DIGITAL RADISH

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

HOW TO FIND YOUR BRAND'S UNIQUE VOICE – AND OWN IT



THE B2B ECO-CHAMBER

Consistent, authentic and appealing, we all instantly recognise a MailChimp, IBM, or Hiscox communication.

But these are **exceptions**. Voice is hugely underused in B2B, despite its power.

Most **B2B businesses** don't just sound the same, (how many brand guidelines describe their voice as 'professional'?) they say exactly the same thing too, commenting on similar topics without adding anything significantly new to the debate.

There is a big opportunity for B2B brands brave enough to show some personality and start new conversations – to have a **unique voice**.

MOST B2B BUSINESSES DON'T JUST SOUND THE SAME, THEY SAY THE SAME THING TOO.



WHAT IS A UNIQUE VOICE?

A unique voice is a **powerful weapon** in a B2B marketer's toolbox. It's both what you say and the way that you say it. It is yours and recognisably yours: no other company could own it in the same way.

It demonstrates what it would be like to **work** together, **builds** a relationship between buyer and brand, and **helps** differentiate you from the crowd.

At a time when busy buyers can feel bombarded by the sea of sub-standard content, having a truly **standout voice** ensures people read and remember what you have to say.

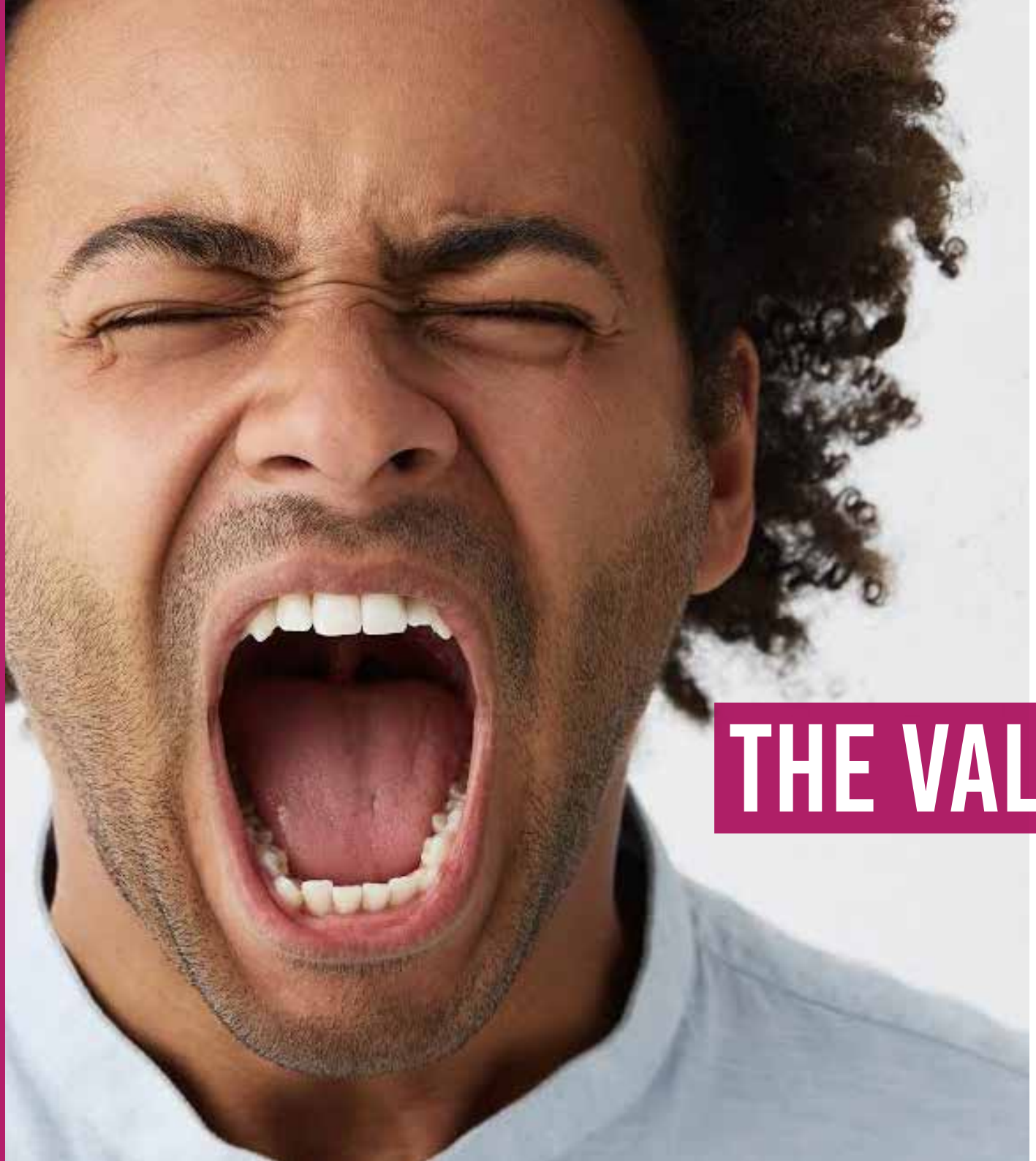
FINDING A VOICE THAT RESONATES

This hands-on guide helps you to identify and articulate the unique voice of your business, by finding the intersection of what will resonate with customers, set you apart from competitors and be entirely authentic.

We hope you find it useful in finding your voice, and then owning it.



YOUR UNIQUE VOICE IS MUCH MORE THAN YOUR TONE, IT'S WHAT YOU SAY TO THE WORLD TOO.



THE VALUE OF VOICE

We're all aware of the value of voice in B2C, understanding it sits behind the success of companies like Innocent, Virgin and Apple. Voice is just as important in B2B and overtime it creates an ongoing competitive advantage - here are **four reasons why**.

THE VALUE OF VOICE

1. IT ENGAGES PROSPECTS

Pretty much without exception, your prospects will read your content before they engage with your people personally – **reviewing** your website, **watching** a conference video, or **reading** a report.

