TRUSTMARQUE

Tone of voice and writing style

This is who we <u>are</u>.
This is how we <u>talk</u>.
This is the way we <u>look</u>.
This is <u>Trustmarque</u>.

Contents

Tone of voice

Imagine the Trustmarque brand is a person.

Our tone of voice is how that person sounds when they speak.

They don't sound the same all the time – in a work meeting, someone might speak formally, but they might speak differently in the bar with a friend. So the way they speak changes according to their context. That is called tone.

But there is an underlying consistency to how they sound. They have a certain vocabulary. They avoid certain words. Where they come from affects how they speak. These rules stay largely the same. It is called voice.

It's important to remember our brand when we build a tone of voice – what is it that makes us different? Our tone of voice is unique, and always resonates with our audience.

Tone of voice.

The Trustmarque voice

We use British English, and this affects our spelling. For example, we write 'realise' instead of 'realize', 'colour' not 'color', 'behaviour' not behavior', 'organisation' not 'organization', and so on.

However, our audience is diverse and our writing needs to avoid sayings or references that are unique to a local or specific culture.

Examples:

✓ "What are the biggest challenges facing the public sector and how can technology help? Our new blog shines some light on this issue."

✓ "We spoke with a number of IT managers about the importance of collaborative technology. Here's what we learned."

✗ "Our new blog shows you how to step up to the plate when it comes to digital technology."

✗ "A gentleman in our product team is particularly savvy with all things digital technology. Come see for yourself."

Tone of voice.

✓ We are matter-of-fact and direct.

✓ We are authoritative and professional.

✓ We are optimistic and upbeat.

✓ We are confident and competent.

✓ We are enthusiastic and inspiring.

Matter of fact and direct

We work in an industry full of acronyms, jargon, and technical language. This can lead to confusion and a lack of trust, which is why we need to communicate in simple language.

Use plain, simple language as much as possible, avoiding jargon. Never assume that your audience understands technical terms and acronyms. Break it down into plain English that the average person can understand, and use the second person 'you' to talk directly to the audience.

Examples:

✅ "Through a better understanding of your organisation's existing data and processes, we can help you achieve real and substantial change."

✅ "We understand the modern workplace isn't just about technology. It's how people experience and adopt the technology to meet your digital transformation objectives and be successful."

❌ "Digitisation has permeated across every facet of society to the point where frictionless digital experiences are the de facto expectation, leading to simple, end-to-end exchanges between friends, colleagues, or businesses and customers, facilitated across manifold platforms, channels, and applications. Delivering against such elevated table-stakes is the crux of the conundrum for those responsible for managing and planning IT infrastructure and SaaS procurement, and it's far from an easy obstacle to overcome when one considers incumbent technology and processes that are often the legacy of a bygone era within the organisation."

Tone of voice.

Authoritative and professional

IT investment decisions are important and the risks and dependencies can be high. Our expertise enables businesses to reduce risk, make better decisions and save time and money.

Demonstrate professionalism by being truthful, specific, and consistent in tone and language. Don't talk in vague or general terms or without conviction. And never pretend to know the answer if you aren't sure.

Examples:

✓ "Did you know that 80% of councils are still relying primarily on on-premise IT, despite an increase of cloud services used in local government? That's the findings of Local Government Cloud Adoption 2021, published by Socitm and Eduserv."

✓ "According to the 2022 Cyber Report by PwC, 69% of organisations predicted a rise in cyber spending in 2022 compared to 55% in 2021."

✗ "Lots of companies rely on on-premise IT, although cloud services are thought to be on the rise in local government."

✗ "People say that a rise in cyber security spending is likely compared to previous years."

Tone of voice.

Optimistic and upbeat

Our language needs to be an extension of our optimistic and forward-thinking nature, inspiring people to be their best, every day. How we talk should recognise that there's a brighter, better future ahead with Trustmarque.

We're passionate problem solvers with a proven track record. We're upbeat and optimistic about what we're capable of, and what that means for customers. Talk about solutions, not problems, and use active verbs and declarative sentences. Avoid selling through fear tactics, and emphasise the impact of technology as much as possible.

