

10 Brand Voice Lessons Every Marketer Should Master

By Alan Siegel

Sadly, the majority of brand messages fails to achieve the most essential tasks of communications. They lack clarity. They pose conflicting messages. They often don't even pay lip service to integrated themes.

The most effective **brand voice** is the result of a singular and powerful vision that is nurtured in environments that encourage innovation and excellence in communication.

Over the last 20 years, the digital revolution has raised the din of marketing communications exponentially, radically altering the messaging environment with its speed, novelty, and noise. Every marketer needs to recalibrate his or her brand voice to find the right pitch and tone, and the ideal volume to be heard. This dynamic has forced organizations to:

- **move from one-way communications to a dialogue**
- **incorporate personalization, flexibility and simplicity**
- **react instantly to rumor, speculation, and criticism on the Internet**
- **convert brand communications to proliferating digital platforms**
- **build social responsibility into brand voice**
- **appropriately translate English for multi-national markets**

Brand Voice works as brand glue, crystallizing strategies behind identity. A fully developed voice drives all communications to project a distinct personality that reinforces customer interactions. It's a "red thread" running through every touch-point, beyond advertising and media to embrace reputation and crisis management.

Marketers should master these 10 lessons to build a coherent brand voice:

1. Define your identity

A clear, precise statement defining your identity is the foundation for creating a rich and sustainable voice that will guide and focus your company's communications.

2. Overarching purpose

Define the overarching purpose—the reason for being in business, the calling your company answers in the market and society, the problems you are striving to solve — to replace cumbersome, generic, predictable mission and vision statements.

3. Inside-out approach

Leverage the intellectual power of the organization — don't ask customers what they want when you create your brand platform: positioning, messaging, architecture and narrative. Take an inside-out approach. Shake things up - get storytellers, investigative reporters, artists and poets to participate in brainstorming sessions.

4. Authenticity

Authenticity is a critical ingredient of brand voice. Being seen as a corporation with a conscience is paramount. People want organizations to live up to higher values and own up to mistakes.

5. Expect the unexpected

Every business must expect the unexpected. Today, anyone can inflict lasting damage on a brand within seconds.

Businesses must have an organizational voice program in place with digital experts who are trained and empowered to respond quickly and effectively.

6. Meaningful conversations

Audiences are no longer passive. Organizations must put programs in place to support meaningful conversations.

7. Sharpen your master narrative

Sharpen your master narrative to incorporate stories that create emotional connections, which are frequently more effective than rational arguments.

8. Humanize, personalize, and clarify

To truly connect with audiences, a brand must humanize, personalize and bring clarity to its voice. Clarity will turn out to be the ultimate sophistication.

9. Leadership

Virtually all organizations with a distinctive voice program have dynamic, visionary leaders who are unwilling to compromise core values, which encourages employees to live the brand voice.

10. Voice-centered world

Just as we are coming to grips with how to extend our voice on websites, mobile phones, tablets, smart home devices, watches and bots, AI has moved us into what one expert called a voice-centered world where virtual assistants will become the preferred communications platform. People will use them to get information, goods, and services, revolutionizing how consumers interact with the marketplace.

Today we must focus on migrating brand voice to new platforms while maintaining the essence of the brand. This requires an entirely new way of dealing with communications.

The future poses many challenges but brand voice backed by brand purpose shall prevail.