Campaign planning	Marketing	Articulate service knowledge Inbound marketing certification	Content ideation PPC basics	Goal and expectation setting
Copywriting	Marketing	Writing blog posts Uploading to HubSpot Uploading to WordPress Interviewing skills Writing for social media	Writing reports Writing case studies Writing white papers Writing website copy Sitebulb Keyword research	Writing press releases Writing strategy foundations
Editing	Marketing	Proofreading	Subediting	Editing
SEO	Marketing	SEO review Blog post enrichment SEO basics Page optimisation	HubSpot SEO tools Featured snippets Page optimisation Keyword research Ahrefs	HubToolkit Sitebulb Schema
HubSpottery	Marketing	HubSpot Marketing Software HubSpot social HubSpot workflows HubSpot lists and contacts HubSpot blogs	HubSpot SEO tools HubSpot reports	HubSpot new client config HubSpot agency certification Demo HubSpot HubSpot CMS development

Copywriting is not 'wordsmithing'



Some examples of 'wordsmithing' requests 😱

All in the last 12 months

- We need some case studies, can you wordsmith some quotes?
- If I give you someone else's purpose, mission and values, can you wordsmith some for us?
- We're still working on our product strategy, can you wordsmith some product descriptions?
- Write 'thought leadership' without any input from us but make it deep, technically accurate and, above all, make it sound like us
- We really like [a competitor's] about us page, can you wordsmith some like that for us?
- We just need 300 words for our home page, it shouldn't take too long to wordsmith that
- 'Track Changes accepter'



What is great copywriting?

(Also Articulate's Purpose)



Inform

To **inform** people is to help them understand their world and make better decisions. Information is at the heart of content marketing but also our desire to share generously what we learn. It is better to be well-informed than ignorant.



Connect

To **connect** is to create an open channel for communication between the reader and the writer and between a company and its clients. It also brings to mind EM Foster's saying, 'only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted'.



Inspire

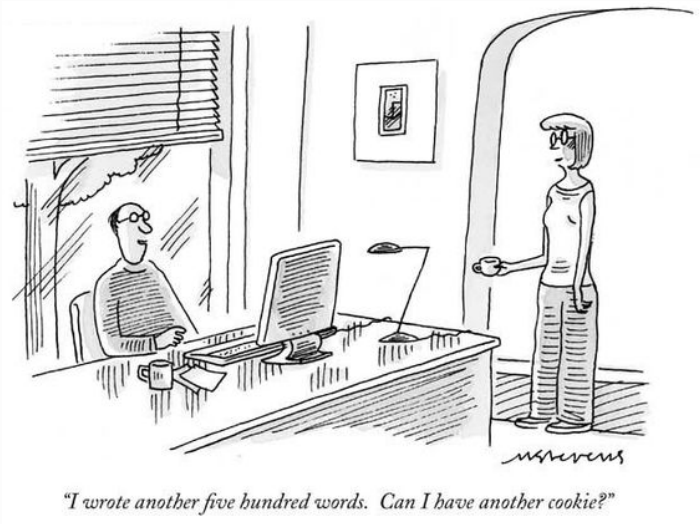
To **inspire** distils the idea of 'inspiring epiphanies' for our audience - flashes of insight that illuminate the whole scene and which lead to meaningful, positive change. If we do our job right, inspiration is our gift.



How to get great work from a copywriter

Care and feeding

- Peace and quiet
- Avoid interruptions
- Comfortable chairs
- Good keyboards
- Caffeine and cookies



"I wrote another five hundred words. Can I have another cookie?"

Brief well

For us, a good brief includes

- Target audience persona(s)
- Target SEO keyword
- Intent (e.g. TOFU)
- Brief synopsis
- Some initial research pointers
- Client tone of voice
- Client messaging guidelines
- Industry briefing



Where the Best Candidates are Gathering in 2021

Campaign numbe...	campaign 11
Topic cluster	Future of Candidate Sourcing
Type	blog
Length	500
Summary	It's no longer good enough to post a job on Indeed. You need to go where the best candidates are. That could be social media, forums, groups, events, recruiter lists, print and digital media, etc.
Target keyword	best candidates
Volume	250
Difficulty	8
Subtopics & syno...	social recruiting, sourcing candidates
Persona	HR Harley
Aim	traffic