In B2B, "**people buy people**" so your content needs to build a picture in your audience's mind of what it is to work with you before they have even met your sales team. Having a voice that is human and relatable is key to starting to build customer relationships. SEO software company Moz has a strong voice throughout its content and its co-founder, Rand Fishkin, highlights the importance of relationship-led content: **"Best way to sell something: don't sell anything. Earn the awareness, respect and trust of those who might buy."**

To achieve this, it's not enough to say something in an interesting way: you have to say something interesting. Without a unique voice, it is nigh-on impossible to have a clear argument in your content and reveal unexpected insights. If you don't understand who you are and what you can speak on authoritatively, your content strategy will be no different to your competitors. And what's the point in that?

A **clear voice** provides focus, direction and clarity to your content strategy and to every piece of content you create. And it makes your content exciting, readable and worth the time of sophisticated buyers.

47% OF B2B BUYERS READ AS MANY AS THREE TO FIVE PIECES OF CONTENT BEFORE FIRST ENGAGING WITH A BRAND.

THE VALUE OF VOICE

2. IT HELPS YOU STAND APART FROM COMPETITORS

In his latest book, psychologist Robert Cialdini reveals why being different has a commercial impact. Researchers at Northwestern University gave people two sofas to choose between. They were identical except that one had softer cushions and the other had more durable cushions. 58% chose the more durable sofa and 42%, the softer sofa.

The researchers added three more options, all with the more durable cushions. This time, the softer sofa was chosen by 77% of people – nearly doubling its popularity despite there being more sofas to choose from.

What can explain this switch? The researchers concluded that distinctiveness was key, leading to people placing a greater perceived importance on softness.

Selling sofas may seem a world away from B2B marketing, but we are talking here about people choosing between options that all seem very similar – as is the case in B2B where often there is little to differentiate between competitors.

