

Tone Of Voice

Finding the right tone of voice for your business means you'll appeal to the right people. If you know your customers and products and have a clear understanding of your brand values finding the right tone will be a cinch!

Have you ever visited a website and been instantly put off, or immediately impressed after a very short time? You might not have stopped to consider why, but it's likely you'll have been influenced by the subtle nuances of the brand's identity. In those initial few seconds after only the briefest scan of the content you'll process the visual identity, soak up the tone and make a judgement.

Ideally, if you're the target market for a company you'll instantly appreciate their marketing materials, however they're presented.

As a business you wouldn't spell out to your customers what your tone is. It's implied, understated ... it should be so natural that your customers don't consider it, they just 'get' it. However, in the spirit of learning to demonstrate what we mean, here is an overview of what we at James Good are trying to capture in our tone.

In general, our tone is straight-forward, inquisitive and intelligent but slightly irreverent. We're confident when we're talking about branding and marketing, so our tone will convey this, we can be quite serious when we talk about what works and our experience. However, there is a caveat! Sometimes our tone is lighter, sharper and wittier, it depends on the exact situation. We're curious about many things – not just branding and marketing – new technology, art, science, politics, innovation, the environment. When we're talking about other stuff, the things that catch our eye, interest or enrage us we're a little different. We're not scared to have an opinion, even if we know it might be unpopular, we might take a more humorous or colloquial tone, poking fun at injustice and celebrating clever ideas. We sometimes unpick ideas and concepts that others have created with a fine-tooth comb ... we might be critical but we try very hard not to be cruel.

So how can you create and capture the appropriate sense of tone for your business? Your sector, audience, products, personality and culture will all influence your writing style. You should have a 'core' voice which you may choose to adapt slightly in different situations.

(i) Your Sector

There will be a sliding scale of what's appropriate for your sector. For example, tone that's suitable for a company within the security sector will be completely different from a theme park. Consider what the general tone for your sector is and whereabouts on the scale your company sits.

(ii) Audience Demographic

Who are you talking to? Understanding your audience and what will appeal to them is key to identifying a tone that's authentic. It's a bit 'chicken and egg' because the type of people you want to sell to / work with, will to some extent be shaped by the personality and culture of your

organisation which is communicated through your tone of voice! You're looking to attract people that want to align themselves with what you offer – ensuring a great cultural fit.

(iii) Your Products

What are you selling? Is it something creative, fun, serious, life-changing? The products and services you offer will also influence your tone. It would be a contradiction to speak in a light-hearted way about certain products and services.

(iv) Your Personality & Culture

Ideally the culture and personality of your business should ooze from everything you do. Any experience, whether it's on your website or face-to-face, should promote a consistent feeling about your business for the customer. Understand how you'd like the customer feel after interacting with your people / marketing / products.

Whoever writes for your company, whatever their personal views and role, it's important that they can grasp the appropriate tone. Formalise the process by creating a tone of voice statement that will serve as a guide for anyone that creates content for your business.

Tone should be a true reflection of the brand. It serves an important purpose. It allows potential customers and suppliers to make a judgement and decide whether they'd like to work with you. If your tone isn't accurate you won't meet customer expectations and everybody involved will feel disappointed.

Get it right and you'll be attracting the right people for the right reasons, everybody's happy!