

## ***Tone of voice*** (rev. 10/02)

We communicate through words as well as images. Words send signals about who we are and what we are like. We want those signals to encourage lasting relationships. Our tone of voice is, therefore, a vital aspect of our brand.

If you have any questions, contact our corporate communications team.

Please refer to section 2 for our identity basic elements.

# ***The definition of our brand makes demands of the way we speak and write when we represent our brand.***

## **Our strength is our great people.**

We should demonstrate what we mean by this. The press and other stakeholder audiences are interested in the people who have been behind particular products, projects or programs. Use the human interest of our people.

**Understanding** is our dominant brand value. It means that we have to demonstrate ways in which we have used our understanding to develop projects, especially by working with customers. Probe into this when developing PR stories with Air Products people. Explore the possibilities of using real stories in case studies in preference to overblown description – let the facts of stories speak for us.

At the same time we need to show understanding of the needs of our immediate audiences in the media – we should think hard about how to meet those needs in the information we provide. Make it short, sharp and engaging, with real examples that can be used. Understand that this information will be used only if we make it interesting enough to use. And understand that our customers and other stakeholders will only read the material if we have related our writing to their interests.

**Integrity** is our second value. We have to be as honest and open as possible in what we say to people with whom we communicate, while maintaining our commercial interests. We should start from an expectation that it will be reasonable to give information rather than to withhold it.

**Passion** is our third value. We should seek ways to show that passion, by featuring people who are enthusiastic about what they do and by making clear that achievements are the result of inspired work by dedicated people.

Our written style has to follow the same principles of the brand. The written word is a vital ingredient of our communications, and we should try to ensure that we express 'understanding, integrity and passion' through the way that we use language.

Because our values include understanding, our written style needs to be flexible to meet the needs of different audiences. The written style of advertizing will be very different from the style of, say, a press release or a product data sheet or an academic research paper.

But in each case we should try to express our brand values within the context created by the particular target readership for the communication.

Bear in mind that the first principle of writing is always to remember that there is a reader looking over your shoulder. This means asking yourself constantly: have I communicated that message well enough? Think of what the reader wants, and modify the written style to meet readers' needs.

**We should avoid using language that creates barriers to understanding by being too technical or jargon-ridden.**

**We should not use language that undermines our integrity by being too pushy and hard sell.**

**We should beware of language that fails to express passion by being boring and flat.**

**The brand values ‘understanding, integrity and passion’ mean that.**

Because our brand is about people there should always be a strongly personal, individual feel to the written style. We should, wherever possible, use real people in the copy we write because the achievements of people represent what we stand for as a

company. It follows that we should use people’s own words as direct quotations, and that the overall tone of our written style should be close to the spoken word.

**Write as if you were speaking.**

**Write as if you were telling a story.**

**But tell the story well.**

Use the following checklist to assess whether you are achieving the right tone of voice. If you answer ‘yes’ to each question, you’ve got it right.

<b>Understanding</b>	Do the words create a sense of recogniton and empathy through the human story?	✓
	Is the language direct and uncomplicated, suitable for the needs of the target reader?	✓
<b>Integrity</b>	Do the words engage people with honest yet thoughtful writing?	✓
	Does the writing allow people’s achievements to speak for the product or project?	✓
<b>Passion</b>	Does the writing talk to the reader, as if in a conversation?	✓
	Does the writing sound as if it comes from an individual not from an anonymous corporation?	✓
Overall does it make me think <b>tell me more?</b>		✓

