



THE CONSUMMATE MARKETER'S GUIDE TO

# Brand Voice & Tone Best Practices

# Brand crushes start here.

Here's what's inside this awesome guide.

## **INTRO: Your very own brand voice**

1. What is brand voice?
2. What is tone of voice?

## **PART #1: Three tips every marketer, brand and business should always aspire to live, breathe and swear by.**

1. Always respect your audience.
2. Always be their guide.
3. Always be authentic.

## **PART #2: Get to know your audience, including how they communicate with each other.**

1. Get to know your audience inside and out.
2. Get to know how your audience communicates.
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## **PART #3: Establishing a great messaging architecture, creating a solid mission statement and defining your core values.**

1. What are your core values?
  - a. Define your core values.
2. How to establish a great messaging architecture.
  - a. Create a message architecture.
3. How to create a solid mission statement.

## **PART #4: Define, create, document, and activate your brand voice and tone.**

1. Define your brand's tone of voice.
2. Document your tone of voice guidelines.

Use this guide to become a pro on all things brand voice & tone. Then, use the framework to strategize, document and activate your own unique brand voice of tone.

## THE ART OF CRAFTING

# Your very own brand voice.

Every day, thousands of new brands are being launched—leading to crowding of the market place and a lot of noise. For any business entering, or any brand re-launching and re-entering a crowded market segment, cutting through the noise is a complex undertaking.

One way to ensure that you'll get seen, heard and respected by your target audience is to create a clear and unique voice for your brand that will cut through the noise and speak directly to them—the way they prefer to be spoken to. Strategizing, creating and documenting a solid brand voice is one thing—understanding all the ways to successfully execute it is another.

But, for now, let's start with defining what a brand voice is. Zoomed out, your brand voice is the unique and ownable personality of your brand. This is the impression or perception that you want your brand to convey when interacting with people—whether they are customers or not. One doesn't have to be a die-hard Apple customer to appreciate, respect and feel inspired by Apple's perfect brand messaging.

Your brand voice can activate in several different ways, including your:

- visual identity
- website content
- articles and blog posts
- podcasts and videos
- social media channels

It's mission critical to see a visual in your mind of all of these channels functioning individually, and collectively—as a single, streamlined sales and marketing machine. A digital marketing ecosystem comprised of specific and unique channels and platforms to which your brand voice must always be clear, consistent and controlled. Multiple, disconnected channels—a single, streamlined voice across all of them, which is the thread that connects them all, while always activating your brand, to ensure a streamlined UX for your customers.

The brand perception you want to create should be rooted in your brand core values. As far as your brand is concerned, everything must always map back to a clear and rational strategy. Otherwise, your brand will read as fake, forced or inauthentic. Therefore, one must always start by mapping out a set of core values or ideas that represent the brand's essence. These values define and dictate how your brand will look, behave and function, which ultimately lays the foundation for the brand tone and voice.

Your brand story also takes inspiration from your core values and your story enables your brand to become unique. How the story sounds is brand voice. It's not just about your story or your message, it's about how you say it. It is about how make people feel when they encounter your story and your brand voice.

Your audience and your customers want an authentic tone of voice. They do not want to be treated as just dollar signs. That's why, we strategize and write to people, not prospects.

Finally—and perhaps most importantly—once documented, it is essential that every employee at your company be onboarded, aligned, activated and empowered to respect and protect your new brand voice and style guidelines. When you've successfully documented and socialized your guidelines for approval, **setup a copywriting masterclass for all of your teams**, especially your GTM team(s), including marketing, sales, customer service and product, to ensure successful onboarding and cross-org, omni channel alignment.

WHAT IS

## *A brand voice.*

Brand voice is the brand's personality; the unique way we will present EverBright to the world. Ultimately, the voice must run consistently through all communications, no matter which teams are handling which channels, it must never change.

WHAT IS

## *Tone of voice?*

Brand tone of voice is how we will communicate with our audience, including our choice of words, communication style, and emotional tone based on the matter or task at hand needing to be communicated. matter which teams are handling which channels, it must never change.



*Three tips every marketer, brand and business should always aspire to live, breathe and swear by.*

## *Always respect your audience.*

As a lifestyle brand your primary responsibility is to respect your audience and customers. If you fail on this one, then your brand is doomed. A lifestyle brand should think beyond just the products and services they offer. They need to get into the shoes of their audience and understand their lives beyond this brand world view. Don't simply market to your audience. Communicate with them.

## *Always be their guide.*

Audience embrace brands that help them understand this world and solve their problems. To do this your brand has to be a guide and your brand voice should be one of guidance and help. This means your articles or social media posts should go beyond your market segment. You should try and reach into your audience's worldview and talk about things that are important to them while still aligning with your core values.

