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Design Voice & Language

Design Language

Document History

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# **Brand personality**

Our brand's personality involves reliability, enjoyment and attractiveness. Its personality is brought alive in the words that we use. We use 6 key elements in our communication language which are:

* Energetic and enthusiastic
* Impressive
* Joyful, but not exaggerated
* Confident, but not arrogant
* Warm, but not obtrusive
* Calm, but not too serious

# **Tone of Voice**

Our tone of voice and the language we use is fundamental in helping us to bring our brand to life. We talk with a clear and consistent tone of voice to help establish the relevance of our positioning, the simplicity and desirability of our products. In doing so we demonstrate our values of trustworthiness, honesty, integrity and reassurance.

**Our Tone of Voice is not:**

* Over-claiming
* Technical jargon
* Parent to child
* Cool
* Too familiar
* Over-promising

**Our Tone of Voice is:**

* Helpful
* Authentic
* Supportive
* Honest
* Direct
* Adult to adult
* Empathetic
* Warm
* Credible
* Grounded in reality

**We are Confident we:**

* Offer an essential and valued product to our users
* Have knowledgeable staff who are highly trained
* Are proud of our market position
* Are active not passive
* Encourage client feedback and contact

**We are Trustworthy we:**

* Act with honesty and integrity
* Look after our clients’ interests
* Keep our users informed
* Offer tailored and relevant solutions
* Adapt to suit the user’s brand

**We are Clear we:**

* Communicate in a concise, straightforward and uncomplicated way
* Focus on the product’s benefits
* Describe the issue and our solution in plain words

In our business, our users matter. We don’t have a product that people can pick off the shelf, so our business relies on delivering what matters at key moments of our users’ lives. We share our advice and expertise through the content of our communication. Business customers are busy getting on with delivering their ideas and vision.

# **Tone of voice guidelines**

**Why these guidelines are important**

Our tone of voice is the written and spoken expression of our brand. Every time we use language, we are living and breathing the values, history and qualities of our brand. That’s why it is important for us to understand our personality and ‘tone of voice’, so that everything we write or speak is aligned with this positive way of being.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help us make the most of our direct communications with our customers and the world. Each time we speak or write we have an opportunity to demonstrate what we stand for as a company and as a brand.

# **The 3Es – our brand tone characteristics.**

Three characteristics shine through in the LANDESK personality. In everything we do and say and write, we must show:

* EXPERTISE – demonstrating our intelligence
* ESTABLISHED – demonstrating our confidence
* EMPATHY – demonstrating commitment and understanding of our customers.

# **How do expertise, established and empathy come across in our tone of voice?**

**Showing expertise means demonstrating our intelligence.**

We have the expertise and insight to give our users what they need. We speak to users as equal partners, with a clear and honest intelligence. We use simple and straightforward vocabulary, grammar and sentence construction. We are sophisticated without being showy or highbrow. We are imaginative and forward thinking in the way we use our professional knowledge, and show leadership. When good leaders speak, they have certain tonal and stylistic characteristics in common. We use the same techniques when we want to demonstrate leadership for LANDESK.

## **One of the ways we demonstrate this is by showing our expertise.**

### **Light**

**What we do:**

* Our writing has verve and freshness, a lightness of touch that says we’re the very opposite of an old-fashioned, software company.
* Lightness is created by a conversational rhythm and a mixing of pace. We can put a longer sentence next to a shorter one. When you read it out loud, you hear lightness in our voice, not a monotonous drone.
* We sound like 21st century adults in purposeful conversation. Courteous and
* Personal, never over-familiar or chatty.
* We sound at ease – just comfortable talking.

**What we avoid:**

* We don’t sound leaden and monotonous in long sentence after long sentence.
* We don’t pack our writing with unnecessarily long words. Nor do we sound lightweight with too many adjectives – great, fantastic, fabulous – and an exclamatory style with too many short, breathless sentences and exclamation marks.

### **Clarity**

**What we do:**

* We are precise – in full control of the detail of our products and perfectly clear about the feature benefits. We are single-minded in our messages – they have a clear, confusing purpose.
* We are concise – we can capture the essence of a feature, without having to write thirty paragraphs about it. We look beyond the minute details.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid complicated descriptions that center on a product’s features.

### **Personality**

**What we do:**

* We are not afraid to be ourselves – and sometimes to speak with the gravitas that comes from our status as a major software company with a very mature product line, sometimes with a more quirky, individual sound to our voice.
* We can introduce words that are fresh, or speak more broadly about an insight, perhaps with a colourful metaphor.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid sounding bland and ‘corporate’.
* We don’t chop and change our voice in a very obvious way: we don’t want to sound all stern and grown up one minute, and soft and empathetic the next.