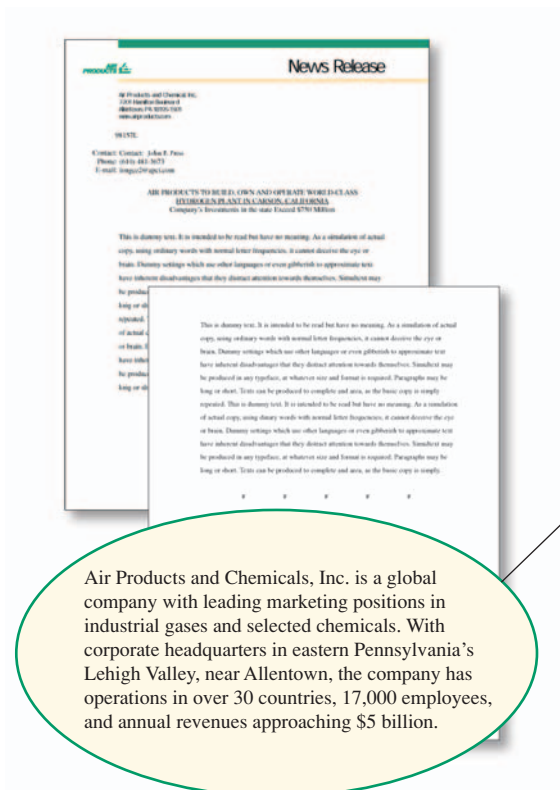
**tell me more**

We should always aim for writing that meets these criteria and still leave people wanting to know more. By being clear that there are tangible benefits to dealing with us, as well as the likelihood of a relationship founded upon understanding of the customer’s needs, we encourage the reader to want to find out more.

Look at the examples on the following pages to see the difference it makes to write ‘on brand’ – i.e. in line with the values of the brand. Use the checklist to assess these examples.

Example 1

Here we look at the basic piece of communication that we attach to most news releases – the statement about our company.



Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. is a global company with leading marketing positions in industrial gases and selected chemicals. With corporate headquarters in eastern Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, near Allentown, the company has operations in over 30 countries, 17,000 employees, and annual revenues approaching \$5 billion.

← *instead of this*

↓ *we suggest this*

**About Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.**

We started small and we started nearly sixty years ago. Our company was the vision of Leonard Pool, who grew the business by really understanding what his customers wanted from industrial gases.

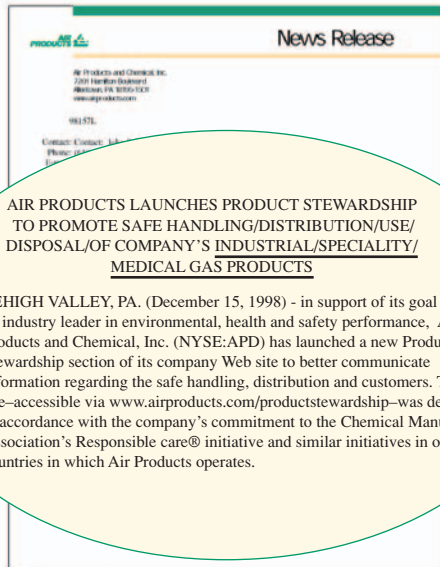
Today we're a \$5 billion company, making chemicals, gases and related equipment, but the same principles apply – we've grown by building lasting relationships with our customers.

Our headquarters are in Pennsylvania, USA, and our 17,000 employees operate worldwide, with locations in more than 30 countries.

*Compared to previous versions of the statement about our company attached to news releases, the version above conveys a style that shows our brand values. It meets the criteria in our checklist and we think it will make people reading it more likely to ring us up and say 'tell me more'.*

