

## Brand Voice: In a Manner of Speaking

Think of the closest person to you. Someone you have known and been around for a long time. You can recognize them from a mile away by their clothes, a certain pair of shoes they wear a lot, their gait when they walk – and of course, their voice when they speak.

Voices are one of the [common](#) identifiers in our everyday life. Similar as they might sound when people speak the same language or with the same accents, you typically can't mistake the voice of someone you know too well.

This applies fascinatingly to [brands](#).

### Defining Brand Voice

Like people, every business with a brand [speaks](#) recognizably to its audience – people who have experienced the brand and are familiar with its style of communicating with them. Every time a brand reaches out to an audience, an impression is created in their minds that defines that brand's distinctive [identity](#).

Therefore, a brand voice may be defined as the unique personality that a brand takes on when it communicates to its target audience. This includes how the brand conducts its [public relations](#), all of which must be consistent across the multiple platforms on which the brand engages with its customers. In other words, brand voices are expressed through the company's marketing channels (social media communications, electronic media commercials, and promotional articles), logo, slogan, website, and product packaging.

Just like you can call to mind the voice of someone close to you, a true brand's voice is unmistakable to its customers.

The next question you probably have on your mind right now is “what is the point of a brand voice?” or “why should a brand speak?” To underscore the essence of having a brand voice, an understanding of the branding concept from which it stems is a good place to begin.

This concept is called Brand Personification.

### Relating Brand Voice with Brand Personification

A business is inherently inanimate. At best, it is a system of specified transactional operations run by animate humans aided by machines. However, there is a way that a business can be perceived by its customers as a person – a friend that they can see, feel, hear, and ultimately trust.

This is known as [brand personification](#), a projective technique that consists of strategic branding efforts to create a relationship with customers that transcends the transactional.

Its origins are not exactly defined, however, brand personification likely took off from the realization that if people think about a brand as a relatable friend they can depend on rather than a foreign impassive identity obsessed with taking their money, a stronger connection is achievable.

This connection fosters trust, and trust is a [statistically](#) paramount deciding factor for many customers when they purchase. Drawing a straight line from brand personification to conversion and customer loyalty, it becomes apparent that brand personification is of tremendous advantage to any business in the long run.

A brand voice is one of the aspects of brand personification that gives businesses that human-like, relatable, and trustworthy outlook. When a brand “speaks” clearly and is listened to, the result is a one-of-a-kind wholesome experience that sets the brand aside from the competition.

Now, you know that a brand **can** speak to its audience. Next, you will find out **how** a brand speaks to its audience.

## Brand Voice vs. Tone of Voice

Once again, recall that special someone whose voice you can distinguish from many others.

You know this person’s voice well enough, but you also know that there are days that their voice perks up because they are happy, or gets rather gravelly when they are upset about something. Their voice is probably recognizable anyway, but what changes per situation is the tone of their voice.

Applying this to brands, you have a better perspective of the [distinction](#) between a brand’s voice and a brand’s tone of voice.

The brand voice is the all-encompassing aspect that reflects the values and personality of a business. However, the tone of voice is sub-defined by nuances such as a particular product or service being showcased to the market, an occasion, or a different demographic of customers.

A brand’s tone of voice typically does not stray far from the main brand voice but may be micro-modified for appropriateness to situations. For example, company X (with a target audience of mostly adults) has a brand voice that is typically humorous and they launch a new product for kids. Company X’s communications about that product would be humorous as well, but adjusted to appeal to kids.

Therefore, it is deductible that while a brand’s tone of voice is more flexible than the general brand voice, it should remain on-brand. Next up, you will read about examples of brand voices as adopted by real-life brands.

## Types of Brand Voices

A wide range of adjectives are used to describe different human voices: deep, baritone, loud, silvery, squeaky, brittle, raspy, alluring – it’s a nearly endless list.

Similarly, brand voices have their adjectives which slightly vary in nature from human voices because brand voices are perceived rather than “heard” using physical ears. Brand voices belong to three broad categories, but can be further defined by extent.

- [The Serious \(Formal and Respectful\) Voice](#)

Brands with serious voices typically (but not always) target people in corporate settings, and do not employ blatant humor or informalities in their communications. They keep it professional, straightforward, and concise. A serious brand voice may be formal, respectful, or both.

[Forbes](#) is a classic example of a brand with a formal voice. Forbes is a world-famous business magazine with interests in politics, business, science, and technology. In line with its [values](#) of integrity, boldness, and purpose, Forbes articles and lists are strictly formal. Many brands in corporate finance, fashion, science, education, and technology adopt a formal brand voice.

