

Writing a Manual - What Does it Cost? Cost vs. Value

The skill sets, experience, education, and technical capabilities needed to research, write, print, proof, and then publish a 200 to 1,000 page manual is considerable to say the least. Assuming a company has such a person with the requisite qualifications, what will it cost to produce a high quality, 210 page manual?

The example below does **NOT INCLUDE** the time needed to research the subject material.

Assumptions (very optimistic assumptions)

1. The writer has the manual "in his/her head" and can write this manual from scratch and do this task at three (3) pages per hour with no breaks, interruptions, or lost time for any cause. The customer is 100% satisfied with the output and zero revisions or re-work are required.
2. The manual has no graphics. No scanning or OCR cleaning is required.
3. Computer hardware and publishing software are readily available on-site. The writer is an expert user of the publishing software and has no lost time whatsoever due to hardware or software problems.

	Case A	Case B	Case C
Hourly pay rate	\$ 20.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 50.00
Fringe benefits at 35% ¹	7.00	10.50	17.50
Overhead rate at 50% ²	10.00	15.00	25.00
 Total effective pay rate	 \$ 37.00	 \$ 55.50	 \$ 92.50
Write 210 pages at 3 pages ³ per hr	x 70	x 70	x 70
 TOTAL cost	 \$ 2,590	 \$ 3,885	 \$ 6,475

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¹ The cost of employee benefits is estimated at 35%. Items in this category include health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, 401(k) plan, uniforms, etc.

² Overhead is the pro rata allocation of a number of "hidden costs." Example items would be office facilities expense, electricity, computers, supplies, etc.

³ Is 3 pages too few? Time yourself and type an exact copy of this page. (There are only 327 words on this "page!")