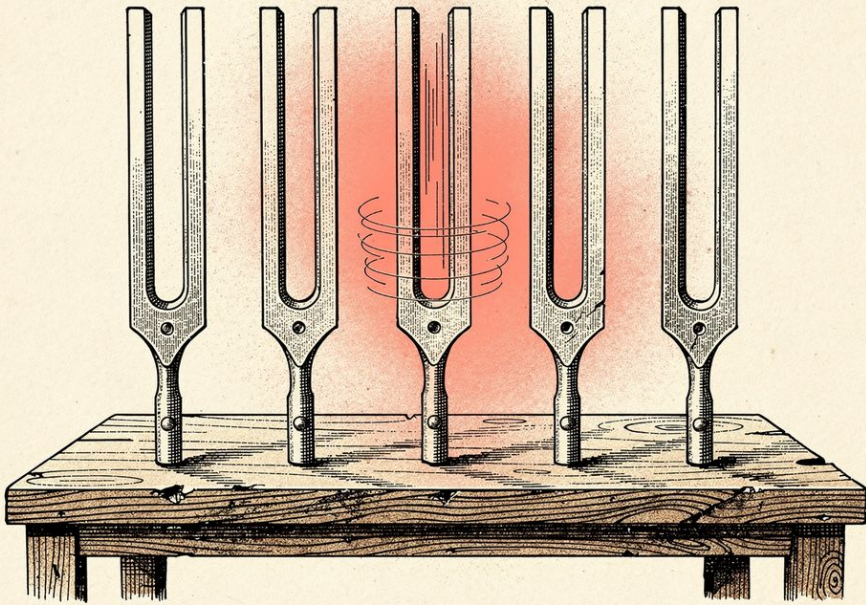




FRAMEWORK

Voice Calibration

Building voice guidelines from choices, not
adjectives

HOW IT USUALLY GOES

Somebody circulates adjective pairs. Formal or casual. Bold or measured.

The org picks the flattering end of every axis. The output says the brand is confident, human, clear and expert.

Nobody disagrees with it. **And nobody can use it.**

Two writers reading “confident but human” produce completely different sentences, and when one gets edited there's no way to resolve the argument.

THE REAL PROBLEM

**People can't describe
how they want to sound.
They recognize it
instantly when they see it.**

Part 01

The move

CHOICES, NOT ADJECTIVES

Take one real fact. Write it five ways. Ask which one they'd sign.

- 01 Real claims only. Invented examples get answers about a hypothetical brand.
- 02 Span the full range, including one that's too safe and one that goes too far.
- 03 Repeat across a dozen scenarios.
- 04 Ten minutes, keyboard-navigable, no timer.

Field service operations, same underlying claim.

Measured Teams reviewing work in a shared workflow reject more line items than teams reviewing after the fact.

Recommended When the record shows up after the decision, you're not approving work. You're filing it.

Bold Most field service teams don't have an approval process. They have a receipt collection process.

Boldest You are not in control of your spend. You're just finding out about it politely.

Too far If you're still approving repairs from a text message, you're the reason the budget is gone.

The “too far” option is **load-bearing.**

It's how you find the ceiling, and including it signals the exercise is asking rather than steering toward a predetermined answer.

COVER THE HARD CASES

Voice is easy on a landing page and hard everywhere else.

- 01 A research finding that implicates the reader
- 02 A competitor's weakness, without naming the competitor
- 03 A limitation of your own product
- 04 Criticism from the community you serve
- 05 Good news without a victory lap

Part 02

Reading the results

NOT AN AVERAGE

Averaging tiers produces the same mush as the adjective survey.

- 01 The mode is your default tier
- 02 The highest tier anyone picked is the ceiling
- 03 Disagreement by role is a finding, not noise
- 04 Variance by scenario becomes the cap table

Caps always win.

House voice has a default tier, but surfaces have ceilings. A crisis response capped at Measured stays there even when the campaign is running at Bold.

Every rule carries an example a group of humans already approved.

- 01 A tier ladder, four levels with real sentences
- 02 A cap table by surface
- 03 Approved openings, by format
- 04 Banned patterns with replacements
- 05 A review rubric, so it gets scored rather than argued

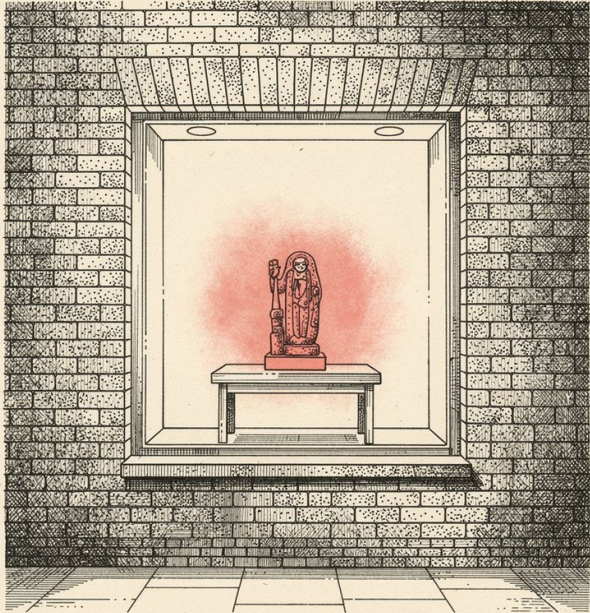
Twenty people picked these sentences.

When a draft gets pushed back, the writer is being pointed at a decision the whole team made, not losing an argument with an editor.

THE LIMIT

This calibrates register. It doesn't decide what to say.

That comes from the messaging architecture. A calibration run before the conviction exists just produces confident-sounding sentences about nothing.



FROM THE SHELF

The words should be like windows in a store.

DAVID OGILVY

VIA EDDIE SHLEYNER, VERY GOOD COPY

You look through them. A headline someone compliments is usually a headline that failed, because they noticed the writing instead of the offer.

Stop asking which adjectives.
Ask which sentence.