

Brand Voice Guidelines – Neighborly Brands

Neighborly, by the very nature of the company, has some brand voice challenges. First, since it's a collection of many different types of businesses, content sampling and competitor reviews are much more diverse than with other corporations. Second, even though all the Neighborly brands are home service companies, many of the brands' business models are very different—from specialties like HVAC and electricians to more generalized services like house cleaning and handyman. As a result, no single brand voice will effectively cover them all. Finally, because of the influence of the local franchises, the national voice for all the brands needs to be as versatile as possible.

Analysis of Neighborly Brand Content

Running a comparative analysis on seven of the Neighborly brands (Aire Serv, Five Star Painting, The Grounds Guys, Molly Maid, Mr. Appliance, Mr. Handyman, and Mr. Rooter) versus their primary competitors, these issues consistently presented themselves.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consistently updated blogs—About 30% of competitor websites don't have blogs. On competitor websites with blogs, about 25% have outdated content.Almost half of competitor brands didn't use any form of multimedia on their websites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Language on the web pages and (where available) blogs usually registered above the 9th-grade reading level. The main factors contributing to higher reading levels are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Long sentences and paragraphs.Complex vocabulary.Incorrect punctuation (comma splices, run-on sentences).Although top navigation was easier to see, the navigation structure (primary, secondary, tertiary) was inconsistent and occasionally didn't work.

These issues present opportunities for Neighborly brands to improve and become leaders where their competitors aren't as strong—especially in the areas of language usage and blog content.

Using a Consistent Voice

Although each Neighborly brand has its own individual style and personality, it's still possible to create some consistent brand voice guidelines that all the brands can use as a starting point. No matter what the brand, Neighborly's vision and purpose are the same across the organization.

- Vision:** To be so remarkable we become a beloved household name.
- Purpose:** To build a service community that enriches people's lives by delivering amazing experiences.

What will make the average home services customer perceive Neighborly as a beloved household name? What will convince the potential customers that Neighborly is building a company that will provide them with amazing experiences? A 2019 study by JobProgress.com revealed nine traits customers value most when selecting home services providers.

- Timeliness**—Companies that contacted customers as soon as possible, showed up on time, and met their deadlines received the highest ratings.
- Quality of Work**—Using top quality materials, professional skills, and guaranteeing customer satisfaction all contributed to customers' perception of quality work.

3. **Responsiveness**—Customers responded positive to professionals who answer their questions quickly and thoroughly.
4. **Expertise and Experience**—Years of experience are important, but a customer’s perception of a company’s level of expertise was also a big factor in a company’s value.
5. **Honesty**—Simple language, upfront pricing, and a reputation for honesty all improved the level of customer trust.
6. **Friendliness**—When customers see a positive attitude, hear upbeat language, and feel like their decisions are respected, they feel safer in their choice of a home service professional.
7. **Cost**—Prices don’t have to be the lowest if customers feel like it’s affordable and the service is worth the cost.
8. **Proximity**—Many homeowners prefer to work with local companies who have strong ties to the community where they live.
9. **Online Reviews**—Whether it’s a testimonial on the website or an online review, potential customers read the opinions of former customers.

When using brand voice guidelines on the brand website and blogs, the goal is to improve customer engagement and give customers positive opinions of the Neighborly brands, leading to an increase in job leads and cross-brand leads to improve Neighborly’s “Own the Home” goals. These brand voice traits are most likely to increase customer’s positive perception of Neighborly and also its brands.

- Conversational
- Friendly
- Trustworthy
- Informative

When used on web pages and in blog content, the traits should communicate these focused ideas.

- Conversational—relaxed, informal, comfortable.
- Friendly—upbeat, engaging, cheerful.
- Trustworthy—honest, consistent, confident.
- Informative—useful, instructive, helpful.

The chart below demonstrates more detailed and concrete ways the brand voice traits can be used in Neighborly’s text and visuals.