## *Always be authentic.*

A lot of young lifestyle brands tend to think in terms of being grandiose. They feel that by simply associating their brand tone with uber celebrities, their brand also gets that status. The truth is that rarely happens. In fact your brand may come off as being in-authentic and fake. Being truthful and real. It is ok to get on the band wagon of celebrity gossip but you must also spend time creating your own branded content with a clear and true voice.



*Get to know your audience,  
including how they communicate  
with each other.*

## STEP #1

# Get to know your audience inside and out.

Now that you know how to define your tone of voice, let's discuss how to tweak it for your customers.

Customers expect brands to understand their needs and expectations. One great way to get to know your customers is to find out what social media platforms they use and how they interact with one another. To begin, find out which channels your audience prefers. The best way to do so is to go directly to the source, whether that's Reddit, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or elsewhere.

But how do you find which sites your audience uses? Start with a Google search. Use the "site search" method, which looks like this:  
site:www.website.com your brand here  
By searching this way, Google will show you results only from the sites you include. Take some time to research your results and take notes. What positive things are people saying? What negative things? Are there any trends?

You can use this information to tweak your overall tone of voice, or even plan social content. If your brand is new or you don't get a lot of results this way, you can also perform the search with your competitor's brand names.

## STEP #2

# Get to know how your audience communicates.

Now that you know where your audience hangs out online, pay attention to how they communicate with one another and use their vocabulary as inspiration. Facebook groups can be a treasure trove of information.

Join relevant groups to see how members talk about brands in your industry. This is a great place to start learning how your audience members communicate. Mirroring how your audience communicates can make your content pieces more relatable. If done right, this can even lead to an increase in sales.

Here are questions to consider when analyzing your customers' voices on social media:

- Do they speak in full sentences or more casually?
- Do they incorporate emojis?
- What kind of slang do they use?
- Do they talk to brands directly?
- What generation are they from?
- What do they like?
- What do they dislike?

It's also a good idea to answer the same questions about your competitors' audiences. Learn from their previous successes and mistakes to determine what might work for your audience.

## YOUR TURN

# Observe your audience.

First, find out what social platforms your audience uses. Once you know where your audience hangs out, observe how they interact with one another:

Do they use slang?

Are there any particular words or phrases they use often?

Do they typically interact with brands on social media?

A good starting point is to perform a Google site search for your brand on a site like Reddit. That way, you can see what people are saying about you only on that site.

Be sure to jot down notes on each “persona:”

Preferred social platform	Observations



LET'S  
DIVE INTO

*Establishing a great messaging  
architecture, creating a solid  
mission statement and defining your  
core values.*

## STEP #1

# What are your core values?

To define your core values, reflect on what makes your company unique and what your brand stands for.

This makes it easy for both employees and customers to know what to expect when interacting with your brand.

To start defining your core values, you need to do two things:

1. Create a mission statement
2. Establish a brand message architecture

## YOUR TURN

# Define your core values.

First, compose a concise mission statement that shows your users who you are, what you care about, and what your brand does to achieve its goals.

Start by answering these questions:

What are our company goals?	
How do we plan to achieve your goals?	
Who is our target audience?	
What do we want our company to be known for?	

Here's a completed mission statement from Microsoft as an example:

**"Our mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."**

## STEP #2

# How to establish a great messaging architecture.

Brand messaging architecture aligns and streamlines your brand's overall communication and brand values across all your content creators.

A message architecture is a set of communication goals, usually a list of terms, phrases, and statements. For example, your message architecture might include goals like "friendly and playful" or "professional and authoritative."

To create your own, compile a list of up to 50-100 adjectives that describe your industry, and bucket them into three groups:

- Who we are
- Who we would like to be
- Who we are not

After bucketing them, focus on the words listed in the "Who we would like to be" category. Group adjectives into categories and organize them in order of priority. You can flesh these out with sub-bullets and color-coding as needed to help clarify their meanings. Finally, update your content strategy with your completed architecture.

## YOUR TURN

# Create a message architecture.

A message architecture is a set of communication goals (usually a list of terms, phrases, and statements) used to align your team on all content produced. Start by compiling a list of 50-100 adjectives.

proactive trusted cool narrow slick value-oriented actionable tailored down-to-earth practical custom innovative hip conservative urban customer-oriented market-driven professional technological aggressive visionary	tactical responsive consistent traditional savvy eclectic broad high-quality friendly fun the thought leader current approachable welcoming blue collar strategic premium classic cutting edge reactive national	timeless elegant accessible responsible sexy high-level bleeding edge tried-and-true rural in touch wise empowering assertive informal progressive modern expensive authentic flexible international formal	trendy simple casual historic serious regional reliable efficient diverse elit driven leading edge experienced smart focused structured timely community-building pioneering lavish global
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Now, sort these into three groups:

Who we are	Who we'd like to be	Who we aren't

When you're done, focus on the words in the "Who we would like to be" category. Group them into categories and organize them in order of priority.

