

## TOGETHER EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

As we move into what's next for our small businesses, digital marketing and online selling have firmly taken a position at the forefront. Creating and optimizing a website, using customer relationship management (CRM), and building a business presence on social media have gone from “someday” to “right now.”

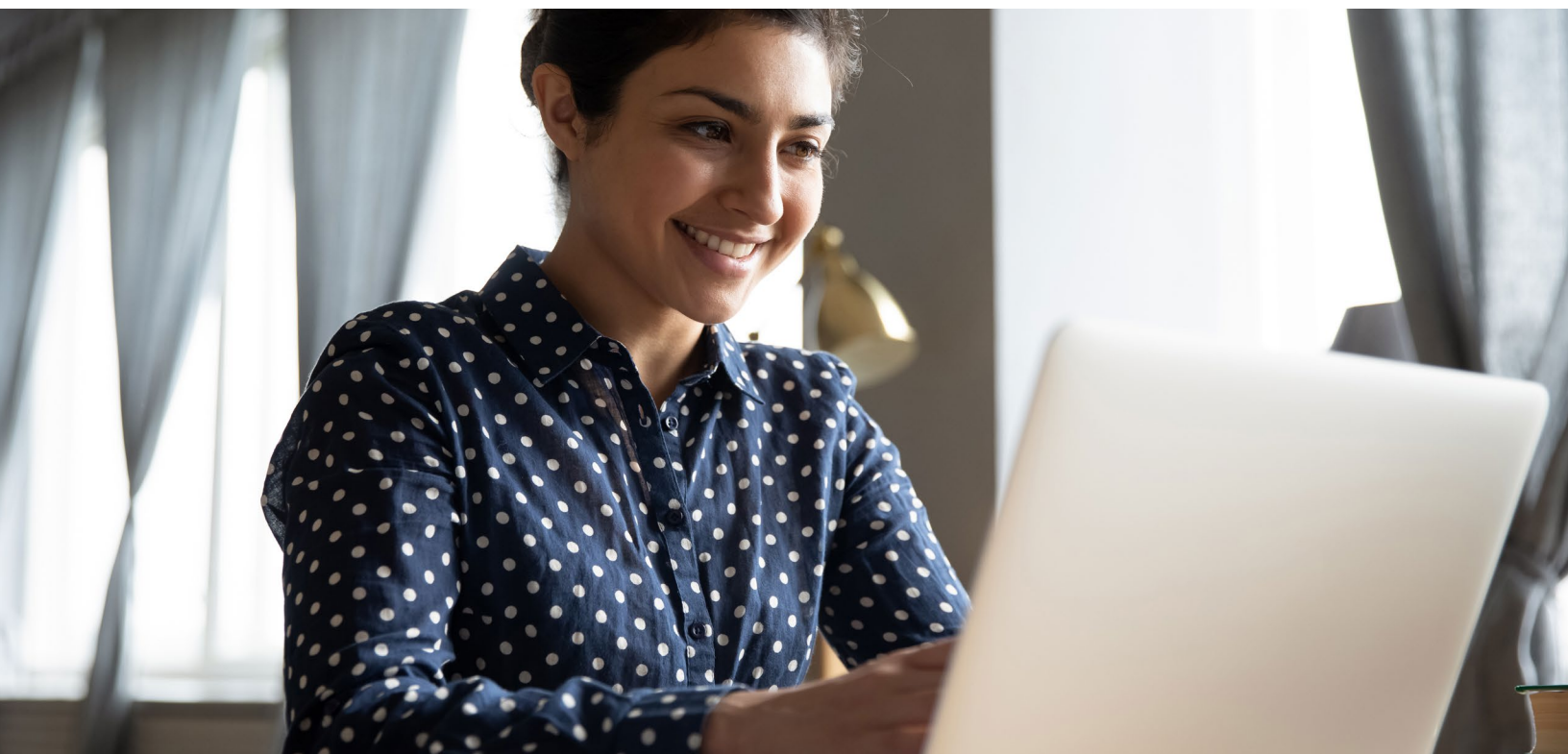
### DIGITAL MARKETING: FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VOICE AND TONE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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As we transition into what's next for small businesses in America, it's important to acknowledge what a hard year it's been. For both business owners and consumers, the events of this year and the aftermath have caused tumult in many people's lives and livelihoods. The economic pressure on small businesses has been immense.

But these are America's small businesses and business owners we're talking about. Tough, scrappy, creative, tenacious and driven—and ready for where we are going next. As we move forward, let's start to change the way we think and how we describe our situation. We're at a transition point, and we can stop using words like *unprecedented*, *catastrophic* and *devastating*, and start using words like *innovation*, *transformation* and *renewal*.

While we consider how we are changing the language we use, let's also think about how we are communicating with our customers, across all channels. One of the most visible channels available is social media. Here are five things to know about voice and tone on social media:



## FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VOICE AND TONE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

### VOICE AND TONE ARE DIFFERENT

Sometimes the terms **voice** and **tone** are used interchangeably. However, they are two different things. Here are some easy ways to remember which is which and why they are important.



