

# Tone of Voice Guidelines

## Problem

Across 6+ external-facing applications, there was no standard tone of voice or consistency in interface copy. This left customers with inconsistent and sometimes conflicting messaging and information and a disparate “feel” of our applications. Messaging and content was often written by non-writers with no review from writers or content specialists.

## How I helped

- Researched tones of voice and their effects on audience perception of brand
- Initiated a cross-team collaboration with User Experience to test hypothesis about tone of voice for our use case
- Adjusted hypothesis based on user testing results
- Created guidelines for the tech organization to follow
- Presented the benefits of a unified tone of voice for leadership buy-in
- Communicated and trained the tech organization on final guidelines

## Deliverables

### Deliverable 1

We created and presented the value of a unified tone of voice, as well as the particular tone of voice we recommended for use across the organization’s external-facing applications.

### Deliverable 2

Using established software for the company’s intranet (Microsoft SharePoint), we created and posted guidelines for the Tone of Voice to be used across the company’s various applications, including what it is, why it’s important, how to write it, and examples.

## About the Guidelines

Our tone represents how we connect with our customers and shows them who we are.

Follow these guidelines and apply them to your application and your users as appropriate. These guidelines are to be used for both internal and external applications.

Both industry research and UX testing at were conducted to help determine the most effective tone to foster a sense of trustworthiness and greater satisfaction among users.

## Summary of Tone of Voice for Applications

### Use a conversational tone.

- Positive, focused on keeping users moving forward
- Relationship oriented (you, we)
- Concise but not robotic

### Variations:

- Moderately energetic for onboarding and welcome messages for initial relationship building.
- More minimalist for often-seen messages (such as success messages) to reduce tone fatigue.

Avoid humor. It does not always translate across different cultures and can cause confusion or even offense.

## Why is tone important?

- Creates a positive perception of our applications
  - trustworthy and approachable
- Improves the user experience and satisfaction
- Encourages return usage (increased MAU/DAU)
- Creates a consistent, supportive user experience within and across applications

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- Keeps us on brand with all aspects of our applications

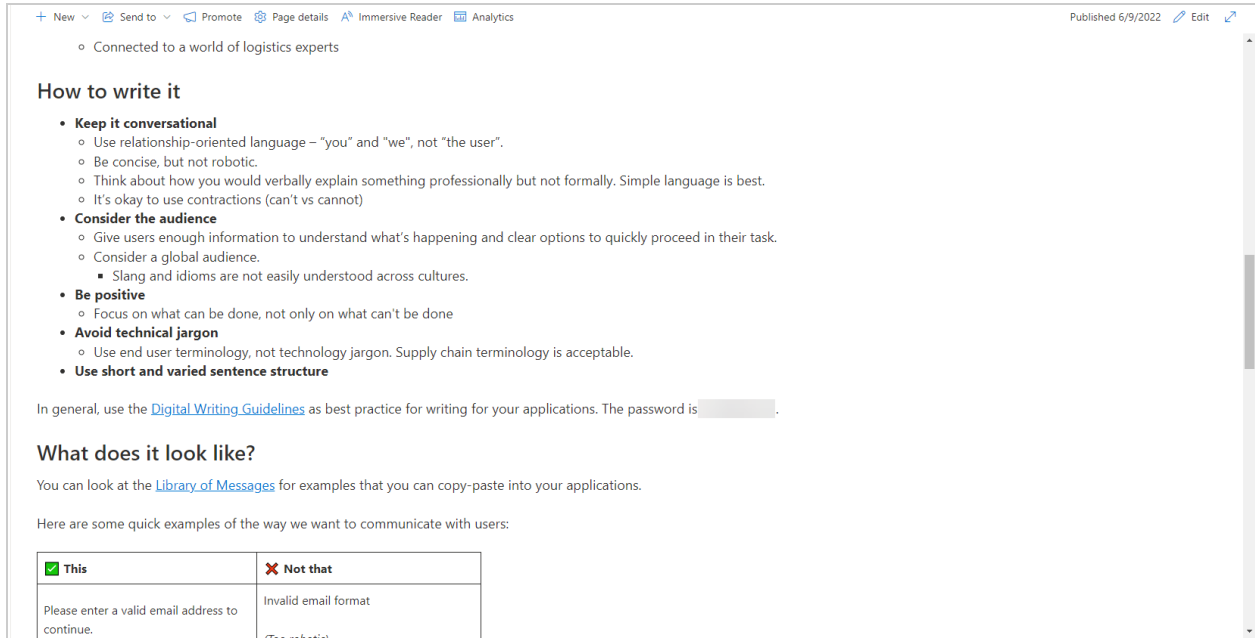
## Attributes

We want to be consistent with's overall brand, which includes:

- **Knowledgeable**
  - Intelligent, yet understanding
  - Innovative, offering best practices and new ideas
- **Relationship oriented**
  - Able to tackle tough problems
  - Encourages discussions to get things right
- **Responsive**
  - Problem solves
  - Never says no
  - Accelerates the customer's advantage to work with us
- **Global**
  - Connected to a world of logistics experts

## How to write it

- **Keep it conversational**
  - Use relationship-oriented language – "you" and "we", not "the user".
  - Be concise, but not robotic.
  - Think about how you would verbally explain something professionally but not formally. Simple language is best.



# Results

After getting leadership buy-in for the value and need of a unified tone of voice, we gave an informational training on how to apply the tone of voice guidelines and then published the guidelines to the organization.

200+ IT professionals (product owners, SMEs, and engineers) used the tone of voice guidelines to draft messaging and UI text for their applications. Customers received communications and information in a unified voice, increasing trust in our applications and increasing return users (Monthly Active Users and Daily Active Users).