

## HeroX Uses Its Own Platform To Boost Productivity

How we embrace our crowdsourcing philosophy to stay agile and fully resourced

*“One of the greatest benefits of crowdsourcing is its capacity to leverage all the little bits of energy, inspiration, and passion that would otherwise go to waste. I love to write, but not in a way that I would publish a book or seek to become a journalist. The HeroX Writers’ Draft Challenge was an opportunity for me to explore my interest in writing, in a way that was compatible with my limited time as a software developer. With crowdsourcing, my energy and efforts have a chance to help build something that I could not otherwise do”*

**Matt Gaiser**  
**New Member of the HeroX Writers’ Bench**

Like every other small business, HeroX constantly manages a variable project load against fixed available resources and personnel. One way we address this issue is by maintaining pools of known contractors. For example, we maintain a bench of contract writers who fill the gap when we need more content than our permanent staff can produce. Recently, we realized that we needed to increase the size of our Writers’ Bench.

Rather than reach out through our network for potential candidates, we saw this as a perfect opportunity to run a challenge. The HeroX Writer’s Draft was a two phase challenge where we put out a call for writers to share their profile and experience, and explain why they should be the next member of our Writers’ Bench. We then invited the most compelling top four participants to complete a writing assignment. As a result of the challenge, and at a fraction of recruitment costs, we were able to attract gifted writers that bring a broad diversity of opinions and writing styles to our Writers’ Bench.

We do a lot of general writing in support of our platform. We produce content that populates the different challenge pages, goes out to different media outlets, and informs our greater community. While we want our platform to present an overall unified sensibility, we also want individual pieces of content to display unique voices and opinions. The Writers’ Bench allows us to do this. For example, our [blog](#) is full of interesting posts partly because they come from a diverse group of writers that each have something to say and their own way of saying it. It was important to us that



new members of the Writers' Bench follow suit and each demonstrate a distinctive voice and an alignment with the [HeroX core values](#), so we emphasized these qualities in the design of our challenge.

We used our readily available platform tools and templates to design and build a two phase challenge. In Phase 1, participants were invited to write a short submission that introduced themselves, discussed why they were a good fit for HeroX, and provided examples of their writing. We received 48 submissions from 18 countries and selected four participants to advance to Phase 2. The submissions were amazing, and it was with difficulty that we selected the four Phase 1 winners. We asked each Phase 1 winner to complete a writing assignment similar to what they would do if they were already on the Writers' Bench. At the end of Phase 2, we evaluated the different pieces of writing and awarded the first place winner Tom Haxton \$1000, second place winner George Shewchuk \$750, third place winner Matthew Gaiser \$500, and fourth place winner Michael Trigg \$250. In addition to the monetary prizes, some of the winners were invited to join the Writers' Bench.

Having ourselves as clients meant that HeroX team members who don't normally interact with the challenge process had an opportunity to experience our services. A side benefit was that we received honest, internal feedback about steps in the process where things were confusing, unclear, or capable of being improved. As a result, future HeroX clients will experience various improvements in their challenges and user experience.

Even though HeroX is active in the crowdsourcing space, we have only infrequently taken advantage of our own tools. This case study shows how even an expert in a field can always learn more. The HeroX Writers' Draft Challenge was a tremendous success, and we've already put the newest members of our Writers' Bench to work. Additionally, by using our own services, we have discovered ways to improve them. Our success with the Writers' Bench has encouraged us to be more active as a user of crowdsourcing services and not just a supplier of them. We are planning to run several additional challenges over the next year to similarly augment our resources in other areas, such as challenge design and project management. To learn more about other ways crowdsourcing can be used, click on the related content links below.