### **Effortlessly smooth**

**What we do:**

* Our users need to be able to grasp the gist of our message at once, so the journey through any LANDESK product should be effortlessly smooth.
* We structure our messages logically and signpost clearly.
* We organise our written material in ways that make most sense for our readers. We use bullet points, paragraph breaks, and down-to-earth headings when these help make things clearer. We can pause to explain something where it’s needed.
* Our calls to action are clear and unmistakable.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid dense blocks of text, with few sub headings to guide the user.
* We don’t choose oblique or clever headings that appear smart, but don’t tell the userr what to expect next.

### **Crystal clear**

**What we do:**

* If people need to re-read anything we’ve written because they can’t grasp it first time, we need to re-write it. This is a test we should apply at every step.
* Technically, we use direct verbs, shorter sentences, and a more straightforward vocabulary.
* We read our work out loud to make sure it makes sense.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid passive verbs (it should be working rather than it will work).
* We avoid weak verb constructions (an assessment will be made rather than we will assess).
* We avoid jargon and copy that is heavy on the page. If you can’t read it out loud in a natural voice, it’s likely to be because you have fallen foul of one of these style rules.

### **Contemporary**

**What we do:**

* We use contemporary, non-gimmicky language and grammar. We can use conversational links (so, and because) to start a sentence – but we do it carefully, and never when we have a difficult message to introduce. We choose the language the majority of our customers use. We still care about spelling mistakes, grammatical and typographical errors.

**What we avoid:**

* We’re not leading edge in our use of language. We don’t choose the latest buzz phrases or youth-culture word. We avoid slang, being risqué or sloppy with language.
* We avoid poor writing or sloppy proofreading.

## **Showing established means demonstrating our confidence.**

We have the self-belief you’d expect from the market leader. Our confidence allows us to be creative and where appropriate, witty, but always clear and assertive. We use fresh, modern everyday language that is always easy to understand.

We’re consistently clear, helpful, open and engaging.

### **Confidence**

**What we do:**

* We make bold, direct statements. When our products or services are strong, we say so.
* We make the customer ‘you’ or us ‘LANDESK’ the main focus of the sentence.
* We know what we’re talking about and we show it by being in control of our grammar, sentence length, paragraph construction and content organisation.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid conditional qualifiers – could, might, we aim to, should – when we are trying to show leadership.
* We avoid starting sentences with the sub clause when we want to show leadership, as it can weaken our message.
* We avoid rambling, marketing clichés and we don’t frill up product facts and service benefits. We don’t pretend it’s a fantastic feature when it’s an average one.

### **Natural authority**

**What we do:**

* We create a calm measured pace, created by well-punctuated longer sentences or short punchy sentences.
* We only use a few contractions to slow down the pace, and add emphasis to our words.
* We can choose words from a more colourful palette. We can use more sophisticated words or unusual words, as long as the majority of our words are every day.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid writing that sounds breathless or hurried.
* Avoid too many pronouns – ‘you, we’ us’ as it can sound over-familiar and insincere.
* Avoid making most of our words unnecessarily long. Using copy or graphical devices to grab attention – capital letters, emboldening, exclamation marks, and copy clichés. All are unsuitable to carry a leadership message.

### **Practicality**

**What we do:**

* We apply our know-how and experience for our users’ benefit.
* We can see things from their point of view, and look ahead to what they need next.
* We can take the lead on their journey without them feeling pushed or cajoled.
* We understand our users and can show this through our products. Every word earns its place – no flabby adjectives, no routine phrases. This gives our writing verve. We give practical examples where they help.

**What we avoid:**

* We avoid making the user chase around the copy to trace the asterisks and footnotes.
* We avoid assumptions, about our users’ knowledge. We don’t use our economical style as an excuse not to explain when an explanation is needed.

### **Realism**

**What we do:**

* This partly shows in our use of content and messaging and partly in our tone.
* We are at ease with ourselves and happy to make propositional statements about what we stand for, what we believe in, why we are different.
* When we know we are the best, we say so with a simple, clear statement – without ever sounding arrogant.
* We are realistic and see the bigger picture, so we are comfortable delivering a hard message in the knowledge that we are still a market-leader.

**What we avoid:**

* When we know we’re not the best, we don’t apologise for it or feel embarrassed. Instead we rely on our brand equity and the products maturity to sell the product and service. A clear, accurate description of the product or service delivered by us at the right time is enough.
* We do not dress up bad news, or try to put a marketing spin on it.

