

BRAND VOICE GUIDELINE

WHAT

Very few companies have a brand whose look, tone and sensibility is consistent across its touch-points (e.g., its websites, customer interactions, packaging, advertising, etc.). This consistency is often missing because there is no attempt made to pinpoint and communicate the feel and rationale behind the brand's name, logo, slogan, personality and visual style. If such a document does exist, it often fails, either because it's a phonebook full of rules about what colors and fonts to use or because it's only delivered to a handful of people in marketing and PR.

The perfect voice guideline is like a Facebook profile: In one page, it defines a brand's personality (logo, slogan, verbal/visual style) while communicating its ideals, dreams, and relationships. This is a document that helps communicate your culture (your brand), and not what you might send to a creative agency so that they can create consistent collateral (your branding).

HOW

Design a Brand Voice Guideline to embody the personality you think your brand should convey. Use learnings from the Image-Identity Gap or your Empathy Research to help you define what should be the voice guideline for your brand. Give a codified voice to the best traits you've seen in your brand and fill in any significant gaps you've found in your brand's current tone or personality.

Include any factors or traits that define your brand, while being as succinct and creative as possible. Here are a few such factors that your guidelines might include:

NAME / NICKNAMES. What is it called? How do its customers, employees, and suppliers refer to it?

PERSONALITY. What are your brand's core values? What is your brand passionate about? What is it striving for? What does it find fascinating? What books are on its coffee table? What are its guilty pleasures? Who are its friends? If it were at a 7th birthday party, would it talk to the parents or the kids? If you surveyed its brand attributes, where would it be positioned?

SLOGAN. What is its catch phrase? What words should it be remembered by?

VISUAL STYLE. How does it look? If it were a movie, what movie would it be? If it were a magazine, who would be its competitors? Does it wear a sweatshirt or a necktie? Does it shop at J. Crew or Juicy Couture? Does it fit in more at Walmart or farmer's markets?

VERBAL STYLE. What language and tone does your brand use? Does it use contractions or slang? What kind of jokes can it tell? Does it whisper or shout? Is it smiling or smirking or stifling a yawn? Does it pronounce either as Ee-ther or Eye-ther?