

Voice Lessons

Managing the Personality Behind the Prose

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Notes

What challenges do we face when we work with voice?

Do we know what voice is?

Can we identify voices we like?

Can we write in different voices?

Can we identify the most effective voices for our work?

Do we have an organizational voice
or a set of voices in which we regularly work?

What is voice?

Voice is the personality behind the prose.

Voice = ideas + word choice + sentence fluency.

Hearing Voices

Every industry has its own repertoire of voices. Below, we've identified what we believe to be the six most common voices in the financial services industry. At one time or another, you may have written in each of them. Can you think of another common industry voice that isn't represented here?

1. Realistic, Fatherly, Responsible

Most of us have goals in life that call for an investment of a significant amount of time and financial resources. We may have done some planning. However, our natural tendency is to focus on only one or two goals that are most important to us right now. For most people, developing and maintaining a plan to achieve all of their financial goals is a daunting challenge—one we delay taking on.

3. Upbeat, Salesy, Confident

In today's real estate market, you need to work with a company you can trust that has professionals you can rely on. Whether you are buying or selling your primary residence, a second home, or relocating to a new neighborhood, we can help make your homeownership dreams come true.

5. Mature, Solid, Stately

Our company has a long-demonstrated commitment to the institutional marketplace, including corporations, public funds, Taft-Hartley plans, foundations and endowments. Strong investment performance, excellent service, and a choice of quality products have helped create superior value for our institutional clients, many of whom have been with us for more than 20 years.

2. Technical, Impersonal, Lawyerly

This option offers a 4-year CDSC period based on the date of each purchase payment, and death benefit flexibility. On annuity anniversaries 5 through 10 and subject to program rules, you can elect an optional death benefit (for an additional fee), or cancel an optional death benefit elected on the issue date. Please see the prospectus for more details. Subject to state availability.

4. Caring, Compassionate, Thoughtful

If something happens to you, life insurance can help ensure that your family will be able to stay in the home and neighborhood where they feel comfortable, and won't have to make rash decisions about moving or selling during a time of emotional stress.

6. Friendly, Reassuring, Encouraging

Does the idea of financial planning for the future seem complex or confusing? Are you worried that you won't be able to save the money you need to send your children to college or to have a comfortable retirement? Well, you're not alone, and there are steps you can take to get started. Learning about the kinds of savings, investment, and retirement plans available to you is a big step on the road to financial freedom.

Voice Lessons

1. Realistic, Fatherly, Responsible

Most of us have goals in life that call for an investment of a significant amount of time and financial resources. We may have done some planning. However, our natural tendency is to focus on only one or two goals that are most important to us right now. For most people, developing and maintaining a plan to achieve all of their financial goals is a daunting challenge—one we delay taking on.

KEY ELEMENTS: Begin with a universally true statement and then bring up a point the reader may not have considered: “However,...” or “But...”. Make the reader feel the seriousness of the issue at hand. Know how the reader is thinking and what the reader may not be thinking about. Commiserate with the reader about the “challenge”.

Many of us think of investment planning as something that can wait. After all, retirement may be decades away. But planning for the future is more effective when we begin as early as possible. Looking ahead twenty, thirty, or even forty years may seem challenging. But starting early is the key to creating the financial future you’re looking for. By investing in yourself today, you’ll provide a better tomorrow—for you and your family.

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KEY ELEMENTS: Longer sentences. Many “in-between” clauses that narrow meaning or specify conditions. Use of terms and acronyms a normal reader may not fully understand. Use of conditional language and warnings. Refers reader to other sources like a prospectus.

Depending on the options you select, and subject to state regulations, you may elect different benefit combinations during a renewal period beginning thirty days prior to the 5th, 10th, and 15th anniversaries of your selection of the original annuity program. Certain changes may require additional fees. Please see the prospectus for more details.

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3. Upbeat, Salesy, Confident

In today's real estate market, you need to work with a company you can trust that has professionals you can rely on. Whether you are buying or selling your primary residence, a second home, or relocating to a new neighborhood, we can help make your homeownership dreams come true.

KEY ELEMENTS: Makes bold promises. Sites circumstances ("In today's...") that make buying a product or using a service an imperative. Solves all the reader's problems in a given area. Offers comprehensive solutions.

In today's rapidly changing equity markets, you need solid advice from experienced professionals. Our award-winning team of advisors will help you optimize the value of your trades regardless of the investment vehicles you select.

4. Caring, Compassionate, Thoughtful

If something happens to you, life insurance can help ensure that your family will be able to stay in the home and neighborhood where they feel comfortable, and won't have to make rash decisions about moving or selling during a time of emotional stress.

KEY ELEMENTS: Demonstrates an understanding of a difficult situation. Offers reasonable and logical solutions. Empathizes with the reader. Provides peace of mind.

One of the biggest fears we have about retirement is the fear of running out of money. An annuity can put that fear to rest by providing consistent income guaranteed to last for the rest of your life.

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5. Mature, Solid, Stately

Our company has a long-demonstrated commitment to the institutional marketplace, including corporations, public funds, Taft-Hartley plans, foundations and endowments. Strong investment performance, excellent service, and a choice of quality products have helped create superior value for our institutional clients, many of whom have been with us for more than 20 years.

KEY ELEMENTS: Uses lists to strengthen statements. Quotes long periods of time to assure readers of reliability. Uses reassuring language like “quality”, “value”, and “commitment”. Reads like a recommendation or resume.

With more than a hundred years of responsible service to both individual and institutional investors, our company is well-positioned to meet your needs in times of change and uncertainty. Using powerful investment vehicles, research-proven strategies, and a century’s worth of good judgment and common sense, we offer the choices you want with the reliability you need to invest with confidence.

6. Friendly, Reassuring, Encouraging

Does the idea of financial planning for the future seem complex or confusing? Are you worried that you won’t be able to save the money you need to send your children to college or to have a comfortable retirement? Well, you’re not alone, and there are steps you can take to get started. Learning about the kinds of savings, investment, and retirement plans available to you is a big step on the road to financial freedom.

KEY ELEMENTS: Uses questions to draw the reader in? Identifies with the reader and the reader’s problems. Assures reader that problems can be solved. Provides solutions that readers can avail themselves of without much trouble.

Are you unsure about meeting the financial needs you’ll have in retirement? Do you wonder about the cost of maintaining a comfortable lifestyle or leaving assets to your children when you die? Many people do. But the answers to your questions aren’t as difficult as they seem. With options like life insurance, annuities, and tax-deferred savings plans, you can take simple steps now to ensure your financial future.

Do you have a voice?

How would you describe your voice as a writer?

Does your organization have a voice?

How would you describe your organizational voice?

Do certain documents have a voice?

Can you describe the voice that goes with each type of document?

Clear Thinking = Clear Voice

You can't hit a consistent voice if you don't know your content inside and out.

Most problems associated with voice are rooted in a poor understanding of content.

If you're struggling to figure out what to say, it's hard to focus on how you're saying it.

Pre-Writing Improves Voice

Pre-writing helps you clarify your message.

Pre-writing makes writers more confident.

Confident writers are confident about their voice.

Pre-Writing Strategies

Content-Purpose-Audience, What-Why-How,
Transition-Action-Details.