The essential human response is the same: **we choose what stands out**.

When 86% of your competitors are using content marketing , your content has to impress or it is worthless.



COULD YOU WITHSTAND THE SOFA TEST?

86% OF YOUR COMPETITORS ARE USING CONTENT MARKETING.

THE VALUE OF VOICE

3. YOUR CUSTOMERS EXPECT IT

A recent study by KPMG shows **senior B2B decision makers expect B2C techniques**, like voice, to be used to target them and build a long-term relationship. At the moment they think B2B is lagging behind.

The expectations of people in the workforce today has changed. They know B2B brands have access to the same tools and expertise as other companies, so by not identifying your voice, you are falling behind.

This is a window of opportunity for bold B2B businesses to meet customer expectations before their competitors steal a march.

4. IT IS HAPPENING WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT

Everything written or spoken by people in your organisation contributes to the overarching voice of your brand. Consistency is key in branding, with research showing that **companies which present themselves consistently are 3 to 4 times more likely to be visible to their audience** . So you can either own and shape your voice, or let it run free. What's it going to be?

SENIOR B2B DECISION MAKERS THINK B2B MARKETERS ARE LAGGING BEHIND.



3 TO 4 TIMES MORE VISIBLE

COMPANIES THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES CONSISTENTLY ARE 3 TO 4 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE VISIBLE TO THEIR AUDIENCE



THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

To define a **unique voice** that you can own for the long-term and bring to life in every piece of content and marketing, you need to hit on the intersection between:

1. WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT AND CARE ABOUT?
2. WHAT YOUR COMPETITORS ARE DOING AND NOT DOING?
3. WHAT SETS YOUR ORGANISATION APART?

This reveals the **unique qualities** of your brand that your customers want to know about, and ensures you shout about the right things in the right way.

To pinpoint this intersection, we have developed a tried and tested process that enables brands to define their unique voice in five steps.



VOICE FINDER

STEP 1. GET CLOSE TO YOUR CUSTOMER

Do you know your customers and what they really care about? What delights them and what ticks them off? If you are clear on this, you can develop a voice that highlights the aspects of your business that will resonate with the people that matter most, that will answer their burning questions and put their fears to rest.

Less than half of marketers use buyer personas but they can make marketing five times as effective, so they are key to revealing your customers and their needs. To develop these, you first need to carry out in-depth research. Consider social listening using tools such as **Brand24** and **Audiense** to identify topics discussed on social media, plus….

BUYER PERSONAS CAN MAKE MARKETING FIVE TIMES AS EFFECTIVE.



VOICE FINDER

A. CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

Speak to a **cross-section** of customers, both new and established, to find out:

- Why they decided to buy from you
- What they most appreciate about your business
- How you are different to any competition they've considered or come across
- The three adjectives they'd use to describe the company's brand and people
- If your brand was a famous person, who would it be?
- The topics they would like to hear your people talking about

IN-DEPTH RESEARCH GIVES INVALUABLE INSIGHT FOR VOICE DIFFERENTIATION.



B. SALES OR SUPPORT TEAM SURVEYS

Survey or **interview** your sales teams - those on the front line that know your customers best. Ask questions such as:

- What do customers ask them about time and time again?
- What do customers complain about when it comes to the product/service you provide?
- What do customers worry about when it comes to their role?
- What are their customers like personally and what do they love?

VOICE FINDER

C. CUSTOMER PERSONA DEVELOPMENT

For the three to five main types of customer you identify through this research, create a persona to **get to grips** with who they are and what motivates them, personally and professionally.

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....

JOB TITLE.....

AGE.....

LOCATION.....

PERSONAL CAREER GOALS.....

.....

.....

THREE INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF WORK.....

BUSINESS

SECTOR.....

COMPANY SIZE.....

SECTOR.....

JOB ROLE

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE THEY WORKED IN THIS ROLE?.....

