



Voice of the brand

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How to show our brand personality through words? This mini-guide is for part-timers, full-timers, volunteers, people who write for a living, and people who don't.

What do we all have in common? We're speaking on behalf of Shift.ms.

Shift.ms is...

bittersweet

A blue speech bubble outline is positioned behind the word "bittersweet". The bubble is roughly oval-shaped with a small tail pointing downwards and to the left. The word "bittersweet" is written in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font, centered within the bubble.

Shift.ms is bittersweet.

MS is not a happy shiny place where everything's sorted. Make space for emotional light and shade. Acknowledge the negative and positive. Be genuine, not saccharine.

Whatever you're saying, you're also saying: 'MS is crap, but we are here', 'MS is the club that nobody wants to be part of', and 'Let's get GOOB: Good Out Of Bad'.

Think anti-charity, alternative, edgy. Don't lapse into grey publicsectorspeak. Don't be boring. People read and act on what interests them. Know your audience. Find compelling content and use accessible language that encourages readers to continue. Keep it short and bittersweet.



Shift.ms is...

**making
sense**



Shift.ms is making sense.

At Shift.ms we try to get some coherence from the confusion and disruption that is MS. Before you write a word, make sure you're clear about your real message. Think hard about what you actually need to say, who you're saying it to, and what response you'd like. Make this clear to your reader.

People like to see what's in it for them. Don't be shy about the benefits—practical, physical, emotional—but don't tell people what they want or like. (They already know. And you might be mistaken).

At Shift.ms, what we say is based on real experience, not false promises, and not what some corporation wants us to say. So... When you're making a point, don't just claim.



Demonstrate. Use facts, real experiences and concrete examples to back your statements and help make sense of things. But don't overwhelm people with statistics, jargon, or million-page research documents. Keep it essential.

For longer writing—say, a report, or a case study—create a clear copy hierarchy: at-a-glance headings, sub-headings, paragraphs and captions. Use font size, font weight (bold, not bold) and layout to make visual sense of the words. All this helps your reader choose what to read, and not.

A paragraph is a unit of thought, ideally no more than five or six sentences. Vary sentence lengths to create contrast and energy. If a list has more than three items, use bullets or numbers. Edit without mercy. And remember: if in doubt, cut it out.



Shift.ms is...

connecting



Shift.ms is connecting.

We believe in peer support as an accessible way of dealing with challenging issues. Stories and shared experiences enable us to make sense of the world. Our collective voice makes us stronger.

Good conversations stem from good environments. Shift.ms is a safe, friendly and vibrant social network where people can express themselves openly and honestly. The community moderates itself, which we believe encourages more people to contribute.

Conversations on Shift.ms involve a range of voices. There's no point in starting a conversation if no one else gets involved. With every interaction, big or small, Shift.ms members are giving back to the community. Shift.ms members know they have a role to play, no matter where they are on their journey. Collectively you build Shift.ms.



Points of view



You

Who is our principal audience? People diagnosed with MS in the last 10 years.

But instead of ‘them’, it’s helpful to think of ‘you’ in the singular. One to one. So, rather than ‘all those people who signed up’, it’s better to write ‘every one of you who signed up’.

Don’t draw attention to bulk messaging. No apologies for group emailing. Think of one person reading or responding. A corporate entity doesn’t read a Shift.ms tweet—a single person does. A charity doesn’t read a Shift.ms flier—an individual does.

