



HOW TO HIRE FREELANCE COMMUNICATIONS PROS

A Guide for Tech Companies

Hiring a freelance communications pro for a project or an on-going retainer can be a great, cost-effective way for tech companies to make an impact, attract and convert leads, and build a successful business. That's assuming you've got the right fit. By right fit, we mean a freelancer that understands your business and communications needs. And from the freelancer's point of view, the right fit is a client that understands the role of a contractor. That's what this e-book is all about. Helping tech companies qualify and connect with the right freelancer for their business and ensure a mutually beneficial relationship.

Table of Contents

3 Non Negotiables That Clients Should Expect from Freelance Communications Pros	4
5 Non Negotiables That Freelancers Should Expect from Clients	6
What Makes a Successful Freelancer/Client Relationship	8

3 Non-Negotiables That Clients Should Expect from Freelance Communications Pros

Before you hire a freelancer, here are three non-negotiables for the client to consider.

1 Expertise in your company's area of technology.

The freelancer should have more than a passing knowledge of your market segment. A client should look for a freelancer that understands your business, technology, and how your company fits into the larger ecosystem. Additionally, they should be able to position your company and craft personalized pitches and compelling stories that will resonate with your target audiences. Those audiences include media, prospects, customers, analysts, influencers, and investors, for example. They should also be well versed in most, if not all of the communications and marketing channels you're using to reach your audience.

When reviewing the freelancer's scope of work, look for tailored recommendations and specific publications, events, journalists, and analysts to approach. Ask to see previous pitches and the resulting coverage. Read their writing samples. Talk about the marketing channels they've seen to be most effective for an organization like yours.

Take note if you receive templates for plans and communication tools that aren't customized to your business. This doesn't mean you shouldn't continue the conversation with the freelancer. However, it might require asking additional questions to ensure the freelancer has enough relevant knowledge and experience to hit the ground running and deliver targeted messages to the right audiences.

2 Experience in tech and communications.

Look for a freelancer with at several years of experience in communications in the tech industry. You'll likely find freelancers that have previously worked at agencies, high tech companies, or both. Ask about their direct experience working with tech companies and the sectors they find most interesting. Ideally, the freelancer has led teams and/or projects, has been responsible for overseeing a budget, and is comfortable providing strategic advice and rolling up their sleeves to execute tactics.

3 Hands on/hands off approach.

A seasoned communications pro will have no problem digging in to get the job done and can work autonomously. While freelancers will need to collaborate with the client to ensure the right messages land with the right audience at the right time, they don't need hand-holding. Essentially, you can trust that they're going to do their job and make their client look great without adding stress to your day.



5 Non Negotiables That Freelancers Should Expect from Clients

Today's freelance communications pros have an enviable amount of opportunities, especially in the tech industry. Many view themselves as small business owners carving out their own niche and adding clients that most align with their skills, professional goals and values. You might be surprised to learn that many earn the same, if not more, than if they worked directly for an agency or a tech company.

Given the strong demand for talented communications freelancers, and the changing federal rules and regulations regarding hiring contractors, here are some of the most common expectations and requirements that freelancers have for their clients.

1 Don't hire a freelancer in lieu of a full-time employee or expect them to be available 24/7. From a legal perspective, freelancers can't work full-time for one client without receiving employee benefits. Also, since they're likely juggling other clients, it's best for the freelancer and the client to

schedule meetings in advance and commit to regular status updates. For the client, this decreases the admin overhead and ensures that both parties have dedicated time set aside to review priorities and progress.

2 Be realistic about your budget allocation. There's no lack of inexperienced freelancers charging very low rates. They might meet your needs, but it's more likely that you'll lose significant time and money on revisions and have to start from scratch.

When it comes to specific tech industry experience and knowing how to properly position and communicate a company's value prop to the right audiences, communications freelancers that can get it right the first time are well worth the investment.

These days, the average billing rates for communications freelancers in the tech industry with a minimum of eight years of experience ranges from \$80-\$150 per hour. The monthly retainers range from \$3K-\$7K. Of course, there are always variables depending on the scope but those are average rates.

3 Be realistic about your expectations. Hiring a strategic communications pro is an investment in a new team member. The client should view it as an opportunity to work with a consultant that brings an unbiased outside perspective. Freelancers can also partner with you to map out a realistic communications plan with achievable goals.

For some clients, it's important to remind them to resist the temptation to provide a freelancer with a wish list of publications (such as the Wall Street Journal or The New York Times) that must cover your company, or else. Instead, work together to determine what's really news and how to best position your company to attract the right audiences using the right paid, earned and owned channels.

4 Trust the freelancer will do the right thing by your business. Every freelancer wants to build long-term client relationships. For the client, that means trusting the freelancer will provide the guidance, feedback and push back to ensure your company's success based on what they know, see and hear in the industry. The best freelancers won't always tell you what you want to hear, but will tell you what you need to know.

5 Dedicate time to the relationship. Client/freelancer relationships can't succeed without the client investing time and ensuring the freelancer has access to the right people and information to do their job.

What Makes a Successful Freelancer/Client Relationship

Since client/freelancer relationships are a two-way street, here are some additional points to keep in mind before you sign the contract.

Hire a freelancer well before a big launch. For the launch to succeed, the freelancer will need to be fully briefed on your company, differentiators, and competitors. From there, they can flesh out a communications strategy, put the tactics in place, write content, test your messages, line up references, etc. These activities take time and can't realistically or professionally be done with just a few days' notice.

Don't assume that a media relations freelancer that knows a lot of journalists will get you coverage purely based on their previous relationships. From the journalist's point of view,

they need to know that the story is solid, different and compelling. Based on those factors, they often have to sell their editor on the idea and why it's worth putting their time into it. Clients that work closely with freelancers to craft a great story will benefit the most from the media relations pro's network.

Think about freelancers as a potential long-term relationship. Freelancers can certainly tackle short-term projects and deliver stellar results. Yet the clients that have the most success with the freelancer business model are those that invest in a longer-term relationship.

When you're armed with the right information about working with freelancers and find one or two or a whole team that align with your business goals, you'll drive even stronger results from your communications programs.

