What You Need

To Know Before

Hiring An Editor

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Writing, Research, Editing and Consulting Services

What You Need to Know
Before Hiring an Editor

Getting what you want when hiring an editor requires two things. One, you need to hire a person who has the skills to accomplish what you want done. Two, you want to be clear about what you are looking for, because not all editing is the same.

Here are some basic skills to look for in an editor.

- Pays attention to detail and thinks critically in order to recognize inconsistencies and vagueness

- Maintains the writer's original voice while ensuring a correct, consistent and complete work that suits the intended audience and medium

- Presents information in accessible language that the intended audience can easily read and understand

- Asks good questions before starting your project. For example, an editor should ask what kind of editing you want done and what action to take when they find a problem. Do you want them make comments so that you can implement the changes, or do you want them to fix the text for you?

- Has tact and good interpersonal skills – he or she can provide honest and objective feedback in a way that is constructive and empowering

- Is able to meet deadlines.

Proofreading, Structural, Stylistic Editing...??!?
The Different Types of Editing

When hiring an editor, it's important to understand the different types of editing done at different stages of the process. This enables you to clarify your needs and obtain the right services to end up with the best possible product.

Surprisingly, there are no specific standards or definitions for editing. What one person may call substantive editing, another may describe as comprehensive editing ... or something else. That's why you, as the purchaser, want to be clear in your own mind what you are looking for.

The Editors Association of Canada (www.editors.ca) has worked to improve standardization for the benefit of clients and editors by developing standard definitions. The following information is based on EAC definitions.

Substantive Editing

Substantive editing can be thought of as the most intensive of all the editing processes. Substantive editing may involve reorganizing, revising, deleting, or expanding on material in a document.

Examples include:

- Documents that need to be reduced in size
- Text written by a number of authors that requires a blending of voices
- Materials lacking good flow
- Text that is difficult to comprehend
- Documents that require additions to fill gaps in content or strengthen transitions between sections

Stylistic Editing

Stylistic editing involves editing to ensure that the meaning is clearly communicated, that paragraphs and transitions have good flow and that the document is appropriate for the intended audience and medium.

Stylistic editing is less intensive than substantive editing; for example, stylistic editing may entail reordering the sentences within a paragraph to improve flow or meaning, but will not require reordering or reorganizing paragraphs or sections. Stylistic editing will focus mostly on cleaning up sentences and ensuring terms and ideas are clearly communicated. You can think of stylistic editing as editing everything from the level of the paragraph and down.

Copy Editing

Copy editing mainly involves editing everything from the level of sentence structure and down. Copy editing looks at grammar and punctuation within the sentence, ensures that terms and styles are consistently used, and either ensures that names, numbers and headings are accurate or identifies those that need to be checked.

Proofreading

Proofreading involves checking a document for typographical or formatting errors and inconsistencies. A document may need to be proofread more than once, depending on the complexity of the material and the amount of editing that has been required.

Proofreading is usually the last stage, after a document has been copy edited (to catch most errors) and is laid out in a document. Even if the text has been proofread prior to being laid out, proofreading will need to be done again to take care of the details of layout (bad word breaks, text overrun, wrong page numbers, graphics that don't match references, etc.).

Project Management (also called Developmental or Project Editing)

Project management involves planning, organizing, securing and managing people and resources to achieve the specific goals of a short-term endeavor. A project manager oversees the project as a whole – either managing those who produce the deliverable or taking a role in producing the deliverable, which is most typical.

Project editing may involve, for example, incorporating input from authors, reviewers or consultants and ensuring the viability of the final document. It also may involve working with people with different specialties, such as research departments, technical people and graphic designers, to ensure that the project moves forward to a successful end product.

An understanding of the editing process and the skills required enables you to bring your communications project to a successful conclusion. Good luck!

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact me.

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