#### 1. VOICE

Your voice is your unique company personality. It's consistent and unchanging. Just as you can identify your friend by their laugh, your company voice helps customers identify you. Your voice is consistent, while your tone can change.

If you think of your company as a musical group, your listeners should always be able to identify you by your voice, whether the song you're singing is fast or slow, upbeat or sad. Things like your branding, taglines, spokespeople and specific vocabulary help solidify your company voice. This voice is what customers expect when they hear from you via any channel.

Whether you are creating a social media post about a grand opening or a letter about changes in your organizational structure, a reader should always know that the communication is from your company.

Some companies always make puns or use playful language in their advertising and marketing. [Duluth Trading Company](#) is well known for using irreverent language and images.

To establish your consistent voice, you need to identify what your voice is versus what it isn't. Think about it this way: if your company was a person, what would they sound like?

Here is an example. If your company/brand voice is passionate, quirky and genuine (you can have multiple adjectives that describe your company voice), here is how you could solidify your voice with some do's and don'ts:

#### Genuine

- Be honest and direct; use clear language. Don't use a lot of jargon or try to aggressively sell.

#### Quirky

- Use unique, fun ideas or examples; be playful. Don't use obscure or overly complicated references or language that your audience won't understand.

#### Passionate

- Be enthusiastic and confident; use bold verbs and adjectives. Don't waver or be inconsistent.

This can be especially important when you use social media for marketing, advertising or selling. When your customer sees you on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter, they should be able to easily recognize your company by your voice.

#### 2. TONE

Tone is all about attitude and inflection. Think of the phrase "tone of voice." Your tone could be impacted by the mood you want to convey or the situation. Again, if your company was a musical group, the tone (or song) could be enthusiastic, somber, hopeful or sad. But your voice is always recognizable.

Let's put tone into action. Say you need to create two different communications: one is a grand opening post on social media, and the other is a post about a plan to reopen after a disaster. Here are some ways you could leverage your quirky voice, with two different tones.

#### Grand opening post

- Whoop, whoop! Just like a crane, we're ready to take off in Center City!

#### Reopening post

- The fog has lifted, and we're ready for a new day.

#### 3. EMPATHY IS CRUCIAL

Many customers have recently experienced tough times, and it's important that we keep that in mind as we communicate with them. Empathy is the ability to imagine the thoughts and feelings of another person. When selling, this is an extremely important skill, and in communication, it's also critical.

Think about where your customer is right now ... what are they thinking and feeling? Do they need to purchase basic items, are they on a budget, are they time-constrained or nervous about being around large groups of people? If those things are true, it doesn't make sense to hold or advertise a huge event, or rhapsodize about the features of the fanciest, most luxurious and expensive model you have in the store. Meet your customers where they are. It will help build trust and credibility—you're showing that you value your customers and want to help.

## FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VOICE AND TONE ON SOCIAL MEDIA, CONTINUED

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### 4. SOCIAL MEDIA IS A FLUID CHANNEL: WHAT TO DO

When situations are fluctuating, it can be hard to effectively communicate with your customers and prospects in a timely manner. Many channels, like print, broadcast and POP, can take a long time to update and produce. One of the best ways to communicate quickly is on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Here are a few things to consider as you plan your customer communications during times of rapid change.

#### **Be honest, transparent and clear**

- If you don't have all the answers, that's okay. Share what you do know with customers, and set reasonable expectations.

#### **Be available**

- If a customer contacts you via social media, be responsive. They may have questions or just need support. Be there for them. If you don't offer what a customer needs, be willing to offer suggestions or introductions.

#### **Be creative**

- Perhaps you can offer unique supports or services to your customers. Maybe you can implement financing or

promotional offers, or pickup or delivery options that make sense for the times. These could be quick wins for both you and your customers.

### 5. SOCIAL MEDIA IS A FLUID CHANNEL: WHAT NOT TO DO

While social media gives you an immediate vehicle for messaging to customers, remember that this can be a double-edged sword. Social media is real time, so there are a few things to consider before you rush to post.

- Don't abandon your company voice. If you are known as the low-price leader, or for having quirky language, stay consistent. Just make sure your tone is appropriate and not over the top.
- Don't stop promoting and marketing. Keep going, but be thoughtful, self-aware and focused on problem-solving. You don't have to change how or what you sell; just be conscious that the environment is different now.
- Don't use uncertain times to play upon customer fears or be aggressive with your selling or marketing tactics. Your tone should be helpful, not scary.

To learn more about effectively communicating with your customers on social media, here are some helpful resources.

[Effective Crisis Communications – Shopify](#)

[Customer Communication Tips – U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#)

[7 Ways to Make Meaningful Connections With Your Customers on Social Media – Forbes Magazine](#)

[6 Ways to Put Customers First in Uncertain Times](#)



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