Voice Characteristic	Description	Do	Don’t
Conversational	Using everyday language and a natural tone to describe our various home services.	Use contractions and relaxed grammar. Use direct and implied second-person references. Use limited slang when appropriate.	Use stiff, formal language. Use too many first-person references (too casual). Use too much passive voice.
Friendly	Engage readers, making them feel comfortable enough to join in and participate on blogs and web pages.	Use positive language. Use simple words and short sentences to create a helpful tone. Tell stories.	Focus on selling services. Lose sight of the core audience. Use too much industry jargon.
Trustworthy	Dedicated to making customers feel confident about inviting our brand	Be honest. Be consistent.	Use waffling language or “weasel” words. Make unrealistic promises.

	professionals into their homes.	Talk to the reader as an equal.	Act superior. Dismiss customer concerns.
Informative	Know readers well enough to provide information they can use, even if they aren't customers yet.	Put the most important content at the top. Use real-world examples. Vary the vocabulary. Make text scannable and use subheads. Use multimedia.	Focus on generalities and high-level statements. Make pages too text heavy. Forget about white space.

Next Steps

Once the baseline brand voice has been defined for Neighborly, it can be applied to new and revamped content across other brands. For example, new content for Window Genie about DIY window cleaning in the winter might read like this:

Making Shiny, Sparkling Windows

You're dressed warmly, and your supplies are ready—now it's time to clean! Before applying your cleaning solution, use your brush to clear away any snow, leaves, or other dirt and debris from the window. If you see any ice, use your warm water to gently melt it away. Starting at the top and in the corners, spray a generous amount of cleaning solution onto the windows. Working from top to bottom, use your damp sponge to wipe in a circular motion until all the visible dirt and grime is removed. Work quickly so your cleaning solution doesn't have time to evaporate.

The tone is friendly and conversational, the sentences and the paragraphs are short, and the content gives valuable information. The reading level on the Flesch-Kincaid scale is 7.7, with only 11% passive voice, so the text is within the ideal target range.

When editing content, choose text that can be improved using the brand voice guidelines. The example used below is from Mr. Appliance.

Use the Recommended Detergent

Check the manufacturer's recommended type of laundry detergent, amount of detergent, and instructions for use. For example, powdered detergent or high-efficiency (HE) liquid detergent should be used with some water-saving washing machine models to minimize the formation of residue. Be sure to load the detergent correctly too—some units have a detergent tray and fabric softener tray, while others don't.

Although it's not badly written, this text is too formal, uses too much passive voice (33%), and the reading level is much too high (13.8). By using the brand voice guidelines, even before they're customized for Mr. Appliance, this text can be revised to be much more in line with the overall Neighborly brand voice goals.

Use the Recommended Detergent

Have you wondered why the letters "HE" are on the front of your washing machine? It means you own [a high-efficiency washer](#). These machines use less water, but they need a special type of detergent to prevent soap residue build-up. Luckily, whether you prefer powdered or liquid, HE detergents are easy to find. Just be sure you're loading the right amount of detergent into the correct tray. Some HE washers have a detergent tray and fabric softener tray, and others don't.

This revamped content has a friendlier, more conversational tone and the text includes a link to encourage engagement. The reading level has dropped to 8.1 and all the passive voice has been removed. Since the subhead stays the same and the reading level is lower, the changes should also have a positive effect on the SEO.

Revisit and revise the brand voice as Neighborly adds more brands

The brand voice guidelines will evolve and become more refined as more brands are added under the Neighborly umbrella. Once all the Neighborly brands are on the same platform, new data can be collected to help refine and revise the brand voice standards.

Starting off at twice a year and possibly increasing to quarterly, the Digital Content Team will collaborate with brand managers, writers, and other content creators to review brand voice attributes and determine what's working and what's not. For instance, if one of the Neighborly companies decides to rebrand or expand their services, it may be time for a voice refresh or some new "Do's and Don'ts."