



# Brand Narrative Mistakes

A Simple Worksheet to Help You  
Avoid Common Brand Narrative Mistakes

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## Who Benefits From This Worksheet?

- Brand new brands needing guidance
- Businesses aiming to rebrand or refocus
- Anyone needing tips on building a solid brand narrative
- Hopefully, YOU!

## What You'll Need

- Basic insight into brand narrative and brand voice
- Basic understanding of target audience
- A pen (or computer, if you complete the worksheet online)
- Some free time to think
- My How to Find Your Brand Voice worksheet will be useful, too!

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*Ready to make some magic happen? Let's get started!*

*Roxb*

# How Not to Find Your Brand Voice

If you've done my worksheet on [Finding Your Brand Voice](#), you will have some idea of how to go about finding the right tone and style to suit your brand. This worksheet is a fantastic way to get started with your new business.

With that said, it is also just as useful to know what NOT to do when finding your voice. You'd be amazed at how easily you can end up ruining your branding efforts by taking the wrong approach. Some of the worst ways of determining your voice:

**Copying.** Imitation may be a form of flattery, but it is a pointless exercise for branding. The reason for this is twofold. On one hand, you will not be authentic. On the other hand, you will not have a brand that appeals to your target audience and goals. To quote Dr Seuss, "there is no one alive who is youer than you."

**Faking.** Trying to build a brand voice on what you think you should do rather than your values, story, audience, and style is another thing to avoid. It's easy to make assumptions about what you think your brand should reflect. Like copying, this is a quick way to end up with a brand narrative that is not really YOU.

**Guessing.** Although some is some instinct involved in creating your brand voice, it's not all guesswork. Instead, it is a combination of logic, homework, and common sense. There are many factors that come into play, from what you stand for to what you offer, where you come from, who you sell to, how you sell, and why you sell.

Now it's over to you... how can you be sure that your brand voice is authentic?

**Task 1: What are some of the things that make you 'youer' than anyone else?**

Make a list of the qualities that you are most proud to offer your audience. Focus on these rather than falling victim to any of the mistakes above.

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# Branding Fails to Avoid at All Cost

Some mistakes are worse than others. While it may not seem like the end of the world to have a brand that is not aligned with your vision or goals, there are a few things that happen when things are not unified. You may come across as unprofessional, clients may assume that you do not know what you are doing, and you may see a dent in how your brand is perceived.

What are the absolute worst brand narrative fails to avoid? For starters, make sure that you stay clear of these epic fails...

## **Lack of cohesion.**

Your website says one thing in one voice and your social media accounts say something completely different, in a completely different voice. If you were a client, how would you feel when presented with totally different brand voices?

## **Lack of credibility.**

You have plenty to say, but it is all hot air. You talk a lot about the environment, but your products are not certified cruelty-free. You say you are passionate about diversity, but all your employees are white.

## **Lack of trust.**

You are big on spin, saying whatever you think people want to hear. Your social media content tells a very different story, however, and people are (quite rightly) wondering whether they can trust what you say.

## **Lack of professionalism.**

You are trying to be cool, making jokes and looking for attention. Your ads and copy have offended more than one person but you are more interested in shock value than respect.

## **Lack of authenticity.**

Your brand is a carbon copy of every other business in your niche. There is no personality and no authenticity at all. You are, in fact, tone-deaf.

# Why Consistency is Key

One of the most important aspects of brand narrative is the ability to provide a consistent snap-shot of your brand. Your brand voice needs to be exactly the same across every single area of your business. Not just the customer-facing areas, either. You need to live and breathe your brand voice, so that it comes across in your internal memos, value proposition, mission, brochures, website, social media channels, emails, press releases, and every other aspect of your business.

When you put effort into developing and maintaining brand voice across your website and emails, only for your social media channels to be a bit of a mess, there will be a disconnect. It may not be obvious, but it will put people off subconsciously. As a result, people may start to see your brand as messy rather than cohesive.