Examples:

✓ "There are positives. While attackers are quick to tap into malevolent opportunities, hot on their heels is Trend Micro. The Cyber Security specialists at Trend Micro are constantly releasing new solutions to meet the ever-evolving digital threat as our workloads shift from edge to core to cloud."

✓ "Trustmarque expertly delivers the technology you need to break down barriers and build an environment of innovation. Through trusted advice and technical know-how, we help you buy and use cutting-edge technology to positively impact your local community."

✗ "Cyber security is your worst nightmare. Your organisation could be crippled by malevolent attackers – and for most it's a question of when, not if it will happen."

✗ "Your customers and colleagues can't reasonably expect the best tech all the time. Let them know that the systems they currently have are adequate for their needs."

Tone of voice.

Confident and competent

We are leaders in our field, and our people are the best and brightest at what they do. Customers should have complete confidence in everything we say and do.

Demonstrate trust through use cases and success stories, and prove that we've been there and done it before – we are tried, tested and trusted. Don't express uncertainty or speak passively, and never miss an opportunity to reference previous work.

Examples:

✓ "Trustmarque has evolved and grown from our launch in 1987, and ever since we have helped organisations like yours to work smarter, run your business more effectively, and unlock the value of you IT investments."

✓ "With over 150 technical experts and highly knowledgeable industry aligned sales teams, we have more expertise than ever before."

✓ "Our strong relationships with market leaders like Microsoft, Cisco, Dell Technologies and VMware, ensure our teams are fully informed of new releases to keep you in step with the latest industry developments."

✗ "We will do our best to help customers to run their businesses more effectively."

✗ "With better IT, businesses might be able to grow faster and make more money."

Tone of voice.

Enthusiastic and inspiring

We believe that technology has the ability to change the world for the better. We support customers by enabling them to unlock the transformative power of technology.

Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo and have the courage to introduce new concepts. Paint a picture of what our customers' lives will look like in the future, unrestrained by limitations or having to do it a certain way because it's how it's always been done.

Examples:

✓ "Your ideal state is where your people are working in an optimal environment, with the tools, time and resources to be at their best, every day. That means less manual, repetitive work, and more time to put creative intelligence to good use."

✓ "Once you have created this collaborative and productive workspace, it's far easier to attract and retain the best talent. You work without boundaries. You allow everyone to have a say, and promote a diverse, inclusive workplace."

✗ "Technology can only do so much, so companies shouldn't set expectations too high."

✗ "If it's the way you've always done it, why try and change it? Better the devil you know."

Tone of voice.

Use the active voice

When possible, always use the active voice. A passive voice often sounds too formal and indifferent.

Passive: The proposal was accepted by the management
✓ Active: The management accepted the proposal

Passive: Customers are enabled to harness the power of digital technology
✓ Active: We enable customers to harness the power of digital technology

Show, don't tell

If you can, always illustrate information with tangible examples such as case studies, interviews, and meaningful data to bring it to life and increase its credibility. This ensures we tell the reader something that they didn't already know.

✓ Many organisations are dealing with a sharp rise in software subscriptions or switching and upgrading licensing agreements, while also managing a flux in IT users. We can help you gain a true view of your license needs and usage, and reduce overspend. Take a look at our case study to see how we reduced Microsoft licensing overspend in the NHS with Prism, achieving a total cost saving of £120,000.

✓ Watch our short video to learn how Bedrock Data Warehousing for the NHS makes reporting faster, more accessible, and more reliable.

Talk directly to our audience

Write in the second person where possible to talk directly to the reader. Highlight that the pains, issues, and objectives we are discussing are theirs – they aren't generic or abstract concepts. Likewise we should address the audience directly when writing about how technology helps them. Try and restrict usage of the third person to when you're talking about people outside of the community who can be cited as bad examples.

Examples:

✓ "You often tell us that you need data to provide safer and more effective care – which is why we offer expertise in Business Intelligence (BI) and data analytics tools to help you discover insights from data faster than ever."

✓ "Trustmarque is a part of your extended team. We just get you. We live and breathe the reality of your day-to-day with shared ambitions and shared success. We celebrate your wins as if they are our own."

