

Words Done Right, LLC
374 Fairmount Avenue
Chatham, NJ 07928

February 14, 2013

Dr. Ethan Joella
Department of English
New England College
98 Bridge Street
Henniker, NH 03242

Dear Dr. Joella:

Words Done Right is a company that provides business writing and editing services as well as speech writing and public speaking training for small to medium-sized businesses. As we have expanded our business, we have discovered that there is a growing demand for writing speeches and that this field has many opportunities for young writers. I would like to visit New England College to make a presentation to your English 101 class to demonstrate that speech writing is a viable and exciting career for them to use their writing skills.

Since the rules of rhetoric are a basic part of a writer's education and were originally formulated for oral communication, I can demonstrate that writing speeches is a good match for the student who wants to write professionally. Company executives give more speeches in a year than politicians, and oral presentations are thus still a regular way that businesses disseminate information. Even Power Point demands writers who must put the material together in an acceptable oral format.

Businesses will assume the ability to write speeches if someone has been hired as a writer. An employer won't care that you've never written one; they expect a writer will know how to do it, especially if no one else is available. My presentation will not only open the door to the world of oral presentations but by providing real world examples I will demonstrate that some writers have discovered that writing speeches has opened up new opportunities for their writing profession.

This will not be a crash course on public speaking. My presentation will provide a brief history of oral communications, will demonstrate that speech writing demands many of the same skills that all writers use, and will provide statistics about employment opportunities in this field.

I worked for over 30 years in ministry, and one of my primary duties was public speaking. As founder and CEO of Words Done Right, LLC, I have provided training for public speaking but more importantly I've continued writing speeches. I am also a member of *Toastmasters International*. Because I have been involved with writing speeches for more than 30 years, I believe I can help them see the opportunities to write speeches as a way of life.

I will need a projector for a few visuals.

Many thanks for your kind consideration! I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached at 973-635-3964 and by email at bobweber58@verizon.net.

Sincerely,

Robert Weber
Owner and CEO, Words Done Right, LLC

Words Done Right LLC
374 Fairmount Avenue
Chatham, NJ 07928

February 18, 2013

Dr. Ethan Joella
Department of English
New England College
98 Bridge Street
Henniker, NH 03242

Subject: Proposal for English 101 Presentation

Dear Dr. Joella:

As discussed in my previous letter of February 14, here is my proposal for a presentation on the profession of speech writer. As a professional speech writer, I am confident this material will benefit your students as they consider careers in writing and business communications.

Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions about the presentation at 973-635-3964 or bobweber58@verizon.net. I look forward to meeting with you and interacting with your students.

Sincerely,

Robert Weber
Owner and CEO, Words Done Right LLC
Enclosure

SPEECHWRITING
CAREER FOR THE SILENT SPOKESMAN

A Presentation for the English 101 Class of Dr. Ethan Joella
Presented by Robert Weber

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ABSTRACT

As a profession speechwriting offers the professional writer some unique characteristics. First, public speaking has a long, rich history in human endeavors. From political stump speeches, to public debates, to sermons public speaking has influenced humanity through oral narratives, arguments, and persuasive rhetoric. Second, the writer who is able to communicate ideas in the spoken medium has the opportunity to help business people, politicians, and educators communicate ideas that shape their communities. Finally as a profession there is always a need for people to write speeches and thus presents opportunities for a writer who has the ability to communicate well. Jobs are available and the career is a satisfying one.

PUBLIC SPEAKING: A RICH HISTORY

All other forms of communication pale in relationship to the history of public speaking. From the time of ancient civilizations people have delivered their most important information orally. If you think about ancient literature and philosophers, it becomes apparent that many of them spent a lot of time discussing issues of rhetoric. This was primarily for the purposes of speeches. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian all added to a large body of knowledge about how best to deliver information in oral presentations (Peeples, 21, 40).

Even some of the great literature that we possess today was delivered first in oral form. Though we have copies of Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, Homer was blind and delivered the stories orally. They were passed on orally until someone finally wrote them down. The *Sermon on the Mount*, spoken by Jesus in the first century, was an oral presentation delivered on a hillside to a large crowd. We have it in written form only because some of his disciples recorded it for posterity.

