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Voice and Tone

Brand Narrative

Everything is a story, and our brand is no different. The narrative shown here represents the essence of our sound. It's our messaging and personality in action. It kindles the emotions our brand strives to inspire. And ultimately, it's here to lend its light to your headlines, to guide your ideas, and to illuminate the path to that perfect line.

As Beacons, we reflect God's light.
Even in darkness or without a path forward, we shine outward and onward, anchored in our values.

We project the image of goodness in which we are created.
We cast compassion and bring truth to light:
dedicated to doing what we can to bring a brighter future for all into view.

Whether we are students in pursuit of our passions, faculty in the field earning hard-won wisdom, athletes on the starting block, or servant-leaders in real communities — we illuminate our surroundings, uncovering the joy that's right before us all: the human joy found in service of something greater.

We ground theory in practice and push ourselves to discover our true capabilities.
Reaching further together.
Leading compassionately for the good of society.
At Valpo, our light is for everyone.

Grounded, we shine.
Grounded, we serve.
Grounded, we radiate.
Valparaiso University.

Brand Narrative Breakdown

Grounded in strategy and story, the brand narrative radiates a unique Valpo voice. Let's outline the significance of each section.

Narrative

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Breakdown

Inside every Beacon is a force that illuminates and guides. It begins within, but is always directed outward, toward others. Valpo offers a foundation, a common commitment to our core values, that grounds us even in the face of uncertainty or difficult decisions.

Our unshakable belief in the power of human potential informs our unique dedication to helping others. At Valpo, service is not a lowly pursuit: It is the ultimate aim of great leaders.

We believe that joy is found in acts of service, and true service is possible in every role and every environment. That's why we insist on an interdisciplinary approach in all aspects of our lives, and that's why we're able to be exactly who we are, everywhere and in all of our complexity. Multiplicity is our strength. Service is our joy.

Beacons know that pursuing truth is equal parts study and experience. It's a lifelong commitment to our effort and multifaceted curiosity that makes us powerful. And our power, like light, is meant for lending.

The hook for our brand platform speaks to the heart of our mission with compassion and fidelity, encapsulating both our personality and every Beacon's power to shine brightly.

Constructing Headlines

Headlines can make a strong first impression, capture interest, and go a long way toward establishing our brand voice. They're also often one of the biggest missed opportunities for expressing our voice, so don't overlook them. Consider the following headline constructions as easy go-tos when writing for our brand. Remember, these are starting points, not the only ones we can use.

**Grounded in
[overarching value],
we radiate
[an outcome of holding
that value].**

**Grounded in empathy,
we radiate care.**

**Grounded in purpose,
we radiate joy.**

**Grounded in community,
we radiate collaboration.**

**Grounded in a love of
photography, we radiate new
ways of seeing the world.**

This primary construction demonstrates how Valpo's commitment to our values allows us to truly radiate in every space we enter. It offers flexibility for any audience, from prospective students to donors, by showing by showing the community in our common cause.

This headline pattern works especially well for showing the connection between a larger value and the observable outcome. It's hard to see empathy, but the high-quality healthcare that stems from it is evident. So if we were referring to our nursing program, we might write a headline like "Grounded in empathy, we radiate care." Ultimately, we're seeking to show how more abstract values result in specific actions or qualities.

**Radiate [a positive
quality or value].**

**Radiate advocacy for the
underserved.**

Radiate integrity.

Radiate stewardship.

Radiate curiosity.

Radiate resilience.

Looking to evoke a strong call to action? Need something straightforward to head a complex piece? This is your construction. No frills, no complicated ideas. Just a powerful declaration that resonates with the Beacon inside each of us and challenges us to embrace the best parts of ourselves.

What's useful about this headline pattern is how malleable it is: you can radiate light, but you can pretty much radiate anything else too (metaphorically speaking, of course). Also, this headline can be short — like, really short. Keep these benefits in mind when you're working on a character count or need some latitude to express a big idea.

Beyond the Headline

Headlines are great, but they're just one piece of the puzzle. So let's take a look at some ways to voice our writing across different contexts, so that we always have a handle on our voice

and take full advantage of our story in every situation.

Radiate further.

The brand narrative demonstrates how being grounded in our values leads us to radiate positive outcomes in every setting — in every industry, in every role, the world over. It's what we do. But we are the Beacons after all, and if we aren't careful, this radiating metaphor can get overused quickly. One solution is to find creative ways to take it even further, beyond the obvious.

When you're writing a piece, consider how the subjects of your piece are interacting with others — what is their "light" doing for others? Is a community of Beacons working together to combine their light? What might this light illuminate? Check out some of these examples of extending the metaphor below.