✓ "When you proactively mitigate the risks of cyber crime you protect your organisation, people, and customers. This is in contrast to organisations that do nothing and hope that they are never the victim of an attack."

✗ "We help businesses with their digital transformation and data analytics needs, giving them access to data insights, faster."

✗ "When organisations choose Trustmarque, they do so to improve their IT."

Writing style

Punctuation

Accents

Use accents in words that normally take them and where names require them.

✅ Résumé

✅ Bogotá

Ampersands

Use an ampersand only when it is part of a proper name.

✅ Trinidad & Tobago

✅ Marks & Spencer

Don't use an ampersand in place of the word 'and' in any other context.

✅ Research and development (not research & development)

Apostrophes

Use apostrophes:

To show possession.

✅ Jane's desk

For things belonging to a period of time.

✅ David has ten years' experience

Don't use apostrophes for:

The possessive 'its'.

✅ The Trustmarque brand is evolving – take a look at its new look and feel

Dates.

✅ Trustmarque dates back to the mid-1980s

❌ Trustmarque dates back to the mid-1980's

Writing style.

Plurals and acronym plurals, including job titles.

✓ KPIs (not KPI's)
✓ CIOs (not CIO's)

Brackets

Parentheses (curved brackets)

Unless brackets contain a full sentence, put the punctuation outside them. As a general rule of thumb, keep use of brackets to a minimum and avoid placing them in the middle of a sentence.

Square brackets can be used to add words to a person's quote to help the reader understand it.

✓ "Jane said she would leave [the annual report] on the CEO's desk by the end of the day."

Colons

For direct quotes, use a comma and double quotation mark.

✓ Jane said, "I will leave the annual report on the CEO's desk by the end of the day."

For lists, use a colon and continue the sentence using lower case.

✓ We have five core values: share ambitions, strive to improve, be diverse and inclusive, embrace change, and demonstrate integrity

In a sentence or heading, only follow a colon with a capital letter if the first word is a proper noun.

Commas

Use commas to separate items in a list, including after the penultimate item. We use the Oxford comma for clarity, concision, and readability. Use a comma after an introductory place of time.

✓ For over 35 years, Trustmarque has been helping public sector and local government organisations to work smarter

Contractions

We want to talk to humans in human ways. We use contractions where suitable - such as can't and don't – to make our marketing communications sound more natural and conversational.

Writing style.

Hyphens and dashes

Use hyphens:

To join words that describe a noun.

✓ Day-to-day management

✓ Long-term plan

✓ Real-time reporting

To join words to create a noun.

✓ The roll-out will begin later this year

✓ We're optimistic and forward-thinking, always looking for ways to help you achieve more

To hyphenate words with prefixes where the same vowel is repeated.

✓ Re-examine

✓ Co-operate

To hyphenate words that might otherwise be difficult to recognise.

✓ Pre-agreed

✓ Pre-tax

For phrases using adverbs like well or ill.

✓ Well-known

✓ Ill-chosen

Don't use hyphens:

When a preposition – such as 'out' or 'off' – is used with a verb rather than as a noun.

✓ The project will roll out across the region

✓ The project roll-out will occur across the region

✓ Drinks will be served after take-off

✓ Soon after we take off, drinks will be served

✓ We'll be reporting in real time as we get the results

✓ We'll have real-time reporting available as results come in

Writing style.

For a word qualified by an adverb ending in 'ly'.

✅ A politically correct statement

To join words with prefixes where there are different vowels.

✅ Proactive
✅ Reinvent

For a simple adjective describing a noun.

✅ A third party
✅ In the long term

En and em dashes

When adding an aside or additional piece of information to your writing, use the en dash – and leave the space between it and the words they surround.

✅ The en dash with spaces – we love it
❌ The en dash without spaces–what are you thinking?
❌ The em dash doesn't look right — I think we should use the smaller en dash instead

Quotation marks

Don't use quotation marks for emphasis or to give a negative connotation.

Use single quotation marks when writing a short phrase as part of a sentence.

✅ The report concluded that Trustmarque was 'a leader in its field'.

Punctuation should sit inside the speech mark for a complete quoted sentence, and outside the speech mark when the sentence is incomplete.