**Example 2**

**Here we look at the headline and the opening paragraph of a news release.**



← *instead of this*

↓ *we suggest this*

**New initiative on product stewardship**

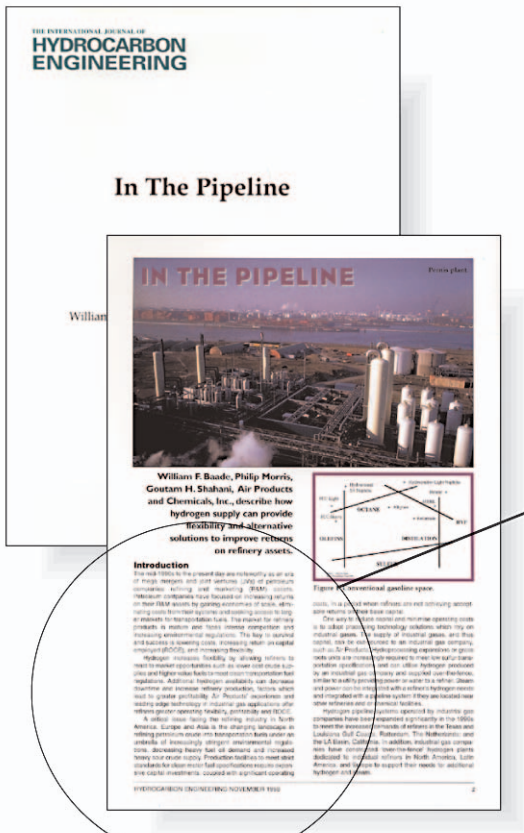
Air Products has launched a new Product Stewardship section of its company web-site. The aim is to communicate information better about the safe handling, distribution, use and disposal of the company's products to suppliers, distributors and customers. As a global manufacturer of gases and chemicals, and as an industrial leader in environmental, health and safety performance, Air Products has developed this new site as part of its commitment to the Chemical Manufacturers Association's Responsible Care initiative.

*We should always try to keep things simple. If we write a headline, let it be a headline not a long sentence. If we have straightforward information to get across, let's understand the reader's needs – write the information clearly.*

*Put the key message into the first sentence, wherever possible. When you have written your draft edit it further to sharpen it. Listen to what you have written, either by reading it aloud or by reading it inside your head.*

Example 3

Here we look at an article written for a trade magazine. The article ‘In the Pipeline’ appeared in the *Hydrocarbon Engineering Journal*.



← *instead of this*

↓ *we suggest this*

**Introduction**

We’ve been living in a time of mega mergers and joint ventures. From the mid-90s onwards, particularly in the petroleum business, companies have focussed on increasing returns on refining and marketing assets. They’ve done this by gaining economies of scale, reducing costs and seeking access to larger markets for transportation fuels. The outlook remains challenging. The market for refinery products is mature, competition is getting fiercer and environmental regulations are increasing.

So what can be done? The key to success is to find ways of lowering costs, increasing return on capital employed and improving flexibility.

*We’ve rewritten the opening paragraph to show how it might have been better if it had been written to fit our brand principles. The new version is written in a more direct style, with a more conversational tone that still retains the authority that comes with showing you understand your subject. Notice that we have used shorter sentences, and we have varied sentence length. We use a question to take the argument forward. We have cut one long paragraph into two to make it less dense. The overall intention is to engage the reader, as if you were speaking face to face.*

The brand essence of Air Products is 'we create lasting relationships built on understanding'. **tell me more** is the verbal manifestation of this essence, expressing our wish (spoken or unspoken) to develop relationships by finding out more.

When we talk to customers we need to build our understanding; we ask them questions, implying the thought '**tell me more**'. When our customers want to understand more of what we can do for them, they say '**tell me more**'. It is the key to creating lasting relationships built on understanding.

**tell me more** is not a strapline. Nor is it a company descriptor. It is like a phrase dropped into conversation, a phrase that is part of a continuing conversation. It can be used informally when speaking, but when written it should follow these few simple rules.

**tell me more** should never be locked to the Air Products signature.

**tell me more** should generally be used with a mechanism that allows you to talk and listen. A designated web-site address or a telephone number, for example.

It can be used in text as part of a sentence that expresses the characteristic of understanding. The **tell me more** student lectures, sponsored by Air Products, for example.

When **tell me more** appears as part of a sentence, it should appear in lower case and be emphasized by using color or by making it bold.

Where **tell me more** appears with a web address or telephone number, then it should all be in lower case with no punctuation.