Needless to say, a cohesive brand is the best way to build trust, grow relationships, and build your reputation. Luckily, there are some ways that you can be sure that everything is consistent.

## Task 2: How can you close any brand narrative gaps?

Are there any areas of your business where your brand is not brought across in a consistent way? Go over every channel, from website to social media, internal communication, emails, ads, brochures, flyers, and other material, taking note of any discrepancies. Make a list of any areas for improvement.

# The Risk of Controversy

Earlier, we briefly mentioned a lack of professionalism as a brand narrative fail. We used the example of a brand that wants desperately to be the cool kid. Trying to be cool rather than establishing a brand narrative that is rooted on values, personality, and individualism can end up causing more headaches than you may think.

Controversy is alive and well in our digital age, with brands making the news for all the wrong reasons on a regular basis. This slippery slope could take the form of a few difference scenarios, such as:

**Adverts that end up sounding sexist or racist.** Even if it was not intentional, making jokes about women staying in the kitchen or making any joke that could be offensive in any way will never be worth the fame. You may be talked about online but it will not be for any of the right reasons.

**Language that can be misinterpreted.** Using slang to try and connect with a younger audience is fine, unless there is a chance that the terminology could be misinterpreted in any way. Double meanings are sneaky, making you not only look bad but also a bit silly.

**Memes that are only funny to a select few.** Everyone loves memes. The problem with these type of messaging is that it often uses inside jokes that not everyone gets. If there is a chance of your audience not seeing the funny side (or the point), it's better to give it a miss.

**Suggestive language or even images.** You may not come right out and spell anything out, but if you use suggestive puns, images, or even product names to try and sell sex, booze or anything else, it can very quickly make you look sleazy.

**Anything that borders the wrong side of legal.** You'd be amazed how many brands forget that everything they say online is there forever. It takes a single screenshot for your post to be immortalised.

**Personal rants and other slip-ups.** Using your blog or social pages to make any personal statement or accidentally posting from your business page instead of your personal page can also backfire horribly.

## Is Your Brand Tone Deaf?

Finally, before we wrap up, it is also a good idea to determine whether your brand is truly listening or not. When brand voice is determined without a clear process or copied from brands that you think you should try and emulate, you run a very real risk of becoming tone deaf.

What do we mean by tone deaf? Essentially, this means that you are not speaking the same language as your audience. You are not responding to feedback, you are not giving consumers what they want, you are missing the point, you are following trends without understanding them, and you are lost in your own bubble.

### Task 3: Are you missing the point or hitting it well off centre?

To find out whether you are tone deaf or not, try this simple quiz.

- Do you understand what is meant by cultural appropriation?
- Are you taking advantage of current events without understanding them?
- Do you have a diverse team that provides input for campaigns?
- Is there any way at all that your campaign can be misinterpreted?
- Do you have processes in place to evaluate campaigns before they go live?
- Have you had any complaints about any of your communication?
- Are you constantly putting out fires on social media or other platforms?
- Are you following trusted news sources or falling victim to fake news?
- Do you use audience feedback in any of your campaigns?

Think carefully about what these questions mean. Rather than writing down yes or no, step back and take a good, hard look at how you approach your brand narrative and various campaigns across each channel. If you can see any areas for improvement, it is best to invest some help to fine-tune your brand narrative.

## P.S. Before You Go

### Looking for More Help Defining Your Brand?

I really hope that this worksheet has helped you get some ideas going. If you'd like to learn more about finding your brand voice, I can help.

With over 12 years of experience in the online content industry, I have worked in agency, in-house and freelance environments. I now help small businesses and solopreneurs find their voice, through brand narrative packages and various other freelance copywriting solutions.

Head on over to [www.roxb.co.za](http://www.roxb.co.za) to learn more about what I have to offer, or hit me up on any of the channels below if you'd like to chat more about taking your brand content to the next level.

Until then, have fun getting your new brand launched!



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