Use the active voice to report direct speech and use double quotation marks only

✅ Use double quotation marks "for direct speech only", says Katherine as she briefs her team on the use of quotation marks in Trustmarque
✅ Briefing her team on the use of quotation marks, Katherine said, "Use double quotation marks for direct speech only."

Writing style.

When referencing a film, book or report etc., put the title in italics and use single quotation marks.

✓ 'The Shawshank Redemption' film is based on a novella by Stephen King, 'Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption'

Semicolons

Avoid using semicolons (;) where possible. Try to rewrite your sentence. Semicolons tend to indicate that your sentence is too long and convoluted. Make your point in straightforward English, using short sentences.

Troublesome words

Revenues or revenue

Use plural 'revenues' when referring to revenues as a whole.

✓ Healthcare Active Solutions revenues reached nearly $7 billion in 2021

Use the singular 'revenue' when referring to a specific revenue stream.

✓ CNN reached more than 17 million subscribers and $1 billion in advertising revenue in 2015

Fewer or less

Use 'fewer' if you are referring to countable people or things in plural.

✓ We can liberate your people's creativity and help them work with fewer repetitive tasks

Writing style.

Use 'less' when you are referring to something that can't be counted or doesn't have a plural (for example, time or music).

✅ People are listening to less music on the radio

Last or past

'Last' is used for finality. 'Past' is used to contrast between the present and the future.

✅ This is our last goodbye

✅ In the past year, Trustmarque has launched an exciting new rebrand

More than or over

Use 'more than' for all amounts, figures, and countable numbers.

✅ Trustmarque has been helping organisations for more than 30 years

Use 'over' for spatial references that are non-specific.

✅ The man is over six-foot tall

None

None means 'not one' so takes a singular verb.

✅ None of the projects is going ahead

Of

'Of' often occurs in phrases where it adds nothing to the meaning, so it's better to omit it.

✅ Your Trustmarque account manager gives you all the information you need to act with confidence

That or which

'That' conveys essential information.

✅ Only taxes that are reasonable should be paid

'Which' conveys non-essential information, usually preceded by a comma.

✅ Taxes, which are reasonable, should be paid

Writing style.

Enquiry or inquiry

Use 'enquiry' as you would query or question. 'Inquiry' refers to an investigation.

E.g. or i.e.

E.g. means 'for example' and is used to introduce a possible example or a number of possible examples.

✅ Holidays can be spoiled by poor weather, e.g. heavy rain and strong winds

I.e. means 'that is' and is used to specify exactly what is implied by the preceding sentence.

✅ The last day of my holiday in Miami was spoiled by the poor weather, i.e. the hurricane that landed overnight

Singular or plural

✅ All the data you access is in a readable format

❌ All the data you access are in a readable format

✅ The Trustmarque marketing team is a single entity comprised of several people

❌ The Trustmarque marketing team are not to be referred to as a plural

We reference organisations in the singular.

✅ Trustmarque is full of experienced, knowledgeable professionals

❌ Trustmarque are full of experienced, knowledgeable professionals

✅ The NHS is looking to accelerate its use of digital technology

❌ The NHS are looking to accelerate their use of digital technology

Writing style.

Million or millions

Use 'million' for specific amounts of money, use 'millions' for approximations.

✓ He won a million pounds in the lottery

✓ He won exactly £1,000,000

✓ Orders received were a record £8.44 million in 2017

✓ He won millions of pounds in the lottery

✓ He won an unspecified amount but it was in the millions

✓ Orders received were in the millions in 2017

Affect or effect

Affect is always a verb, effect is usually a noun.

✓ How will any economic downturn affect the public sector?

✓ The effects of the economic downturn will be felt across public and private sectors

Amount or number

Use 'amount' with uncountable nouns.

✓ The amount of time spent

Use 'number' with countable nouns.

✓ The number of hours spent

One word or two?

✓ 'White paper', not 'whitepaper'

✓ 'Cyber security', not 'cybersecurity'

✓ 'Datacentre', not 'data centre'

✓ 'Datasheet', not 'data sheet'

✓ 'Data warehouse', not 'datawarehouse'

Capitalisation: a bias toward lower case

Businesses, functions, and industries

Capitalise products when referred to as proper nouns.

