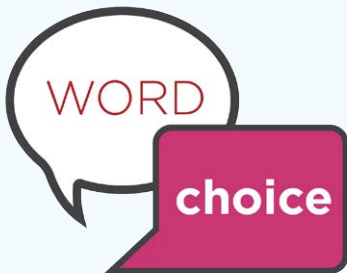


Elements of Voice in **GHOSTWRITING**

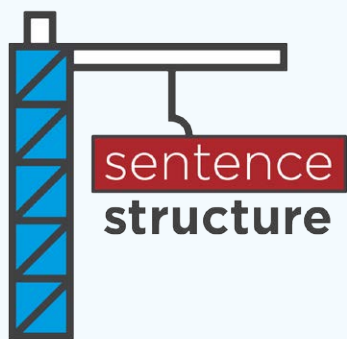
The foundation of any written material is a clear and compelling voice. Each person and each company has their own voice, their own way of communicating and sharing. As a ghostwriter for you're A/E/C firm, you must be able to expertly write in both your company's overall brand voice as well as in the unique voice of each of your principals and subject matter experts for which you produce content. It's not as hard as it sounds. It just takes an understanding of the elements of voice and the key elements of your brand personality and the personalities of the individual thought leaders in your firm.

Elements of Voice



Word Choice

The basis of style, word choice is the first step in conveying the exact personality you wish to convey to your target audience. The words you choose are subconscious clues as to who you are as a firm. For example, the hip, innovative company will choose words like “fresh” and “cutting-edge,” whereas the stable firm will choose words like “reliable” and “long-lasting.” Defining your key words helps you build the voice and the message you want to project.



Sentence Structure

How sentences are formed also conveys personality and style. For example, short, choppy sentences add speed and impact. On the other hand, long and flowing sentences that dive deep into a concept are more calm and elegant. Good communication includes a mix of sentence structures, but a predominance of one over another is indicative of style. Just compare classic writers like Hemmingway and Dickens and you will see a significant difference in sentence structure and how that changes the overall personality of the book. The same is true in business and marketing. Short, fast, upbeat sentences convey one personality, while longer sentences with more words convey another. In either case, be careful not to clutter your message and always look for ways to cut the excess in order to keep the message focused and impactful.



Tone

Here is where you decide if your company will lead with a formal, more professional tone, or if you will converse with a more laid-back, conversational style. A conversational style writes each piece of collateral as if the firm is sitting face-to-face talking to the person. Other firms take a more polished, professional tone. It all depends on what makes more sense for your brand and client base.

Your Brand Personality

Your brand voice is a function of numerous traits that, when combined, convey a specific tone and style that shows off your brand's personality. So in order to define your brand voice you first need to ask yourself the following questions:



What Makes Us “Us”?

What sets you a part from everyone else out there doing what you do? This should have been part of your original positioning exercises when you developed your brand and company. This is also tied to your values and mission statement, which defines what you stand for and what impact you want to make on the world.

How Do We Want People to Remember Us?

What impression do you want people to walk away with? Do you want them to think you are cool, hip, and innovative? Or do you want them to view you as a firm that is stable, providing tried and true services, and who will be here for years to come?



Answering these two questions helps you pull out 3-5 key characteristics that define your brand. The Content Marketing Institute suggests taking those traits and making a **“brand voice chart”** to map out your key characteristics and how they are conveyed in your current collateral. Once you have this information, its time to build the elements of your brand voice.

Your Experts’ Personalities

Often times you will find yourself ghostwriting on behalf of one or more experts in your firm, be it writing a transmittal letter to a client or drafting a blog post on behalf of a technical member of your team. In each case you need to adhere to the tenets of your brand voice listed above while sounding as if the expert herself wrote that piece of content. To do this you must identify the specific word choice, sentence structure, key phrases, and tone your expert uses when he or she communicates both in writing and in speech. A few questions you can ask are does your expert have a specific phrases or words they use regularly? Do they tend to write or speak in long sentences or short ones? Do they use analogies to explain things or are they always literal? This will help you cultivate their individual voice and allow you to mimic their speech.

The only caveat is you must maintain the overall guidelines of your brand voice. Each person brings his or her own personality and voice to the mix, but the overall brand voice should be consistent and identifiable throughout every element of your business. Brand voice guidelines should be included in your brand style guide, or brand bible as I like to call it, along with guidelines on logo use, brand colors, core collateral, and key messaging. This information should be made available to anyone who is involved in developing any type of communication for the firm, internally or externally. The brand experience should be consistent for all stakeholders who interact with your firm, not just Clients.

This is an excerpt from the Essentials of Ghostwriting for the A/E/C Firm presented by Shennandoah Goodson.

BE BOLD

AT EVERY TOUCH POINT

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ConnorCreativeCo.com

Ghostwriting for the **A/E/C FIRM**

Presented by Shennandoah Goodson

Ghostwriting consists of _____, _____ and _____.

To get the content you need from internal subject matter experts, you need to think like a _____.

The three elements of voice are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What specific words or phrases does your firm use often?

What tone does your company use?

You need to write for your audience. Imagine you are working on an RFP for an athletic facility. Who might be on the selection committee? What is their background and experience? How can you work the narrative to speak directly to them?

Who needs to be trained on your content library policies and procedures?