EXAMPLES

"Lend your light."

This phrase could be used as a call to action when communicating with donors or alumni. By giving gifts to the University, they are sharing their resources with future generations of Beacons, and we can extend our central metaphor to illustrate that generosity powerfully and succinctly.

"We know brilliant lights don't just shine in one direction."

This example extends our central metaphor to capture the way our students' diverse, interdisciplinary interests are a natural result of their inherent greatness. The double meaning of "brilliant" as both smart and bright does the heavy lifting, but we can also deploy light-associated verbs like "shine" to great effect. We can then use this phrase to discuss any number of our responses as a University — our broad range of majors, our numerous student organizations — all through a powerful opening.

Ground your copy.

"Grounded, We Radiate" is the core of our brand, but that doesn't mean every headline needs to have "grounded" in it. Not every line needs to be about light. In fact, it shouldn't. Using too many explicitly branded metaphors is a surefire way to tire out the concept and diminish its power. Consider other ways to get at the messages behind the metaphor. Don't forget the strategy: It'll help you nail our voice and messaging every time.

EXAMPLES

***"Your education prepares you for a career.
Valpo prepares you for a calling."***

As a University, we feel our values on a deep level, and pursue them for the benefits they bring to our communities and the joy and edification that come from service. Though we could convey this with metaphors, we can also illustrate this with more direct statements that evoke activeness and faithfulness — two of our strategic personality traits.

"Beacons don't drift, and they don't get lost."

An example where "grounded" never appears, and yet we've conveyed the same message: Our students are grounded firmly, and it allows them to shine their brightest. This framing is our voice at its boldest, and yet we can temper that boldness with activeness and compassion by using it to discuss a topic like academic support — resources that help keep every Beacon steady during difficult seasons of learning.

Best Practices for Writing

Writing can feel overwhelming if you don't know where to start, and even the most seasoned writers can use reminders. Keep these tips in mind for crafting inviting and inspiring content

that moves your audience to keep on reading.

Speak naturally.

Our audience is broad, and we want to make our University accessible to people of every background. And most of those people probably don't know all of our insider acronyms and field-specific words. Reading your copy aloud can go a long way in helping you hear where you're being conversational, and where you've fallen into formality. Academia is an important but small segment of society — let's keep our doors open and the light on for everyone we communicate with.

Break it down.

Readers have increasingly short attention spans, so every word counts. Clarity usually comes with fewer words, not more, and perfection happens not when there's nothing left to add, but when there's nothing left to cut. Make your communications more digestible by employing bullet points, infographics, and clear content hierarchies with headlines, subheads, and body copy.

Keep it focused.

It's rare that your reader needs to know everything. With the exception of multi-page pieces like case statements and newsletters, make sure each communication focuses on a single message. Prioritizing the right information is the shortest path to being heard, understood, and remembered.

Prove it.

It's easy to say that a donor's gift will make a monumental difference on our campus, or that prospective Beacons will experience joy at Valpo. But asking people to consider giving their money or spending years of their life at Valpo isn't insignificant. And just because we know all that Valpo has to offer doesn't mean they do. So don't just tell them — show them! Specificity is credible and convincing, so get into the details. A balance of statistics, examples, and stories brings any concept to life.

Keep it organized.

Arrange pieces so your reader can quickly find what they're looking for. For example, when writing for our website, keep the most important information first. Dial up the brand voice on top-level pages. As readers venture further into our site, we can dial back our voice, tailor content to specific proof points, and provide functional information.

Spark action.

Everything we create has a purpose and the potential to drive further engagement. On every piece, make sure to include a call to action to tell your reader what to do next, whether it's attending an event, signing up for a newsletter, or applying for a program. There's always a next step, but it can be hard to see in the dark — make sure your words light the way.

Voice and Tone Checklist

You did it! You've used this brand guide to craft a beautiful, compelling communications piece. Now, take some time away. Then, reading out loud whenever possible, use this checklist to

give it one more pass. Or use these questions while you're writing to make sure you're checking all the boxes. After all, it's your light now — we're just living in it.

Does this piece reinforce the "Grounded, We Radiate" concept?

Is the message exemplified with a combination of proof points? Do you use narrative elements to resonate emotionally with our audiences?

Does it feel inquisitive, ethical, humble, compassionate, faithful, or active? Or some combination of those traits?

Is the piece tailored to a specific audience? Can you point to language that is crafted just for them? Are their unique needs being spoken to?

Can you identify its key message quickly? Have you avoided including too many messages?

Is it something you're excited to share with your colleagues and audience?

Does the message align with our core value proposition?

Have you included a clear and direct call to action for your audience?

VALPARAISO  UNIVERSITY