### STEP #3

# How to create a solid mission statement.

Compose a concise brand mission statement that shows your users who you are, what you care about, and what your brand does to achieve its goals.

Strong mission statements answer these questions:

- What are your company goals?
- How do you plan to achieve your goals?
- Who is your target audience?
- What do you want your company to be known for?

Write down your answers to these questions and work with your stakeholders to come up with a mission statement based on the results.



*Define, create, document  
and activate your brand  
voice and tone.*

### STEP #3

# Now its time to define your brand's tone of voice.

Now that you've determined the "why" behind your company, you can begin to craft a unique tone of voice.

To start defining your tone of voice, come up with adjectives that describe your desired tone.

You can use the four dimensions of tone of voice to map where your brand falls in each category:

1. Funny vs. serious
2. Formal vs. casual
3. Respectful vs. irreverent
4. Enthusiastic vs. matter-of-fact

### CATEGORY #1

## Formal vs. casual

Using a formal tone can help your brand appear more authoritative, but may also feel impersonal. Casual language can help create a sense of personality and friendliness. On the other hand, using too casual a tone in the wrong context can make you seem inexperienced or unprofessional.

### CATEGORY #3

## Respectful vs. irreverent

It's good to be respectful to your audience, but you also don't want to overdo it. You may not come across as genuine if you're always pandering to your users. Using an irreverent tone, on the other hand, can make your brand seem confident and fun. But, be careful not to intimidate or offend your audience.

### CATEGORY #2

## Funny vs. serious

When choosing between a funny and serious tone, remember that a funny tone won't fit all companies. And humor shouldn't get in the way of actually communicating with your audience.

### CATEGORY #4

## Enthusiastic vs. matter-of-fact

An enthusiastic tone can help you come across as helpful and friendly. But when used at inappropriate times, it may irritate your audience. While matter-of-fact language gives a feeling of honesty and simplicity. But when executed poorly, it may be seen as indifferent or lacking in personality.

## A FRAMEWORK TO HELP YOU

# Create and activate your tone of voice guidelines.

To successfully implement your tone of voice, start by setting clear brand guidelines. Review them every once in a while, especially when there are changes in your target audience.

Start with writing your guidelines in the brand's tone of voice you have defined—this will create a perfect example of correctly using it when writing. Include both correct and incorrect examples of your tone of voice to show your team members what to do as well as what to avoid.

Your internal guidelines should include:

- A portrait of your target audience and their voice
- Your brand's attitude to your audience (i.e., how formal or casual to be)
- Your brand's core values
- Your mission statement
- Your message architecture
- Vocabulary to use
- Vocabulary to avoid
- Grammar rules

Once you've created the first version of your style guide, share it with your company.

## HOW TO

# Create your own brand tone of voice guidelines.

Your tone of voice is how you connect and engage with your audience. The best way to do that is to align it with your brand values and mission as well as with your audience's voice.

Once you have an idea of what it should look like, match your tone of voice to the content format you're using to communicate.

Don't be afraid to get creative—the goal is to stand out from your competition. And by sticking to a consistent, unique tone of voice, your brand can gain authority (and popularity) within your niche.

Then, when you've successfully strategized, documented and socialized your guidelines for approval, setup a copywriting masterclass for all of your teams, especially your GTM team(s), including marketing, sales, customer service and product, to ensure successful onboarding and cross-org, omni channel alignment.

## YOUR TURN

# Define your tone of voice.

Map where your brand falls in each category:

Funny vs. serious

Formal vs. casual

Respectful vs. irreverent

Enthusiastic vs. matter-of-fact

Chart it out below by highlighting where you want your voice to land on each row:

Funny	Neutral	Serious
Casual	Neutral	Formal
Irreverant	Neutral	Respectful
Enthusiastic	Neutral	Matter of fact

Yours should end up looking something like this:

Funny	<b>Neutral</b>	Serious
<b>Casual</b>	Neutral	Formal
Irreverant	<b>Neutral</b>	Respectful
<b>Enthusiastic</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	Matter of fact

## YOUR TURN

# Finally, document your tone of voice guidelines.

To successfully implement your tone of voice, start by setting clear brand guidelines. Take some notes to start creating guidelines for the following:

Target audience	
Rules around interaction with them	
Your brand's core values	
Your mission statement	
Your message architecture	
Vocabulary to use	
Vocabulary to avoid	
Grammar rules	