

Why hire an editor?

Some things are best left to experts. Electric wiring. Plumbing. Car repairs.

Editing.

If you decide to cheap out and do it yourself when you lack the training and experience, you risk finding yourself shocked, all wet, left by the roadside... and that's just if you mess up the editing, never mind those other things.



Image: pixabay

Everyone makes mistakes. All it takes is a few words that can be misread horribly, amusingly, or horribly amusingly, and you'll get spread all over social media (and not for the reason you want) - or all over the floor of a courtroom (with a legal decision against you).

Independent editors are available for as little as an hour at a time. You can hire an editor when and as you need one, just like an electrician, plumber or mechanic. But don't wait until you have a disaster — hire professionals to *prevent* disasters.

Disasters in editing are real, expensive and damaging

Editors do a lot more than catch errors. They tighten your text and make it more effective in conveying your message to your audience. A text that hasn't been professionally edited can often be spotted as easily as fridge art can be distinguished from gallery art. But what *really* stands out is when lack of an editorial eye costs you money - and reputation.

It doesn't matter who you are or what your responsibilities include:

- You might be a government agency on the hook for thousands of dollars to reprint a form or a promotional piece that had obvious spelling errors in it (possibly including the perennial gaffe *pubic* for *public*) - or to remake a bronze plaque that misspells a historical figure's name.
- You could be a large company hit with a multimillion-dollar judgment for back pay owing due to a missing comma in a standard contract.
- You may be a website who, trying to be hip, tweeted a topical reference that was actually breathtakingly insensitive... and went viral, as the saying goes.
- Or perhaps you're an educational publisher who inadvertently included a very rude word from another language in a school text, or a cookbook publisher who let a recipe go to print with a typo that turned a simple ingredient into a racial slur. Either way, you have to recall the whole run, pulp and reprint, *and* do major damage control in the media.

All of these have happened in real life, some of them several times. A good editor could have prevented all of them and saved many times the editing fee. In fact, good editors *do* prevent things like this *many times a day*. You don't hear about it because the mistakes were caught in time.

Independent editors are amazing and affordable, and they add value

When you're dealing with the text that's your face to the world, you can't afford *not* to get a professional. A professional editor will most likely be ready, willing and able to tighten, strengthen and embarrassment-proof your text for less than the cost of the time it took to write it, let alone the time it would take you to rewrite it. They might even be able to have it back to you within an hour or two, especially if you have a good ongoing relationship. Good text pays for itself in increased revenue - and with the revenue you won't lose because of a job disastrously done.

If you don't have an in-house editor on your staff, there are many advantages of using an independent editor. Here are a few of them:

- **You save staff time** - and you keep staff focused on the jobs they were hired for. That means you get more from your staff (and their job satisfaction will probably be higher when they're not interrupted with proofreading assignments).
- **It ensures consistency of style and vision** when you have an ongoing relationship with your editor, and at the same time it only costs you money when you are having them do work.
- **It gives a fresh external perspective** that no one inside your organization can provide.
- **Many editors are in-depth subject matter experts.** Check the directories of the organizations listed at the end of this article; you may be surprised at how many editors have master's degrees and PhDs.
- **Editors have the right tools and know how to use them.** For example, many editors use PerfectIt, which is an application that finds consistency mistakes and enforces house style. It helps editors apply their judgment more efficiently, effectively and consistently than non-professionals can.

If you think you can't hire an independent editor, think again!

You're not the first person to think that an independent editor is out of the question. Here are some common reasons for not hiring an editor, together with how to address them so that you can deliver all the benefits for your organization:

- **The document is highly confidential and for legal reasons can't be sent to anyone outside the company.** This is what non-disclosure agreements are for. And if that isn't possible, it's a good reason to hire an in-house editor, because when something that important hits the world, any problems with it will become *very big* problems indeed.
- **The text needs to be ready within an hour.** This happens, and it's why you should establish a good working relationship with a professional editor - or more than one. Any company that might need to draw up contracts on very short order keeps a contract lawyer on retainer; editors are much less expensive and no less necessary. Build one into your process.
- **Junior staff members can proofread it.** Giving the work to a junior member of staff may help them learn the business, but if you were running a restaurant, would you hand your best sauté pans to a new hire who is still learning the trade and then give what they create directly to your most important customer? You'll create more editing disasters than you avoid.

How to find the right editor for you

Editors have a wide variety of areas of subject expertise and specialization. Some have decades of experience with government or legal documents; some have doctoral degrees in math or agriculture or clinical psychology; some have built up a long list of projects on molecular gastronomy, mediaeval French society, oil exploration, or mental health treatment. What they all have in common is that they really like helping other people communicate more effectively - and they're very good at it. Every text you've really enjoyed or found useful has had one or more editors who helped make it that way, and you may even be able to hire those same editors.

Independent editors are everywhere. Start with an association in your country or region and check their directory of members, which should include qualifications, experience and specialties. You'll be amazed at the quality and variety of editors you'll find, e.g.:

[Institute of Professional Editors \(IPEd\)](#)

Thanks to PerfectIt for this info in their blog: https://intelligentediting.com/blog/the-editor-s-guide-to-marketing/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=PerfectIt%2041%20Release%20Reminder%20New%20Users&utm_content=PerfectIt%2041%20Release%20Reminder%20New%20Users+CID_9d76b184728d0102724bb549f3acf639&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=see%20the%20guide