Define + refine your voice! This is individual assignment No.3 of three. It is due before class on Tuesday, May 3. Please submit a PDF of your one-pager to BEST.stanford@gmail.com. Thanks!

WHAT

Very few companies have a brand whose look, tone and sensibility is consistent across its touchpoints (e.g., its websites, customer interactions, packaging, advertising, etc.). This consistency is often missing because there is no attempt made to pinpoint and communicate the feel and rationale behind the brand’s name, logo, slogan, personality and visual style. If such a document does exist, it often fails, either because it’s a phonebook full of rules about what colors and fonts to use or because it’s only delivered to a handful of people in marketing and PR.

The perfect voice guideline is like a Facebook profile: In one page, it defines a brand’s personality (logo, slogan, verbal/visual style) while communicating its ideals, dreams, and relationships. This is a document that helps communicate your culture (your brand), and not what you might send to a creative agency so that they can create consistent collateral (your branding).

HOW

Design a one-page Brand Voice Guideline to embody the personality you think your brand should convey. This assignment should incorporate your learning from either the Image-Identity Gap or Experience Map assignments to help you define what should be the voice guideline for your brand. Give a codified voice to the best traits you’ve seen in your brand and fill in any significant gaps you’ve found in your brand’s current tone or personality.

Although we recommend using your team’s brand, you may do this for any brand you choose. Include any factors or traits that define your brand, while being as succinct and creative as possible. Here are a few such factors that your guidelines might include:

NAME / NICKNAMES. What is it called? How do its customers, employees, and suppliers refer to it?

PERSONALITY. What are your brand’s core values? What is your brand passionate about? What is it striving for? What does it find fascinating? What books are on its coffee table? What are its guilty pleasures? Who are its friends? If it were at a 7th birthday party, would it talk to the parents or the kids? If you surveyed its brand attributes, where would it be positioned?

SLOGAN. What is its catch phrase? What words should it be remembered by?

VISUAL STYLE. How does it look? If it were a movie, what movie would it be? If it were a magazine, who would be its competitors? Does it wear a sweatsuit or a necktie? Does it shop at J. Crew or Juicy Couture? Does it fit in more at Walmart or farmer’s markets?

VERBAL STYLE. What language and tone does your brand use? Does it use contractions or slang? What kind of jokes can it tell? Does it whisper or shout? Is it smiling or smirking or stifling a yawn? Does it pronounce either as Ee-ther or Eye-ther?

By reading your voice guideline, we should be able to intuitively understand how your brand would react in almost any situation – from its cocktail-party banter to its apologies to its tweets.

You will be evaluated on (1) Creativity, (2) Consistency, (3) Thoughtfulness, (4) Thoroughness.
First-time blood donors say that SBC’s greatest asset is our warmth. Repeat donors say that they choose SBC over other blood centers because of that same compassion. But, when our donors and employees are asked what images represent us, they think of blood, busses, and needles, which may align with our competence, but not with our warmth. If our caring is the most crucial factor for repeat donors, we need to express that warmth in everything we do.

Our tweets are funny, our mailers are smart, our recruiters are as folksy and kind as the Car Talk guys. In the office, our volunteers and staff come armed with funny stories to amuse bored donors, and we love to give away surprises (like fortune cookies and cracker jacks). We put on fun events, like Saturday movie matinees, to draw in families and groups. We are sharp enough to know our procedures and all the proper terminology, but we have the wit and grace to say things plainly and comfort even the newest newbies. We know the ups and downs of every step, and always smile and wink when checking on our guests. We try to make friends, not just friendly faces, because our donors come in over and over again.

SBC is as competent as a SWAT team and as comforting as a best friend’s hug. Our donors feel safe, calm, and confident because everything we do makes them feel glad to make their donation and supremely relaxed in the process. To make our service feel like a spa, our colors are a salon’s cool blues and soothing greens, with only accents of our logo’s red-orange and maroon. (The old dark grey and red could be too severe.)

Our busses (and their staff & volunteers) are most donors’ first touchpoints with SBC. In order to create more regulars, we need to show how fun and easy donating can be. Cue the Vanpire. A bright, relaxing space where donors feel good while doing good. More ice cream truck than blood bus – it helps form fond memories.

What We Say
Our donors are heroes. What they do isn’t easy and it isn’t fun – they go through an hour of paperwork and pain in exchange for a cookie and a pat on the back. The biggest hurdle to coming back through that door is the thought of an hour wasted, out of the way. To get them back in the chair, we need to give them giggles and put them in stitches. We need to take their minds off the pricks and prodding questions, and let them focus on the fun they’re having and the good they’re doing. The stories of specific blood recipients can be moving and powerful, but they can also be off-putting to many new donors. A few small facts (20 minutes in the chair can save three lives) and a few big smiles can move mountains. If we can make them laugh, we can bring them back.

How We Feel
SBC is as competent as a SWAT team and as comforting as a best friend’s hug. Our donors feel safe, calm, and confident because everything we do makes them feel glad to make their donation and supremely relaxed in the process. To make our service feel like a spa, our colors are a salon’s cool blues and soothing greens, with only accents of our logo’s red-orange and maroon. (The old dark grey and red could be too severe.)

How We Act
Our tweets are funny, our mailers are smart, our recruiters are as folksy and kind as the Car Talk guys. In the office, our volunteers and staff come armed with funny stories to amuse bored donors, and we love to give away surprises (like fortune cookies and cracker jacks). We put on fun events, like Saturday movie matinees, to draw in families and groups. We are sharp enough to know our procedures and all the proper terminology, but we have the wit and grace to say things plainly and comfort even the newest newbies. We know the ups and downs of every step, and always smile and wink when checking on our guests. We try to make friends, not just friendly faces, because our donors come in over and over again.

Needle Sting Prick Stick Poke Stab Bite Jab
(These are a few words to avoid.)