

Tone of Voice for [Brand Name]

Step 1: Define Your Core Values

First, compose a concise mission statement that shows your users who you are, what you care about, and what your brand does to achieve its goals.

Start by answering these questions:

What are your company goals?	
How do you plan to achieve your goals?	
Who is your target audience?	
What do you want your company to be known for?	

Here's a complete mission statement from Microsoft: "Our mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."

Next, create a message architecture.

A message architecture is a set of communication goals (usually a list of terms, phrases, and statements) used to align your team on all content produced.

Start by compiling a list of 50-100 adjectives. Sort these words into three groups:

Who we are	Who we would like to be	Who we are not

When you're done, focus on the words in the "Who we would like to be" category. Group adjectives into categories and organize them in order of priority.

Step 2: Define Your Brand's Tone of Voice

Use the Nielsen Norman Group's tone of voice dimensions to map where your brand falls in each category:

- Funny vs. serious
- Formal vs. casual
- Respectful vs. irreverent
- Enthusiastic vs. matter-of-fact

Chart it out below by highlighting where you want your voice to land on each row:

Funny	Neutral	Serious
Casual	Neutral	Formal
Irreverent	Neutral	Respectful
Enthusiastic	Neutral	Matter-of-fact

Your end result will look something like this:

Funny	Neutral	Serious
Casual	Neutral	Formal
Irreverent	Neutral	Respectful
Enthusiastic	Neutral	Matter-of-fact

Step 3: Observe Your Audience

First, find out which social platforms your audience uses.

Once you know where your audience hangs out, observe how they interact with one another:

- Do they use slang?
- Are there any particular words or phrases they use often?
- Do they typically interact with brands on social media?

A good starting point is to perform a Google site search for your brand on a site like Reddit. That way, you can see what people are saying about you only on that site.

Plug this into Google for results, replacing “chipotle” with your brand name: “site:reddit.com chipotle.”

Be sure to jot down notes on each “persona:”

Preferred Social Media Platform	Observations

Step 4: Create & Implement Tone of Voice Guidelines

To successfully implement your tone of voice, start by setting clear brand guidelines.

Take some notes to start creating guidelines for the following:

Target audience	
How your brand should interact with your audience	
Your brand’s core values	
Your mission statement	
Your message architecture	
Vocabulary to use	
Vocabulary to avoid	
Grammar rules	

After taking notes, work with your content and design teams to create a full guide and distribute it to your company.