[Uber](#) personifies a respectful brand in their communications. Although not strictly formal, this globally-recognized ride-hailing and delivery service brand communicates in short, simple mannerisms that reflect in its app, emails, and social media relations with customers.

A formal or respectful brand voice is often associated with class, elegance, and professionalism, however, brands choose other types of brand voices for flexibility.

- [The Not-So-Serious \(Casual, Humorous, and Irreverent\) Voice](#)

Brands with a more dynamic consumer demographic or diverse products prefer to take on the not-so-serious persona. This is because the casual type of brand voice is modifiable to multiple [branding](#) nuances and is compatible with nearly every industry – including corporate businesses. A casual brand voice accommodates the use of witty puns, wordplay, humor, and even cheeky irreverence in their communications. The goal is to relate with customers beyond the limited confines of professional or corporate settings.

[Burger King](#), a famous multinational hamburger fast food chain of restaurants, uses a casual tone of voice that occasionally branches out to humor. This is reflective of its identity as a family-friendly brand with customers from all walks of life.

According to a recent [study](#), over 70% of customers prefer brands that can make them laugh. Brands such as [Mailchimp](#) and [Spotify](#) amplify an edgy, rather humorous outlook, with brand voices that only ever tell a joke, a pun, or a witty catchphrase to amuse customers. This type of brand voice is common with lifestyle brands or such that reach out to people who don't mind a good (or bad) joke for laughs.

While humor creates a disarming sensation that endears customers, it is often [emphasized](#) as best practice that humor remains within reasonable confines to avoid coming off as offensive.

Interestingly, brands like [DeadHappy](#) don't play by this rule book. Instead, they take humor to a whole new extreme. DeadHappy employs a most outlandish brand voice for an insurance company; famous for using [dark](#), irreverent humor in its communications. Despite this, the brand is [favorably](#) reviewed across multiple platforms.

[Old Spice](#) is another example of a brand with an unapologetically irreverent brand voice, expressed in its [controversial](#) raunchy ads and [randy](#) commercials.

With the scope of the not-so-serious category of brand voices stretching from mildly casual to nearly offensive, it is not amiss that most brands find their place in this massive spectrum.

- [The In-Between \(Inspirational and Helpful\) Voice](#)

Very few things are black-and-white, and brand voices are definitely not one of them.

While some brands have an affinity for sounding strictly formal, or strictly informal, a considerable number of brands strike a balance between both categories, avoiding extremes as much as possible in their communications.

An inspirational brand voice borrows from both formal and informal brand voices. It creates the perception of a motivational brand, and this requires a measure of seriousness to be believable, and yet, be relatable to the target audience. [Disney](#) exemplifies such a brand voice; possibly drawing inspiration from its founder's [story](#). Disney's communications and storytelling are typically hinged on themes of magic, dreams, and superheroes – all to inspire its audiences.

[Nike](#), a sportswear designer brand is also renowned for its uniquely motivational brand voice expressed in its entire communications, including its famous tagline “Just Do It” and its many heartfelt campaigns. This type of brand voice reassures the audience by helping them see positivity and purpose.

## Finding Your Brand Voice – Curiosities Answered

Evidently, a brand voice is irreplaceable in branding. Not only does it magnify your brand’s presence, it effectively evokes reactions from the people who perceive it. By now, you probably want to decide on a brand voice for your company. Naturally, a few more questions will occur such as:

- **Who chooses a brand voice?**

The good news is that this isn’t set in stone. For many household brands, the persons who decided on the brand voice are not known. Beyond job titles and specifics, what truly matters is that research is conducted on your target market to decipher the best brand voice they’ll recognize. You can put together a team of branding strategists to decide on the brand voice and other aspects of brand identity.

- **When should a brand voice be created?**

The best time to decide on a brand voice is at branding inception. This will guide communications and other related activities for the company. Of course, a brand voice can be modified or changed during the process of rebranding, but it might affect the entire outlook of your company – which means customers have to settle into a new perception of the brand.

- **What determines a brand voice?**

Certain types of brand voices are commonly associated with specific industries, however, nothing is set in stone. No brand voice is intrinsically good or bad for your business. Often, the major determining factors of a brand’s voice are the company values and the target audience.

Before deciding on a brand voice, consider the purpose of your business. What does it seek to achieve? What core values does the company prioritize? How does the company want people to react and respond to it?

Next, consider the “for whom” when choosing your brand voice. For your target audience to respond favorably to your brand, they must first “hear” it. This means that the brand voice should be relatable, understandable, and believable.

## Conclusion

Nothing cements the efficacy of a brand voice better than consistency. Across every channel of communication, a brand voice should be uniform and true to type.

After all, if for a moment, that person whose voice you well know suddenly sounds nothing like the usual, you’ll have a hard time recognizing their voice.