Help us understand

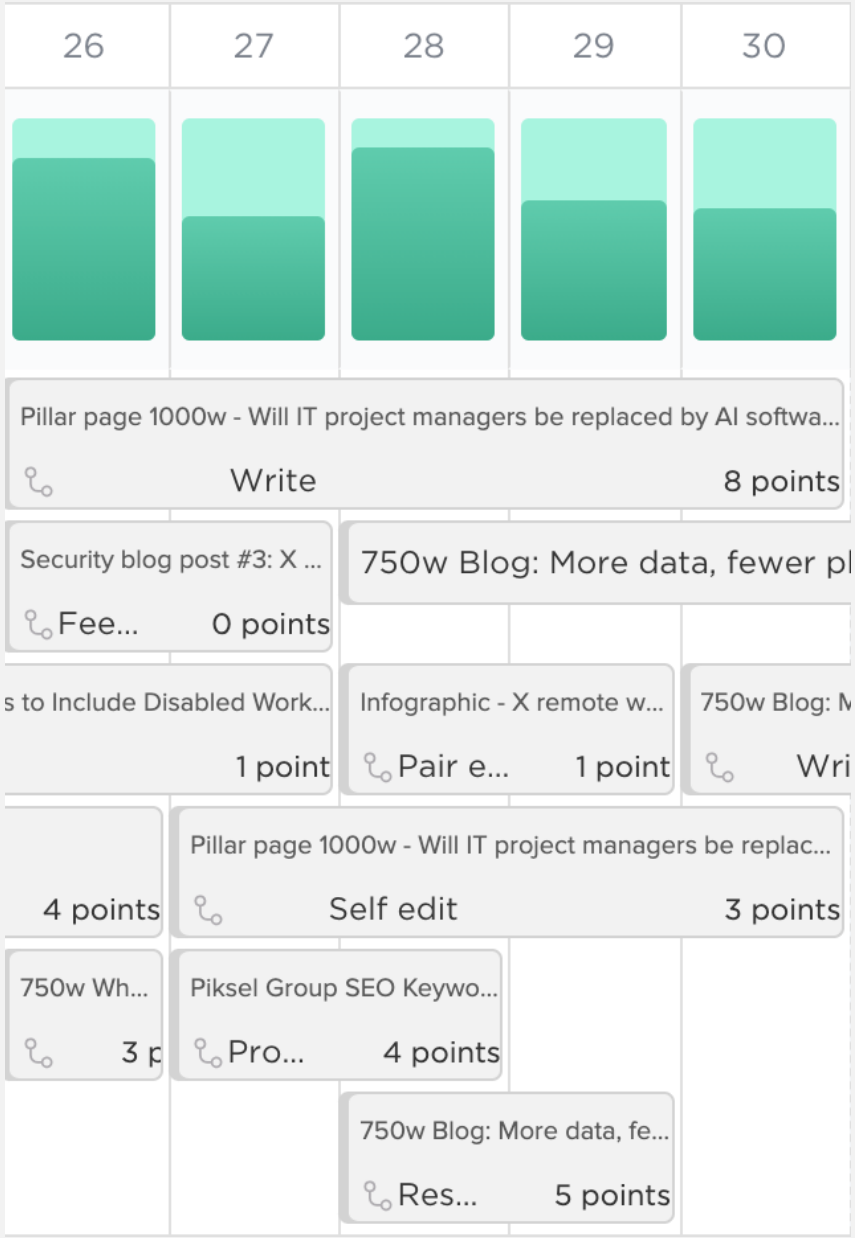
You're the expert on you
We don't know what you know

- Briefing
- Interviews
- Resources



Use deadlines wisely

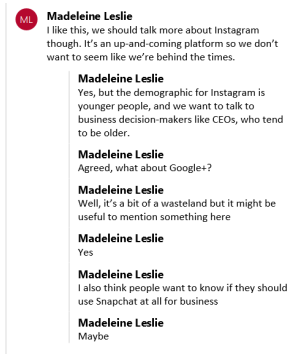
- Windows not walls
- Workload management
- Prioritisation
- Business context
- Time for all the different steps



Give good feedback

- Share context
- Expect some 'harmonisation' early on
- Be specific and detailed
- Give positive feedback too
- Not 'technical' or 'professional' enough
- Use comments, not redlining
- Avoid editing by committee
- Timely turnaround
- Don't be a dick - sarcasm, impatience, grammar nazism, crowing over typos, better-writer-than-thou etc.





The 'man in the mirror' problem

"Here's what our product can do" and "Here's what you can do with our product" sound similar, but they are completely different approaches.

- Jason Fried, CEO, Basecamp



And finally...





Let's talk

Video and slides appearing soon on articulatemarketing.com
Email me with questions at matthew@articulatemarketing.com
Book a call with me: www.articulatemarketing.com/meet