ROLE IN DECISION MAKING RELATED TO YOUR PRODUCT/SERVICE.....

ROLE GOALS.....

GREATEST AIM OF THEIR ROLE.....

GREATEST CHALLENGES.....

HOW YOU CAN HELP ACHIEVE THESE GOALS.....

AND OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES.....

.....

CONTENT NEEDS

PREFERRED CONTENT CHANNELS.....

PREFERRED CONTENT FORMATS.....

TOPICS OF INTEREST (RELEVANT KEYWORDS).....

.....



VOICE FINDER

STEP 2. STUDY YOUR COMPETITORS

What do your competitors sound like? Many organisations, especially B2B organisations, use incredibly similar voices, making it impossible from the outside to identify their differences. If you know what they are talking about and in what tone, you can make sure your brand says something that **customers will notice**.

By mapping your competitors out, you get a clear sense of where the possibilities are for your own organisation. For instance, B2B customers favour brands that demonstrate emotion – do others in your industry recognise this or is there a clear space for you?



A. TOPIC REVIEW AND REFINE

Analyse your competitors' marketing and for each record the topics they have covered, their angle on them and whether their content is informative, insightful or interesting, (tools like Ahrefs and Buzzsumo will do the leg work). Compare this to the topics of interest highlighted in your customer research – which of these topics aren't covered extensively by competitors? See our content audit template on page 15 for this task.

B. TONE REVIEW

While looking at your competitors' marketing, record in brief:
What is the content designed to make buyers feel?
Does it achieve it?
What keywords and phrases do they use time and again?
What three to five adjectives do you think appear in their brand guidelines about their voice?

C. COMPETITOR MAPPING

With that information, you can create a competitor voice map. Work out the four quadrants of voices that make sense in your industry. Create an axis like the one below and map your competitors, highlighting the clusters – and the gaps. The gaps could be opportunities for you.

A B2B TONE OF VOICE MAP



VOICE FINDER

STEP 3. UNLOCK WHAT MAKES YOU, YOU

A unique voice is yours and recognisably yours. No other company could own it in the same way. So you need to find what it is that is genuinely **original** and **interesting** about your brand and its people - and that will hold true for the future.

Pool as much information as possible about the direction your business is taking and the people that are taking it there. Look into…



A. BUSINESS STRATEGY

To ensure your voice is strategic and works for the long-term, you need to know the direction your business is taking. Gather information on your values, vision and growth plans in the short and mid-term.

B. CONTENT AUDIT TEMPLATE

Carry out a thorough content audit so that you can see what has worked in the past and whether there are opportunities to repurpose or develop existing ideas.

C. PEOPLE

This is one of the most important parts of the Voice Finder process. It's your people who make your business so carry out structured employee interviews or surveys to find out:

- Why did they choose to work with the company?
- How do they think the company is different to competitors?
- How would they describe the company's people?
- What 3 adjectives would they use to describe the company.
- What topics do they think customers want the company to speak on?
- What topics do they think people in the company could speak on authoritatively?
- What are they, as individuals passionate about?

VOICE FINDER

B. CONTENT AUDIT TEMPLATE

URL	TITLE	ACTION	PRIMARY KEYWORD	OTHER KEYWORDS	CONTENT TYPE	CONTENT OVERVIEW	TARGET PERSONA	PERFORMANCE: VISITORS	PERFORMANCE: SOCIAL SHARES

VOICE FINDER

STEP 4. DEFINE YOUR VOICE

What insights does your research reveal about your brand? It's time to pull all your learnings together with your leadership team to shape your **unique voice**.

Gather together ideas from throughout your research to develop an in-depth hands-on workshop to run with your senior leadership team. You need to find out what they think of the **topics** you have identified and the **tone** they think will propel the business in the direction they need to achieve their growth.

By the end of this session, you will have alignment on the unique voice you want to develop and how to take that forward into your marketing.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM WORKSHOPS WILL SHAPE YOUR UNIQUE VOICE.



