



how to find your brand voice

Just as people have individual personalities and defining characteristics that set them apart from a crowd, brands possess distinctive qualities that make them shine.

One such quality is a brand's voice: the personality and emotion instilled into a company's communications and image. Brand voice encompasses everything from the words and language used, to the public image marketing efforts aim to produce. A brand's voice clearly expresses and exemplifies its core values.

Consistency is Key

- **A brand should maintain a consistent voice across all media.** That means every touchpoint – social media and email, websites and mobile apps, print and TV ads, storefronts and customer support hotlines – should share a coherent tone.
- **A consistent voice further demonstrates a company's reliability and credibility.** Varying messages may confuse your customers and fans, making your brand regarded as erratic to some. Uniformity and consistency set expectations and allow people to embed solid trust in your brand.
- **Successful brands have a voice that is manifest in the company's people and assets.** For example, if a company offers products or services that help others in need, the representatives of that brand – leaders, employees, store associates, spokespeople, etc. – should also be kindhearted and benevolent.

Brand Voices You May Recognize

Some of the world's most well-known brands reached their "celebrity" status due in part to their iconic voices.



empowering & connecting
apple.com »

TIFFANY & CO.

elegant & charming
tiffany.com »



compassionate & humane
toms.com »

SUBARU

comforting & uplifting
subaru.com »



inspiring & confident
dove.com »

PROGRESSIVE®

quirky & reassuring
progressive.com »



rugged & bold
ford.com »

Crayola®

youthful & creative
crayola.com »

Stay Prominent & Relevant

To stay prominent and relevant, celebrated brands have strategically evolved their voices, creative approaches, touchpoints and offerings over time. These metamorphoses do not happen overnight. As cultural norms and economic systems change, successful brands follow suit. For example, Tiffany & Co. was founded as Tiffany, Young and Ellis, a small luxury stationery store in Connecticut. Now, the upscale Manhattan jeweler has its own trademark color, is the manufacturer of the Vince Lombardi Trophy, Larry O'Brien Trophy and several other professional sports victory cups, and perhaps most famously, is the namesake and opening setting of a Capote-novel-turned-Hepburn-film. Tiffany's has become more than just a company that makes jewelry out of precious gemstones; it's a beacon of luxury and prosperity that many dream to obtain.

While consumerism radically evolves, the brandscape should, too. As brand strategist Patrick Hanlon states,

“**Brands are no longer products or services, but the communities of people that surround those products and services. Today, brands are social and participatory, created not by companies but by consumers.**”

The “Is/Is Not” Matrix

Small strides can make a big difference in developing a distinct brand voice. A valuable step in this process is interpreting how your brand walks and talks – and how it doesn't.

Following is an example of an “is/is not” matrix. The “is not” terms are typically deemed undesirable, so it's important for brands to avoid language and imagery that would result in a brand being perceived or described in these ways.

is	is not
silly	sophomoric
professional	stuffy
smart	egotistic
fashionable	tacky
classic	old-fashioned
loud	obnoxious
strong	forceful

← This chart can become an essential reference tool in helping ensure that your content standards are followed by every stakeholder of your brand. To keep the brand fresh, it's important to occasionally revisit and amend the matrix as your brand evolves, consumers' values change, and new competitors enter the scene. Most importantly, everyone in your organization should be on board with and abide by the voice matrix.

In Short

We mature and establish ourselves in various environments, shape our own personas and grow from our surroundings. Brands can do the same. As brands mature and establish themselves in the marketplace, customers are able to better understand and define them. But brands should also evolve and change as time progresses and culture shifts.

So, how do your customers describe your brand? If you don't already know, now is the time to define and amplify your brand's voice and use it wisely.