## **Showing empathy means demonstrating understanding of our users.**

We understand and empathise with our users concerns and the challenges and opportunities they face. This is reflected in our language, which is warm, reassuring and supportive. We have a genuine interest in our users, and insight into their lives.

### **Listening**

**What we do:**

* We have listened to our users and we demonstrate this by driving our messages with our insights. This is the key to showing that we are market-leaders, and on our users’ wavelength. It wins us the right to make bold, confident statements.

**What we avoid:**

* We don’t make casual assumptions about our users’ gender, race or age.

### **Understanding**

**What we do:**

* This follows on from listening. We respond and show understanding of our users’ priorities and concerns. So in everything from product design, to application processes, to communication structure and service delivery, we anticipate what our users want and when they need it.
* We smooth the journey, providing answers in the copy before they are asked so that our users can quickly grasp the benefits.

**What we avoid:**

* We don’t lose our users in the jargon of our industry and concentrate on the features of our products and services.
* We don’t make it hard for users to find their way around our copy.

# **Characteristics of the LANDESK tone**

### **Concise**

We need to make every word count. We should structure our headlines, sentences and paragraphs simply. The copy should be short, to the point and each word must work hard and have a reason for being included. Less is more.

### **Reassurance & Empathy**

While we communicate directly, we also need to show that we understand. Our tone of voice shows our expertise, while remaining understanding, collaborative and constructive.

We are optimistic but in a considered, thought through manner.

### **Lead with benefit. Support with facts**

Key information in our communications is based on real facts and statistical evidence, not opinion. **Identify the benefit to the user, not just the feature.**

### **Language**

Our communications must always be relevant and useful to our users. We deal with a broad range of business people who have varying levels of technical expertise. We must speak to them in everyday language, using an appropriate level of technical language when necessary. We must never confuse the message with unnecessary ‘technical jargon’.

Simple language, the style of language we use should be direct, strong and meaningful.

All of our communications sound like they come from the same company and they should work across the entire product suite, across all customer groups and also in internal communications.

When presented with significant amounts of information we use segmented summaries e.g. Bulleted lists and tables to help get the message across.

Our pace should be quick, concise and consistent. Limit the headlines to an absolute maximum of ten words. Keep sentences as short as practically possible - for clarity and ease of reading.

### **Content**

Since we must assume that users (and potential users) are busy people, copy should be kept as short as possible.

The key to getting this right is to ask the question: What will the reader find interesting and relevant at this time?

We might call this the “need to know” rule. Copy can nearly always be reduced in length by removing information that isn’t essential at certain stages of the communication process.

### **Presentation**

Generally, shorter copy looks more inviting on the page. Avoiding very long paragraphs, which tend to lose the reader’s attention.

But there are a number of ways it can be made even easier to read, one way would be to use bullet points especially when listing information

Highlighting key points, so that a speed-reader can pick up the essential information at a glance, also use sub-headings to break up text.

### **Keep it brief**

No fluff, no jargon, write as if we were trying to explain a product to a friend.

Keep it succinct and helpful without ever being patronising.

Use bullet points to display a range of benefits or to help break up long copy

### **Headline/subhead**

Clear headlines and sub-headings create the story and context with a brand tone that is engaging but straightforward.

Our headlines are clear, straightforward and plain speaking

We use subheads to create a story and context

Steer clear of smut, innuendo or cheesy puns

The headline/subhead ordering can be reversed if necessary so that the witty bit is presented first with the brand message afterwards

### **Simplicity is perfection**

Use of fancy or less favorite words will make the text hard to understand. Sentences used should be simple and plain, appeal to a wide range of people from different segments, not be intellectual but colloquial language without containing slang. To prevent misunderstandings, known and familiar words should be used.

### **Short and distinct**

It should not be forgotten, that in today’s world the most valuable matter of fact is time. It is very important not to make readers to lose time and bore them with redundancy. Besides, readers should be communicated in a clear way without creating any question in readers’ minds and leaving room for comments.

### **A respectful sincerity**

As a part of the business of the brand, using a sincere communication language to establish a bond with the reader will strengthen the brand personality. The brand should establish a warm bond with the reader according to the dynamic of the market, which is already seen in the design of the brand logo. But, while trying to be warm, becoming obtrusive on readers’ eye should be prevented.

### **LANDESK, not “we”**

The reader should never be appealed from the first person. Namely, in the communication language, while talking about the brand, instead of using “we”, we should use “LANDESK”. For example, instead of saying “We will make you win!” we should say “LANDESK will make you win!”. This will also contribute to branding.