VOICE FINDER

BRAND SCALES

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WE ARE / NOT

Use words from the **brand scale** and others you have identified in your research to create statements of what your voice is and what it is not. This will show how far your voice stretches, for example:

- Bold not brash
- Bright not cocky
- Friendly not kooky
- Helpful not patronising
- ____ not _____

CORPORATE	SMALL BUSINESS
PROFESSIONAL	AMATEUR
SERIOUS	CHEERFUL
ORDINARY	DAZZLING
SHOUT	WHISPER
BOLD	HELPFUL
CALM	EXCITED
HILARIOUS	BORING
APPLE	VIRGIN
INNOCENT	COCA-COLA
MAILCHIMP	IBM
CENTER PARCS	BUTLINS
FLAKE	FERRERO ROCHE
BARACK OBAMA	JACOB REES MOGG
DR SEUSS	CHARLES DICKENS
MARY BERRY	PAUL HOLLYWOOD



WORKSHOP AGENDA

INTRODUCTIONS
Why are we here
Where we are in the process

FUTURE FOCUS
Recap and alignment on the direction the business is taking

INSIGHTS
Highlights from our research so far

- Customer
- Competitors
- Us

TONE
Voice mapping
Brand scales
We are / not

TOPICS
Topics we could own and why
Our angle on those topics

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS



VOICE FINDER

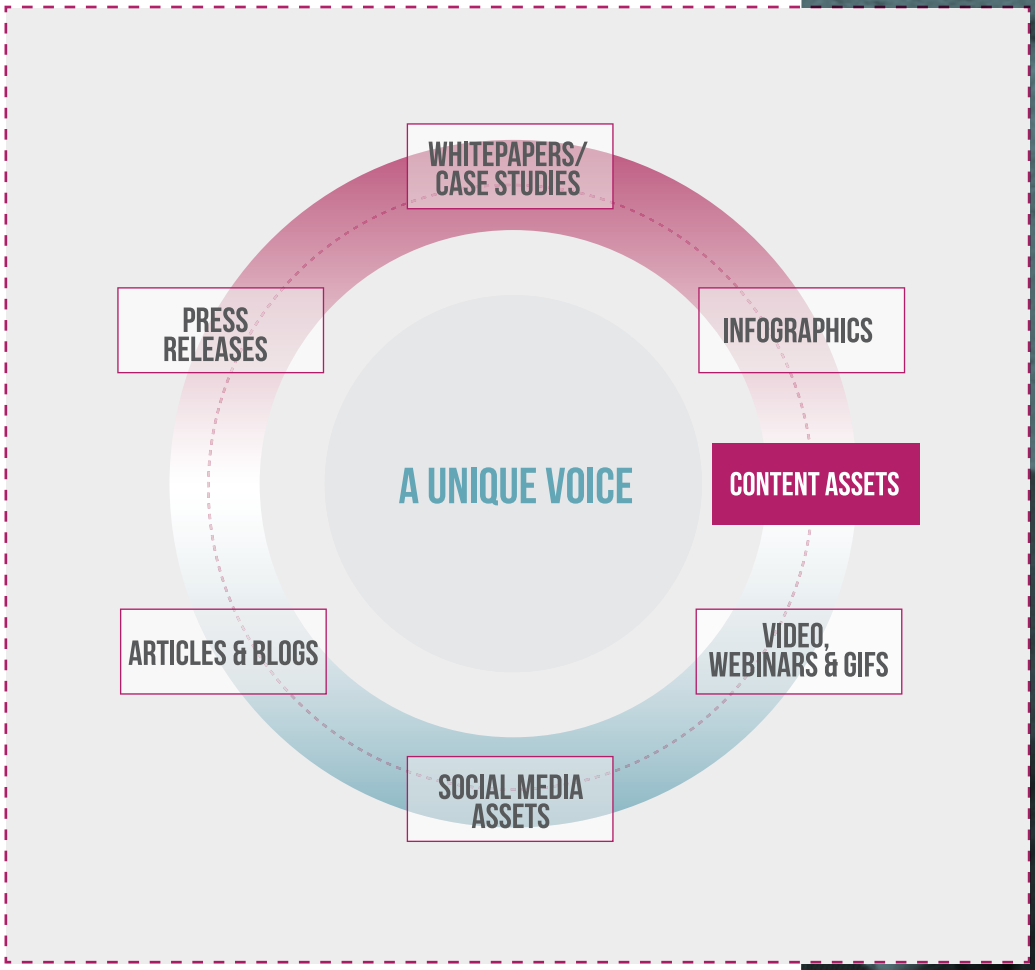
STEP 5. OWN YOUR VOICE

That's the easy part done. You need to ensure the unique voice you have defined is evident in **everything** your business communicates **forever** – externally and internally.

Over time, this will establish your voice with customers. It will become so strongly associated with your brand that you could remove your logo and people would still know a message had come from you.

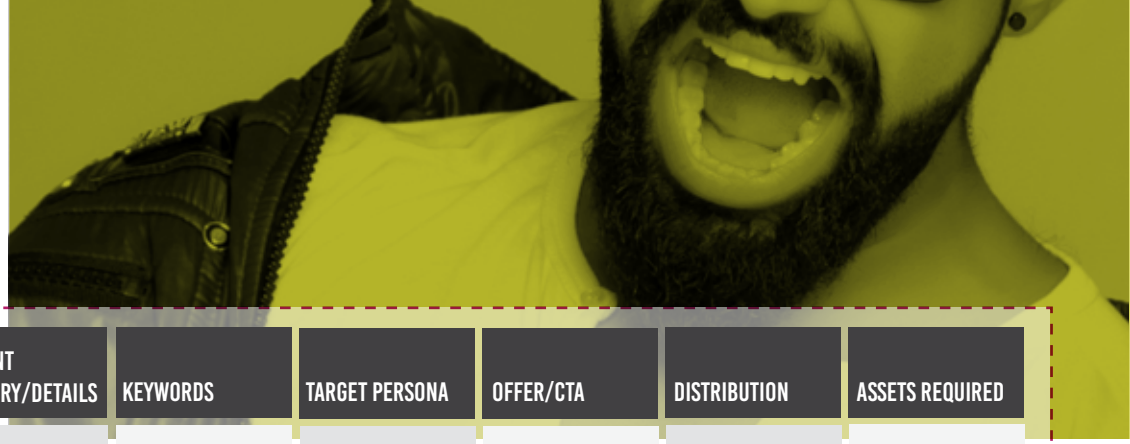
This takes time and patience, but with your voice agreed and defined, you can develop messaging and plans with direction and momentum.

Aligned with your marketing and sales strategies, and taking into account current trends and hot topics, it's time to develop a one-of-a-kind content plan.





