6 Tips for Managing a Remote Freelance Writing Team



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Freelance writers are a godsend for many businesses looking to ramp up their content marketing efforts. But managing a remote team of writers is no cakewalk. You need to ensure your writers honor their commitments and deliver work that meets your vision, all the while avoiding scammers and time-wasters. Unsurprisingly, these challenges only become more pronounced as your writing team grows.

Fortunately, my time overseeing more than 350 freelancers at WordAgents has taught me a thing or two about how to manage a remote team of writers effectively. Here are the main lessons I've learned:

1. Leverage technology

Making use of remote working tools and online platforms is a no-brainer when it comes to coordinating a geographically dispersed team of writers. Of course, given the abundance of options available, it can be a challenge to assemble an easy-to-use tech stack that maximizes productivity.

In my experience, the following tools work well for efficiently managing our writing team's workflow and maintaining consistent, high-quality output:

- MarketMuse for content briefing
- Grammarly for proofreading
- Copyscape for rooting out plagiarism
- ClickUp for project management
- Google Workspace for document organization
- Slack for instant or asynchronous communication
- Zoom for live meetings
- Loom for video messages and presentations
- Trolley for payment management
- BambooHR for managing team data

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2. Install standard operating procedures

A common hurdle when hiring freelance writers is getting them up-to-speed on how your business operates and clarifying what

you expect of them. The best way to quickly acclimate new writers to your business is to develop a well-defined onboarding program that conveys your standard operating procedures in simple black and white.

To achieve this, I recommend you create a “writer operations playbook” to hand out to all new freelancers. This starter-pack resource should contain everything your writers need to know about working with your team, including the standards you expect from their work, your invoice/payment process and instructions on how to access any tools or training that can help with their writing.

It’s also worth setting up an online hub where writers can easily access information, like their performance metrics, client feedback (if applicable) and payment history.

3. Refine your hiring funnel

Creating an optimized hiring funnel is essential for reducing the risk of taking on board unsuitable candidates. The earlier you’re able to filter out poor-quality writers, the fewer headaches you’ll have down the road.

The trick is to discourage bad candidates from ever applying in the first place. To cut down our pool of applicants at WordAgents, we ask all candidates to write a small test piece, complete a short online course, and attend a video call before deciding whether to hire them. (I should note that we only share test assignments completed by our candidates within our team. We never deliver candidate work to clients.)

If an applicant is successful, we’ll place them on a short probationary period during which we’ll monitor their ability to deliver the work we set for them. Sometimes, new writers will overestimate how much work they can take on and forget that “writer fatigue” exists. For this reason, we try to limit the workload of new writers to no more than 2,500 words per

week.

Related: How to Hire Top-Tier Freelance Writers for your Content Business

4. Push for accountability

When managing a remote writing team at scale, slipping standards can cause big problems as more and more of your time is spent chasing up writers who stray from the rules. So, it's imperative to reinforce your standards clearly and often. After all, the less time you spend running down "special cases" and the fewer revision requests you receive, the better your ROI will be.

Make sure that you establish a standardized feedback procedure where writers get regular and honest appraisals regarding the quality and quantity of their work. You can also encourage writers to stick to the standards by setting up an ongoing training program. Your best and worst performers should regularly participate in these coaching sessions to foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support within your team.

5. Focus on outcomes vs. activity

Micromanagement is an ineffective and impractical strategy when dealing with a large team of writers. Accordingly, you should place a much greater emphasis on the quantity and quality of your writers' output rather than the minute details of their day-to-day activities.

This means setting clear goals for your writers but also trusting that their talent and training will lead them to deliver high-quality and punctual work.

Whether producing a piece of SEO writing, an ebook or a landing page, different writers will approach different assignments with their own unique plan. Leaving them to tackle

the project in whatever way suits them best will give them a greater sense of ownership in their work.

Related: Micromanagement Is Murder: So Stop Killing Your Employees

6. Put a concerted emphasis on over-communicating

My philosophy is that there's no such thing as over-communication when working in a remote working environment.

I've already mentioned the importance of regularly reinforcing standards and communicating your standard operating procedures to your writing team. The same goes for letting your team know about new developments within your business or organization.

You'll need to develop a communication strategy for your team to ensure that the right messages get to the right people at the right time *without creating information overload*. For example, your communications strategy should lay out the frequency of team meetings and include standardized meeting templates to ensure they stay productive.

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Today's digital economy makes it easier than ever for organizations to meet their marketing KPIs through the help of freelance writers. But the benefits of outsourcing work to freelancers also introduce a new set of challenges for marketing managers.

I hope this post has reassured you that these challenges are perfectly surmountable. The key to managing a team of remote freelance writers at scale is to develop well-communicated and repeatable systems that are easy to follow.

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