

Freebie guide

Finding your brand voice

Why do I need a brand voice?

It's a busy marketplace and you need to stand out from the crowd. Your branding tells people who you are and why you're different.

When used consistently, a relatable brand voice builds recognition among your customers, earning their trust and boosting loyalty.

Brand voice refers to the way you talk to your customers. It's a key component of your brand image.

Ultimately, a carefully honed brand voice will boost your sales, both in the short and long term.

The foundation: defining your brand and its unique personality



Your voice is built on your brand personality – your identity. If you haven't yet defined your identity, you could start by thinking about the questions below.

- What is your mission statement and what are your brand values?
- Who is your target market and what is your market positioning?
- Who are your direct competitors, locally, regionally or globally?
- What are your unique selling points? What products/services/values does your brand offer that differentiate it from its competitors?
- Does your brand have a particular cultural reference point?

- In terms of brand image, which existing brand does your company see itself closest to?
- What brands do you not see yourself aligned with?
- If your brand were a movie/musician/pop star/artist/designer/art movement, which one would it be?
- What five words would you choose to describe your brand image?

Thinking of your brand as a person

After mulling over the questions on the previous page, your brand personality should begin to take shape, with key traits becoming clearly defined. For example:

Financial services company

- authoritative
- professional
- formal

It can be helpful to think of your brand as a person. Who are they, what are they like, and how do you want others to perceive them? For example, let's look at the financial services company.

Perhaps this company could be thought of as an English gentleman. He is well educated, well mannered, eloquent and refined. He has traditional values and wants others to place their trust in him.

Fast fashion retailer

- funky
- eclectic
- young

Organic food supplier

- wholesome
- down-to-earth
- principled

The next step: giving your brand a voice

With your brand personality firmly in mind, it becomes easy to define your brand voice. When your brand talks, what does he or she sound like? How does your brand want to make other people feel?

Let's look at our English gentleman and his financial services. How would he sound when he talked? He would probably use quite formal language. As a gentleman, he would be polite and seek to make people comfortable without being overly familiar. He would take the time to

explain things clearly, and would probably talk a lot about traditional values such as trust, hard work and a commitment to quality.

Let's break that down to look at tone, formality and key words.

Tone

First and foremost, you need to decide on your tone – how you would like to speak to your customers.

Are you **formal** or **chatty**?

Are you **funny** or **serious**?

Are you **elite** or **down-to-earth**?

Are you **confident** or **reserved**?

Are you **disruptive** or **traditional**?

Are you **technical** or **accessible**?

A brand will adopt a tone that reflects and enhances its personality.

Disruptive



Apple

This changes everything. Again.

Elite



Mercedes-Benz

More style per hour.

Down-to-earth



Walmart

Save money. Live better.

Accessible



AIA

The Real Life Company.

Formality

Your brand personality will decide whether you adopt a formal or casual register. The difference can be striking. For example:

- Check it out! An extra month of coverage is yours - and it's free!
- Enrol this month and receive an additional month of coverage with our compliments.

Using contractions, colloquialisms, pronouns and rhetorical questions will affect your level of formality.

Contractions (it is vs. it's)

Mastercard



There are some things that money can't buy.
For everything else, there's MasterCard.

Google



Don't be evil.

Colloquialisms and slang (informal language)

McDonalds



I'm lovin' it.

KFC



Finger lickin' good.

Rhetorical questions language)

Budweiser



Whassup?

California Milk Processor Board



Got milk?

Colloquialisms and slang (informal language)

L'Oreal



Because you're worth it.

Avis



We try harder.

Vocabulary

Your brand vocabulary consists of specific words and phrases closely associated with your identity.

Using these words repeatedly across your communications – including your website, press releases, brochures and adverts – will not only help you to communicate your message consistently, but will also create a deeper connection with your customers.

Let's take a look at La Mer, which has a clearly defined list of key words that it uses across its product copy, website and communications.

La Mer

Transform

Born from the sea, this legendary cream has the power to transform the look of skin.

... it is infused with a dose of highly concentrated Miracle Broth™, the heart of La Mer's profound powers of transformation.

Radiant

Renewed and energized, skin looks youthfully radiant.

Irritation appears soothed and dry, fragile skin made strong for a radiant renewal.

Luxurious

Luxuriously light, this formula delivers miraculous benefits.

This luxurious cream mask infuses skin with serum-strength sculpting power.



As well as key words to use, many brands also have specific words and phrases that they avoid. It may be that these words just don't fit with the brand image or it may be that they are commonly used by competitors. Sometimes, what you don't say is as important as what you do say.

Other companies keep a comprehensive list of how to use technical terms correctly. These guidelines help different writers to communicate in the same way, which is crucial to building a respected and trustworthy brand.



The end result: a voice worth listening to

We hope this guide has helped you to identify and refine your brand voice. We look forward to hearing your own unique tone when we're out and about.



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