

Brand Voice Guide

Incorporating a consistent and impactful brand voice across all your communication channels.

INTRODUCTION

Your brand voice is the personality behind your messaging—how you communicate with your audience in a recognizable, consistent, and trustworthy way. Whether you are speaking to donors, customers, or community members, a strong brand voice ensures clarity, cohesion, and engagement across platforms.

This guide will help everyone on your team—from social media managers to email writers—use the same tone, language, and messaging style, ensuring your brand remains authentic and memorable.

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR BRAND PERSONALITY

To create a distinct brand personality, answer the following questions.

What Three Words Best Describe Your Brand Voice?

Choose words that reflect your brand's personality.

Small Business Example:

Friendly, Innovative, Professional

Nonprofit Example:

Compassionate, Empowering, Impact-Driven

How Do You Want People to Feel When They Engage with Your Brand?

Identify how you want your audience to “feel”.

- ☐ Supported?
- ☐ Motivated to take action?
- ☐ Confident in their decision to support your cause?
- ☐ Other?

Small Business Example:

"We want customers to feel informed, valued, and excited about our products/services."

Nonprofit Example:

"When people read our emails and social media posts, we want them to feel inspired, hopeful, and

empowered to make a difference."

STEP 2: BRAND VOICE DO'S AND DON'TS

Create a “Do’s and Don’ts” brand criteria that appropriately clarifies your tone and provides direction on language, tone, and focus. Here is an example.

What We Do	What We Don't Do
● Use conversational, accessible language.	● Use overly technical, jargon-heavy language.
● Communicate with warmth and authenticity.	● Write generic, robotic messages (e.g., “Dear Customer”).
● Focus on storytelling to create connection.	● Overuse humor or slang unless it aligns with our brand.
● Personalize messaging when possible (e.g., “Hey [First Name], we appreciate you!”).	● Be overly formal or distant in communication.

Tip: Provide examples of these “Do’s and Don’ts” in your guidelines.

Example:

Instead of saying: "We are dedicated to delivering community-driven impact through collaborative engagement with stakeholders."

Try: "Together, we're making a difference in our community—one step at a time."

STEP 3: TONE AND STYLE GUIDELINES

Brand tone refers to the emotional quality, style, and attitude of your brand’s communication. It defines how your messages sound and feel across different platforms—whether in emails, social media, website content, or customer interactions. While your brand voice remains consistent (who you are as a brand), your tone may adapt based on context, audience, and platform.

General Tone Template

Start with a general tone guideline and then adapt across platforms.

Example: Our tone is [insert your brand personality: e.g., friendly, professional, passionate, authoritative, inspiring]. We aim to balance [insert values: e.g., warmth with professionalism, enthusiasm with credibility].

Example of Tone Guidelines Across Platforms:

Platform	Tone Style	Example
Website	Clear, professional, engaging	"Welcome to [Organization Name]! We believe that small actions create big impact."
Email	Personal, warm, action-driven	"Hi [Name], we're excited to share something special with you today!"
Social Media	Conversational, community-focused, engaging	"What's your biggest challenge with fundraising? Let's talk about it in the comments!"
Fundraising Appeals	Emotional, compelling, donor-centered	"Your support has helped us feed 500 families this month. Will you help us reach even more?"

STEP 4: KEY MESSAGING GUIDELINES

Core Messaging Pillars

Identify and use consistent phrases, taglines, and messaging themes to reinforce your brand voice across all channels.

Small Business Examples:

- "Quality products, personalized service, and a community-first mindset."
- "We don't just sell, we serve—and we're here to help you thrive!"

Nonprofit Examples:

- "Every donation makes a difference."
- "Together, we can create lasting change."
- "Your generosity fuels our mission."

Preferred Language and Phrases

Clearly identify keywords and phrases you DO want to incorporate often in your messaging and words and phrases you absolutely DO NOT want to use. The words we choose to use should align with your brand voice.

Example:

✓ Commonly used words:

- "Community," "Empower," "Together," "Transform," "Make an Impact"
- "Innovative," "Reliable," "Trusted," "Local Experts"

✗ Words we avoid:

- Overly technical industry jargon
- Impersonal terms like "valued customer"

STEP 5: SOCIAL MEDIA VOICE AND ENGAGEMENT

A strong brand voice is essential for effective social media engagement. Follow these guidelines to keep messaging consistent and engaging.

General Social Media Rules:

- ☐ Keep posts short, punchy, and engaging.
- ☐ Use storytelling and personal experiences when possible.
- ☐ Respond to comments in a way that reinforces your brand's tone.
- ☐ Use relevant hashtags that match your organization's values.

Small Business Example:

Question: "Do you offer custom product options?"

Response: "Great question! Yes, we do! Here's how you can customize your order: [Link]"

Nonprofit Example:

A Donor Says: "I love the work you do—thank you for making a difference!"

Response: "Thank you so much, [Name]! Your support makes all the difference!"

STEP 6: EMAIL AND NEWSLETTER VOICE

Emails should feel personal, clear, and aligned with your brand's tone.

Subject Line Examples (Based on Tone):

- **Friendly:** "We've got something exciting to share with you, [First Name]!"
- **Professional:** "Important Update from [Your Organization]"
- **Urgent:** "Last Chance to Make a Difference Before Year-End"

Email Opening Example:

✗ Dear Valued Customer,

✓ Hey [First Name], we're so grateful to have you in our community!

STEP 7: CRISIS AND DIFFICULT MESSAGING

Your brand voice should remain consistent and aligned with your values, even in challenging situations.

When Responding to Negative Comments or Complaints:

- Stay professional, but show empathy.
- Offer solutions, not excuses.
- Never ignore or delete constructive criticism.

Example:

Complaint: "I had a bad experience with your service."

Response: "We're so sorry to hear that, [Name]. We want to make it right—can you DM us so we can help?"

STEP 7: BRAND VOICE CHECKLIST

Create a brand voice checklist as a quick reference guide to check if your message across various channels meets your brand voice guidelines.

- ☐ Does this message sound like “us”?
- ☐ Is the tone aligned with our brand personality?
- ☐ Is it clear, engaging, and easy to understand?
- ☐ Does it reflect our core values?
- ☐ Is it appropriate for the platform?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Your brand voice is what makes your organization unique. By following these guidelines, your team can ensure that every email, social post, blog, and customer interaction aligns with your organization's mission and personality.

Need help refining your brand voice?

Ready to create a strategy that ensures your messaging is strong, clear, and engaging across all platforms. Let's connect.

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