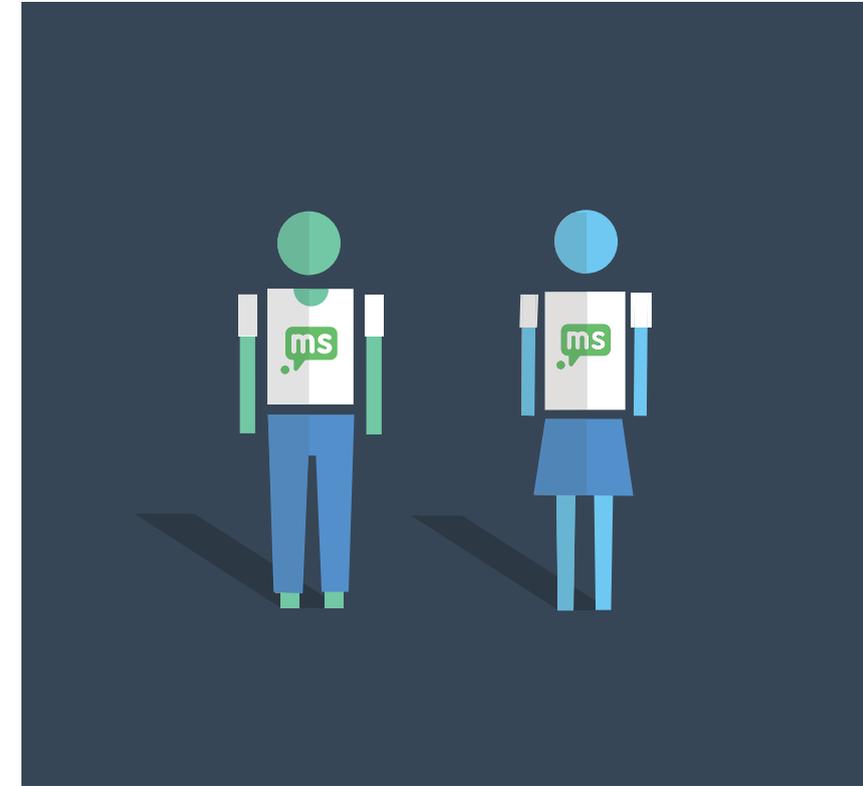


We

**When the brand calls out to others,
it is 'we' who are addressing 'you'.**

Keep the brand point of view consistent.

The brand's words are uttered by 'us' because we are all in this together. The pronoun 'we' has the bonus of being the voice of collective authority in research or documentary writing.



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For anything written in a personal capacity, use 'I' and sign it with a personal name.

'I read your email and...' is friendlier than the unsettling 'We read your email and...?'

If it's a good moment to show Shift.ms collectiveness at work, 'I' might have passed the email on to 'my team' and 'we felt that...?'



Brand name

Shift.ms.

Our name is already a Call To Action. It's supportive and collective: it's what you can do. You can shift your perceptions of life with multiple sclerosis.

It's bittersweet, too: there's no magic cure, but there is an adjustment, a change, a shift. The promise is progress, not perfection. Keep the brand name consistent.

If you're talking about us, it's never just 'Shift'.

We're Shift 'dot' MS (don't forget the dot).

The web address needs to be written fully as www.Shift.ms.

Brand descriptor

Keep the phrasing and
punctuation consistent.

**The social network
for people with
multiple sclerosis.**

Brand strap-line

Use this when there's space or need.

It introduces the MSer concept. It succinctly communicates the supportive/collective message.

Stick with this exact phrasing and punctuation.



By MSers. For MSers.

All-purpose brand paragraph

For the Shift.ms website, 'about' fields on social media, as a sign-off with logo at the end of fliers or emails, on exhibition banners at conferences...

It's structured to be cut from the end if space is tight. The first line contains the most vital info. The second line elaborates on this. The third line has more feeling—and reinforces the message about lack of bias, inhibition or cost. (Copy it, paste it, don't mess with it).

Shift.ms is the social network for people with multiple sclerosis.

Founded by MSers, for MSers, the charity supports many thousands of recently diagnosed people across the world as they make sense of MS.

It's independent and it's free.

Brand calls to action

Choose and use liberally, so that the message sifts through different channels.

Keep phrasing as here.

Make sense of MS.

Talk with others who get it.

Ask an expert for real life answers.

Join a community of thousands.

Get to grips with MS here.

Stories

**Remember the speech bubble in the logo?
Through stories we make sense of the world
and the chaos of experience.**

We connect with others. All this is at the heart of Shift.ms, a brand that exists because it is a social network, a safe place where people can tell and hear stories.

So let's not be shy about our stories. They are real.

Some of the stories we tell: case studies, testimonials, MSers' positive and negative experiences, A Day in the Life of an MSer, MS Nurse stories, partner stories, our founder story...



And finally

It should feel effortless and irresistible to go into the Shift.ms world.

Any barrier or disappointment will detract from the brand's values—the user's experience should not be bitter, but intriguingly bittersweet.