VOICE FINDER

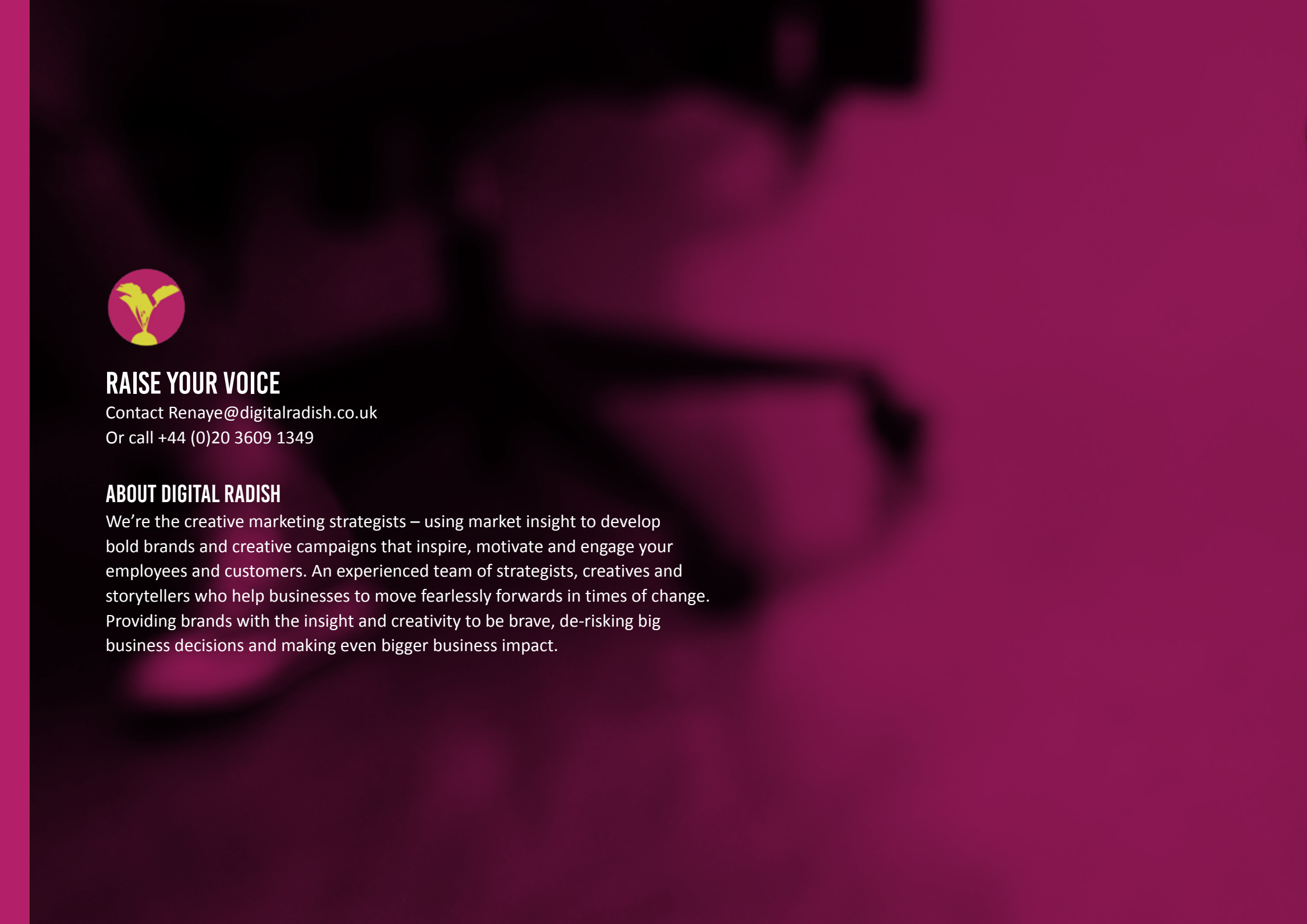


TEMPLATE CALENDAR PLAN

PUBLISH DATA	DUE DATE	AUTHOR	TITLE	CONTENT TYPE	CONTENT SUMMARY/DETAILS	KEYWORDS	TARGET PERSONA	OFFER/CTA	DISTRIBUTION	ASSETS REQUIRED

With the Voice Finder process complete, your content is set to move your audiences and give you a continuing **competitive edge**.

AND THAT'S SOMETHING WORTH SHOUTING ABOUT.



RAISE YOUR VOICE

Contact Renaye@digitalradish.co.uk
Or call +44 (0)20 3609 1349

ABOUT DIGITAL RADISH

We're the creative marketing strategists – using market insight to develop bold brands and creative campaigns that inspire, motivate and engage your employees and customers. An experienced team of strategists, creatives and storytellers who help businesses to move fearlessly forwards in times of change. Providing brands with the insight and creativity to be brave, de-risking big business decisions and making even bigger business impact.