- ✓ Amazon Web Services
- ✓ Trustmarque's Cyber Security Service

Don't capitalise otherwise.

- ✓ Trustmarque's dedicated team focus on cyber security
- ✓ Trustmarque delivers around 100 IT transformation projects each month
- ✓ We work to secure everything from datacentres to laptops
- ✗ We work to secure everything from Datacentres to Laptops

Compass points

Capitalise only when proper nouns.

- ✓ North America
- ✓ South-East Asia
- ✓ Trustmarque has a strong presence in the north European market

Headings, subtitles, and titles

Capitalise the first word only, unless the title contains a proper noun.

Hemispheres

Use lower case in all instances.

- ✓ The southern hemisphere

Writing style.

Job titles

Capitalise all job titles as proper nouns.

Job titles that are five words or fewer go before the name.

✅ The Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, has been in power since 2017

✅ Trustmarque Head of Marketing, Katherine Murphy, wants to enable customers to harness the power of digital technology

Job titles of six words or more follow the name and are separated by commas.

✅ Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, said that tough decisions have to be made

✅ Katherine Murphy, Head of Brand, Marketing and Communications at Trustmarque, wants to enable customers to harness the power of digital technology

Abbreviate common job titles.

✅ CEO

✅ CFO

✅ COO

Write job titles in full if:

- Appearing on business cards
- Being used in email signatures
- The job title is unusual or has alternate definitions

CPO could either be chief product officer or chief procurement officer

Nouns in general context

Always use lower case.

✅ The annual report

Proper nouns

Capitalise people's names, companies, places, and trade names.

Writing style.

Seasons

Always use lower case.

In corporate reporting write out quarters in full in the first instance, and use the abbreviated 'Q' thereafter.

✅ Trustmarque's financial performance for the first quarter (Q1) of 2022 is now available on our website. The Q1 results show that we have significantly outperformed initial expectations

Currencies

Use the monetary symbol followed by the number, with no spaces in between.

✅ euro, €10

✅ sterling, £10

✅ US dollar, $10

For all other currencies, write them out in full.

✅ Japanese yen

In general writing, we avoid using contractions.

✅ euro, not EUR

✅ US dollar, not USD

In corporate reports and investor material, we use contractions.

Refer to the following 'money' section for additional guidance on writing currencies in your copy.

Writing style.

Presentation

Abbreviations and acronyms

Use acronyms for common industry terms.

✅ Mergers and acquisitions, M&A

✅ Non-disclosure agreement, NDA

• Always capitalise acronyms

• Write the term out in full the first time it appears with the acronym in brackets directly after it. The acronym can be used for every subsequent usage on that page

✅ Our Managed Detection and Response (MDR) service is based on Azure Sentinel

• Only use an abbreviation if the term is repeated more than twice in the same document (if only twice, write it out in full each time)

• Don't continue to repeat abbreviations in a lengthy document; if it is a new section, treat it as though it is a new document

• For reports, consider adding a glossary list of definitions list
If the abbreviation is extremely well known, you can use it in the first instance without abbreviating (NASA, for example)

• Don't abbreviate to shorten words (August, not Aug or AUG)

• Use full stops in Latin writing references e.g., i.e., and etc.

• Don't use full stops in country name abbreviations (US not U.S.A), well known organisations (UN not U.N), or where the abbreviations end with the same letter as the word (Dr not Dr.)

Dates

Trustmarque uses the 'day month year' date format.

✅ Day month year

✅ 4 July 1776

• Always write months or days of the week out in full

• Use cardinal, not ordinal numbers in dates (4 July, not 4th July)

• Centuries should be lowercase, written with numbers, and shouldn't use superscript

• Don't write 'the year 2015'

• Do write 'In 2015, Trustmarque...

• Avoid starting a sentence with a year

• 'The company expanded its capacity in 2015...' not '2015 was a successful year'

Writing style.

Times

For report and news writing, use:

✔ 10:00am and 2:20pm

✔ 10-11:00am

A colon should be used rather than a full stop. Always use figures except when referring to noon and midnight.

