

Voice in Five Messages

Brand Creation Brief §7, pulled out to stand alone. **Time:** an afternoon

You can't find a voice by choosing adjectives for it. You find it by writing the brand doing real jobs and reading them back to back. Write these at full length, as if you're sending them today — not as taglines.

The three everyone writes

1. The welcome. A stranger has just arrived and knows nothing about you.

2. The offer. You are asking someone for money.

3. The apology. You got something wrong and they noticed.

The two nobody writes

These expose more about a voice than the first three combined, because they’re the ones people default to corporate language for.

4. The no. You’re declining a request, or holding your price.

5. The hard question. The thing customers are afraid to ask you — answered before they have to.

The question: _____

Read all five out loud, back to back

Mark where the register jumps — the apology suddenly formal, the offer suddenly apologetic, the no suddenly stiff. Those seams are where the voice isn’t real yet.

Message	Sounds like the same person?	Where it slipped
Welcome		
Offer		
Apology		
No		
Hard question		

Extract the rules from what you wrote

Not from adjectives — from the sentences above.

Always true

- _____
- _____
- _____

Sometimes true (*and when*)

- _____
- _____

Never true

- _____
- _____
- _____

Check each rule against the promise

A voice rule that doesn't serve the emotional promise (ch. 3) is a personal preference wearing a lanyard.

- ☐ Every rule above traces to the promise or the tension.
- ☐ The ones that don't are crossed out or rewritten.

The handoff test

Give the rules — not the five messages — to someone else. Ask them to write a sixth message: a reminder, a follow-up, a thank-you.

- ☐ It came back sounding like **you**. The voice is documented.
- ☐ It came back sounding like **a brand**. Go back and extract again.

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Kill-or-keep date: _____

On that date, pull five real messages you actually sent since. Run the same read-aloud. If the seams are in the same places, the rules aren't being used — put them where messages get written, not where documents get stored.