According to Cynthia Starks, "...speechwriting has a long and storied history. A Google search on 'history of speechwriting' reveals that it dates to at least 1415 when, it seems, England's King Henry V employed a speechwriter to craft his call to arms on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt. The essence of that speech was captured by Shakespeare, 'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...' More than 350 years later, here in the states, it's believed that both Alexander Hamilton and James Madison had a hand in writing Washington's farewell address" (Starks 153).

That "long and storied history" has not abated. The power of the podium is why politicians, dignitaries, and businessmen still give speeches to disseminate information and to persuade people to accept their ideas.

WHY BE A SPEECH WRITER?

For communicating ideas in business, education, and politics, the genre of oral communication will never grow old and speech writers will always be in demand. Peggy Noonan, former speech writer for Ronald Reagan, highlights the importance of good speeches by noting that the internet has moved society from a sound-bite mentality. According to her now we can read entire speeches online without resorting only to the sound bites afforded by television news, "It is restoring rhetoric as a force" (Noonan par. 11).

The irony that technology may have produced a greater need for written speeches should not be lost on potential job seekers. Jon Browning, a speech writer that was interviewed for this report, made an important observation. Many of the speeches he wrote would later be quoted in engineering magazines. The spoken word would be "spoken" many times over.

Furthermore the CEOs of many Fortune 500 companies make more speeches in a year than most politicians (Advertisement for American Speaker quoted in *Executive Focus* 17). The history of public speaking illustrates the ubiquity of discourse in human affairs, and even in the digital age the spoken word demands people who can write words with the greatest effectiveness. Somebody will always need a good speech writer.

With technology lending a hand and with the demand for good speeches on business people as well as politicians, the number of people writing them will have to keep pace with the demands of the market.

Professional speech writer Warren Anderson provides the following reasons why people should turn to one, and though his reasons serve the purpose of drumming up clients, they also highlight the need for professional speech writers:

- “People who have important roles to play should not use valuable time crafting speeches, but use a professional speechwriter.
- People who are not accomplished public speakers, but who have an important speaking responsibility can strongly increase their chance to do well by using a professional speechwriter.
- Busy people don't think about a speech until it's on top of them.” (Anderson par. 4)

JOB DETAILS

Description: swz.salary.com lists the following job description for a speechwriter:

- Prepares and/or writes speeches, briefings, and other documents for key executive corporate positions
- Plans and edits in-house communications vehicles
- May be responsible for editorials, press releases or articles
- Performs a variety of tasks

Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in related area
- Four years of experience in the field or a related area
- Familiar with a variety of the field's concepts, practices, and procedures
- A wide degree of creativity and latitude is expected

Two points stand out:

1. Writers are called upon to write a wide variety of publications including speeches
2. Speech writers are allowed “a wide degree of creativity”

Two of the professional speech writers that I interviewed substantiated the first point in a surprising way.

- Jon Browning is a retired editor of an internal newsletter for chemical engineers with Exxon Corporation. He was hired as an editor and writer. Two days before one chief executive had to give a speech, Jon was called to write it because the executive's speech writer had taken ill. They reasoned that he was, after all, a writer. After that he wrote numerous speeches for executives and even one for the president of the college.
- Warren Anderson has been a freelance speech writer for 18 years. He worked in a corporate environment for 10 years prior to that and was in the army prior to that. He had a business degree and was a major working at the Pentagon when he was called upon to write a speech for

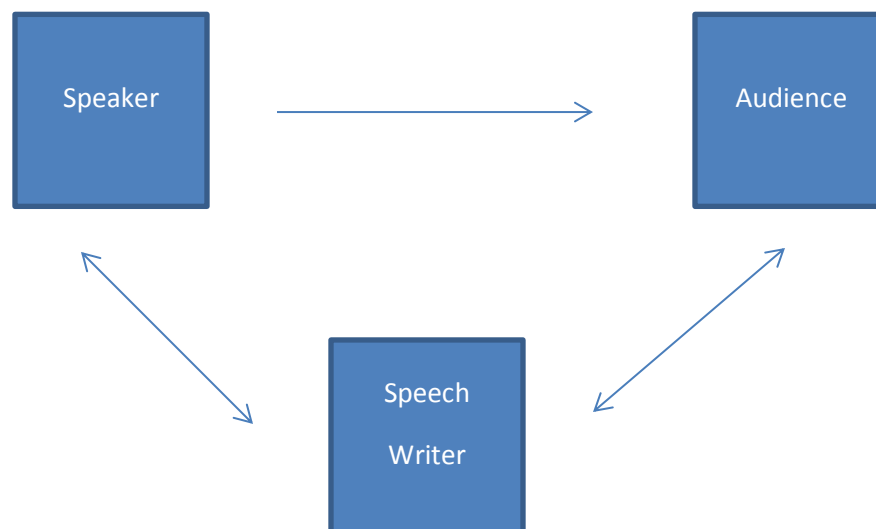
one of the generals. The general promptly made him his chief speech writer for the next 3 years. After that he developed his own career in speech writing.

