

Tone of Voice Guidelines Exercise

Inspired by Natasha Clark’s approach, a brand strategist known for shaping the voices of Under Armour and Pinterest, the following is a helpful exercise that uncovers the core attributes of your brand, tailors the tone to your target audience, and establishes clear guidelines for consistent messaging. This process ensures that every piece of content reflects the brand's personality and values, building stronger connections with your audience.

Part 1 – Research & Analysis

1. SWOT Analysis of the Company

Strengths:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Weaknesses:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Opportunities:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Threats:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Audience Analysis – stranger, acquaintance, friend

Stranger

Profile: Knows very little about the brand/company/project

Needs:

Content Goals:

Acquaintance

Profile: Knows some information about the brand/company/project

Needs:

Content Goals:

Friend

Profile: Is familiar with the brand/company/project

Needs:

Content Goal:

3. Relevant Brand Voices Research and Benchmarking

Competitor 1: _____

Brand Personality attributes:

Content style attributes:

Competitor 2: _____

Brand Personality attributes:

Content style attributes:

Competitor 3: _____

Brand Personality attributes:

Content style attributes:

Part 2 – Creating the Guidelines

1. Define the brand's personality (3-6 characteristics)

Example:

Welcoming: Warm, curious about target audience.

Friendly: Open-minded, respects diverse needs.

Relaxed: Laid-back, opportunities to unwind, safe.

Modern: Digital, cosmopolitan, fashionable.

Your brand:

2. Establish 3-4 brand voice principles

Example:

Approachable: Makes website visitors feel comfortable, valued, and understood.

Creative: Uses descriptive language with an emotional appeal.

Sincere: Transparent and thoughtful, creating realistic expectations.

Enthusiastic: Uses active verbs and CTAs, expressing excitement about its offerings.

Your brand:

3. Based on the above 2 points, define the tone of voice per audience segment (tone matrix)

Example:

	Audience Segments		
Tone of Voice Characteristics	Stranger	Acquaintance	Friend
Focus	Highlight basic information	Highlight niche experiences	Highlight novelty
Formality	Formal	Semi-formal	Informal
Attributes to Showcase	Welcoming and modern	Friendly and modern	Friendly and relaxed

Your brand:

	Audience Segments		
Tone of Voice Characteristics	Stranger	Acquaintance	Friend
Focus			
Formality			
Attributes to Showcase			

4. Create style guidelines

a. Rules to follow

Example:

- Section content through subheadings and pagination
- Follow the Inverted Pyramid Points Organization, beginning with the most important information at the top of the page
- Can use contractions, exclamation marks, acronyms or figures of speech
- Keep a readability level of grades 11-14
- Keep numbers in digit format (e.g. 4, 10)
- Use percentages (80%) instead of fractions (8/10)
- Use a mix of second person and third person perspectives for attractions, blogs and events

Your brand:

b. What to avoid saying

Example:

- Puns or jokes
- Slang
- Basic words like “very”, “some”, “thing”, “really” or “actually”
- Mentioning competitors
- Any negativity

Your brand:

c. Types of copy/content with examples/samples

d. KPIs

The following KPIs are important to monitor, to ensure the effectiveness of the website's content and tailor it accordingly.

For websites:

Organic Search Traffic: The amount of traffic coming to your website through organic search results.

Top Pages: The most visited pages on a website, ranked by the number of visits or page views within a specified period.

Traffic per Page: The total number of visits or page views that each individual page on the website receives.

Time on Page: The average amount of time that visitors spend on a specific page before navigating away.

Bounce Rate: The percentage of visitors who leave a website after viewing only one page, without taking any further action.

Engagement Rate: The measure of how actively visitors interact with a website, often calculated based on actions like clicks, saves, and time spent on the page.

For brands:

Brand Mentions: Frequency of brand name mentions across social media and online platforms.

Social Media Followers Growth: The rate at which your social media audience is increasing.

Conversion Rate: The percentage of users who take a desired action (e.g., signing up for a newsletter, downloading a resource) after engaging with your content.

Content ROI: The return on investment from content marketing activities.

Sentiment Analysis: The general sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) of conversations about your brand across social media and other platforms.

Customer Feedback: Direct feedback received from customers regarding content effectiveness and relevance.

e. Key Messages (3-5 points)

Besides communicating the brand's unique value proposition, key messages for a new brand or website should address the specific needs and concerns of each target audience segment, providing essential information that may not be immediately apparent but is crucial for informed decision-making. These messages should emphasize how the brand uniquely meets these needs, ensuring clarity and trust.

Your key messages:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.