As the job description points out, a speech writer writes more than speeches, but speech writing is part of an overall package. In the case of these two men writing other things came first though the speech writing came as a complete surprise. Even as an editor or writer for other company publications, speech writing has now become a necessary skill.

In addition speech writing is considered part of the job description for public relations managers. They handle all of an organization's communications with the public. Along with press releases and advertising many of those forms of communication are speeches (What Public Relations Managers and Specialists Do par. 2).

The job description also calls for a degree of creativity. Creative ways of saying something can come in handy when trying to communicate difficult or even familiar ideas to say . . . a group of teens or PhDs in chemistry or even an audience hostile to the message. A speech writer has to understand his speaker's voice, his audience, and even a good deal about human nature to develop a good message. A speech writer has the opportunity and challenge to be creative in a way not always found in other careers.

THE SPEECH WRITER'S ROLE



To more fully understand what the speech writer does the above illustration demonstrates that the role of the speech writer is a relationship that bridges the speaker and the audience.

- The arrow from the speaker to the audience demonstrates the flow of information from the speaker to the audience.
- His first role is to interact with the speaker to understand the message and the speaker's voice (Jon Browning emphasized this). This arrow is both ways to demonstrate that they collaborate; interaction is back and forth, often with several revisions.

- The arrow between the audience and the writer is also both ways. The writer not only has to know his audience, but he also tailors the message to their expectations, the nature of the event, and the content of the message. Though she doesn't interact with them directly, there is still some interplay between her and the audience.

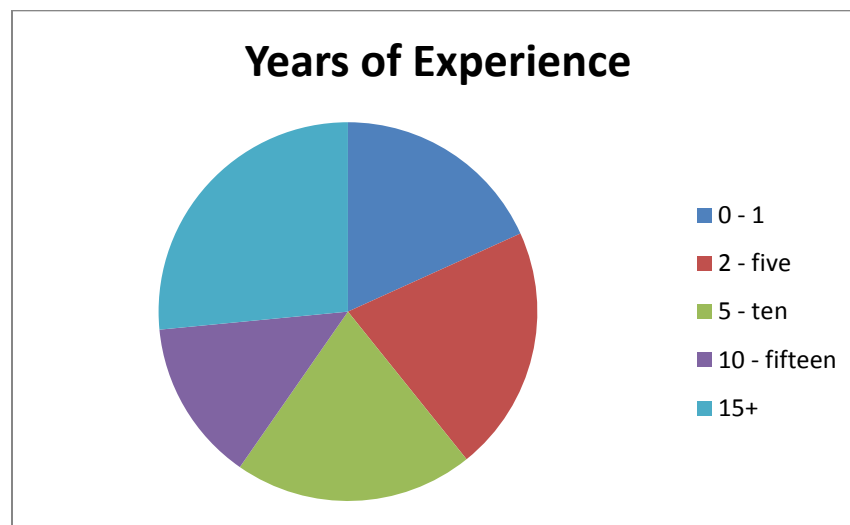
It is a process not unlike what any writer does. Audience analysis is always a primary consideration. The speech writer has to think about both the speaker and the audience as she constructs the message. How will the speaker feel about saying this? How will the audience receive it?

Warren Anderson's web site contains a four-page Speech Evaluation section. On it he has sections for Audience Analysis and Event Agenda. These illustrate that in order to construct the speech effectively the writer must get a feel for audience expectations and receptivity. Another professional writer noted the importance of considering the audience: the seven deadly sins of speechwriting are 1) writing a speech no one will listen to and 2) repeat #1 six times (Dean 27).

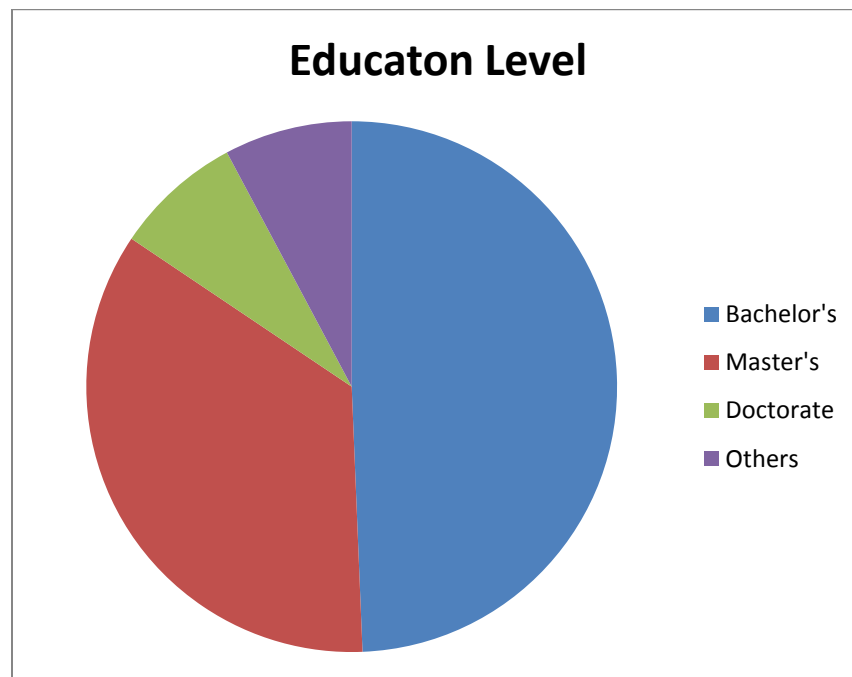
Essentially the speech writer helps develop the message without being the one to deliver it. Thus he becomes a powerful and influential role as the "silent spokesman." My interview with Jon Browning revealed that many times the speeches would be quoted in professional journals, and so the power of the spoken word also became the power of the written word.

JOB STATISTICS

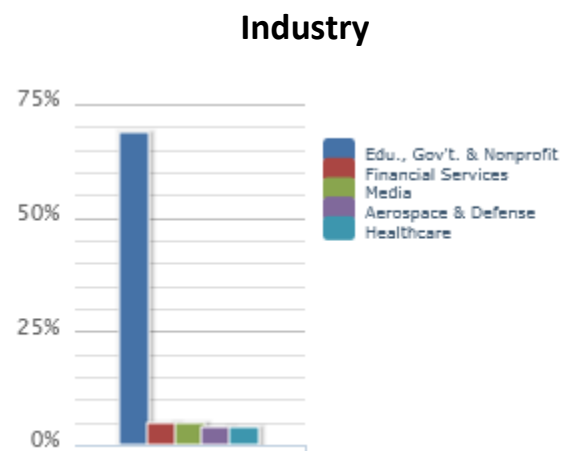
In considering speech writing as a full-time profession let's look at the experience and educational levels needed as well as the prospects for employment.



This chart, adapted from Salary.com, demonstrates that even though most jobs in speech writing are filled by experienced writers, there is still room for inexperienced writers. Though the two speech writers mentioned above fell into their roles by accident, Anderson emphasized that experience ultimately sells the speech writer's freelance business.

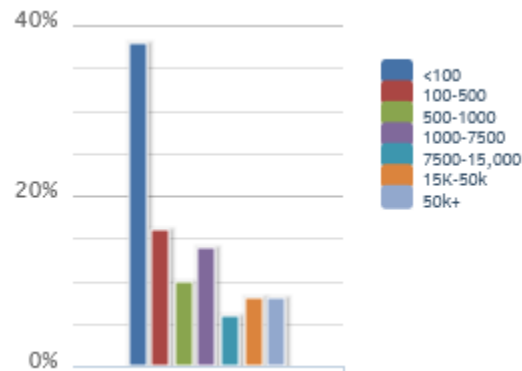


This chart (also adapted from Salary.com) illustrates the education level of people in the speech writing field. The “others” category consists of Associates degrees, High School diplomas, and none. A master’s degree puts someone in a better than 80% category with all the others in the profession.



- 68% of professional speech writers work in Education, Government, or Non-Profits
- The rest are spread across a number of businesses

Company Size



- 36% of speech writers work for companies with less than 100 employees which would indicate that even in small companies there are places for speech writers
- Almost 10% work for large corporations above 50,000 employees
- The rest are spread out in between the smallest and the largest
- This chart suggests a wide range of possible jobs no matter what the size of the company

Note: data for these has been reported by Salary.com users.

MONEY MATTERS

The median salary for a speech writer varies from \$58,000 to \$79,000 depending on experience and location. Freelancers with many years of experience can charge by the number of words in the speech. Freelance speech writing fees are often charged by the speech rather than the length.

Your salary generally depends on the level of your experience and the executive level of the person you write for (How to Become a Speechwriter par. 11).

TECHNOLOGY NEEDED FOR SPEECHWRITING

You don't need a lot of expertise with sophisticated computer programs to write speeches. Familiarity with word processing will do the trick. You may occasionally have to do some creative formatting to make the speech readable for the speaker, but other than that and occasionally Power Point, technological expertise in things like InDesign, Publisher, and other programs is not a necessity as they might be in some technical writing fields. You will need other sources: illustrative material, quotable statements, and other important speeches. There are numerous online resources for such things. Online databases provide sufficient research capabilities. Print magazines devoted to speech writing are available for a subscription fee as well as online subscription services.

One web site in particular has quotes, illustrations, and research tools in one place, www.AmericanSpeaker.com. There is a free blog that can be accessed here as well.

The speech writer will often be called upon to develop a speech about a topic unfamiliar to him. These research databases available online are a boon to his business. If researching and becoming familiar with new ideas interests you, then this is just one other reason to go into speech writing.

I highly recommend also that you read a lot. As a minister I have found that my ideas can dry up quickly if I don't read often. I read several monthly journals, a weekly news magazine, and numerous books. Not all of the books are on religion and theology. Reading keeps me thinking about a lot of different things all of which at some point can relate to ideas that I have to speak about. A good speech writer needs to have a deep well of ideas from which to draw as well as lots of good illustrative material in the form of stories, quotes, and jokes. Many of those can be gleaned from online sources.

WHAT YOU NEED

A number of years ago as I was considering going into the speech writing business, I talked at length with Tim Ensign, Manager, Executive Communications, for Prudential Insurance Company in Newark, NJ. One of his primary roles was that of speech writer. He suggested getting an education in business communications. The Masters of Professional Writing program here at New England College would be a natural fit with his recommendation. I would further recommend the following:

- At least an undergraduate degree in English, public policy, communications, business management or some related field (see the Education Level chart)
- Learn what it is like to be the speaker: give talks on behalf of whatever organization you are involved in (sorority, fraternity, school papers, booster club, etc.)
- Tell jokes at parties; comedian Mike Michalowicz suggests there are lots of things public speakers can learn from comedians (Michalowicz par. 3-9)
- Join Toastmasters International – an organization dedicated to the art of public speaking
- Research the how-to of speech writing

CONCLUSIONS

1. No digital media will ever fully replace the need for a human voice standing before an audience disseminating valuable knowledge.
2. Speeches are an essential part of the business and political world, and good speech writers will always be in demand.
3. Writing a speech requires many of the skills used in writing for print including the ability to analyze audience expectations. Good communication skills will prepare you for a job as a speech writer.
4. Charles Parnell, a professional speechwriter for Nationwide Insurance gave several reasons why he liked his profession: getting paid to use the English language, keeping well informed on a wide

variety of issues, help organizations and leaders formulate and communicate their ideas (Parnell, 207). **The speech writer gets to be the silent communicator, exert influence, and help formulate important ideas.**

5. Be confident that the prospects for working as a speech writer with a reasonable salary are good. Though experience helps, gaining it early along with the appropriate education can be good preparation for a rewarding and exciting career as a speech writer.

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