When inputting time ranges, only use am or pm once and omit spaces between the number and the suffix.

✔ 9-10:00am

Numbers

For decimals, add a zero if there is no digit before the decimal point.

✔ 0.2

Use a decimal, not a fraction or words, to show half years, unless you are starting a sentence with it.

✔ The acquisition took 1.5 years to complete

✔ One-and-a-half-years later, Trustmarque completed the acquisition

For large numbers, use commas to separate them and add a 'total of' to the start of sentences.

✔ A total of 200,000 NHS workers in Wales rely on Trustmarque for their operational IT needs

For percentages, use the % symbol and don't put a space in between the number and the symbol.

✔ Savings of 15%

✘ Savings of 15 %

At the start of sentences, don't use %, use per cent.

✔ 15 per cent of employees have been with us for over 10 years

✘ 15% of employees have been with us for over 10 years

Use a hyphen to show a percentage range.

✔ 10-15%

Writing style.

Use words for:

- Numbers at the start of a sentence
- Cardinal and ordinal single digit numbers to nine/ninth: one, three, sixth
- Very large numbers made up of a single digit plus: million, billion
- Simple fractions: two fifths, one third

Use figures for:

- Cardinal and ordinal numbers greater than nine/ninth (10, 11, 65th), and omit superscript usage (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th rather than 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th)
- Money (£4, $20, €15)
- Weights and measures (5 metres, 9 million barrels)
- One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14...

Website URLs

In print, write out the URL in lower case italics and omit www. Online, use a hyperlinked URL instead and omit the www.

Formatting

Bullet points

Lists with sentence fragments should:

- Follow a colon
- Use capitals at the start of each sentence
- And avoid using full stops at the end of the bullets

If lists follow a header, then don't precede them with a colon, but use the rules laid out here.

Avoid using roman numerals for bullets or lists.

Footnotes and references

When applicable, footnotes should always be used. The superscript reference in the main text should be placed next to the key word or phrase. If the reference relates to the full sentence, place it outside the full stop. Numbers should be used as the footnote rather than symbols or letters.

Writing style.

Avoid footnotes in headings and titles.

Always include sources in reports and news writing. Put the title of the source in italics and use single quotation marks.

✅ This writing guide has been compiled using the Associated Press' 'AP Stylebook'

Writing for different channels

Online content

Write for scan reading. People will scan online content, so use bulleted lists, captions, and subheadings to aid your reader.

Hyperlinks. Don't use actions and instructions such as 'click here' for hyperlinks. Use the name or description of what you are linking to.

Abbreviations. Don't use them in headings.

Character limits. Headings and introductions are restricted to specific character limits. Keep them short, and expect to edit again.

Punctuation. Don't use a full stop at the end of web page (not webpage or web-page) introductions.

✅ For more information, visit trustmarque.com
❌ For more information, visit trustmarque.com.

Writing style.

Search engine optimisation (SEO). Include common terms in your headline and introduction to optimise your posts.

Ads and banners. Remember that banners need specific copy. Take the banner template, and think about omitting full stops and removing words to make sure your copy is aesthetically pleasing as well as grammatically correct. Never copy, paste, and leave. Always tailor for banners.

Social media

Tone. Use a relaxed and conversational tone.

Call to action (CTA). Engagement is critical to the success of social. Make sure your posts have clear CTAs.

Keep it brief. Space and attention are short, so get to the point quickly.

Use ampersands. But only for social communications.

Hashtags. Use relevant hashtags for your posts to gain wider audience reach.

Emojis. Can be used if appropriate.

Event materials

Tailor. Remember that event materials are rarely the same, so your copy must be tweaked for each piece of individual event material. This will be applicable to both online and offline materials.

Ads and banners. When producing printed ads and banners for events, remember that they will need specific copy. Take the banner template, and think about omitting full stops and removing words to make sure your copy is aesthetically pleasing as well as grammatically correct. Never copy, paste, and leave. Always tailor.

Stand space. Stand space comes at a premium, so think about copy that is differentiated and shouts a new angle. Capture attention quickly. You don't need to explain everything on your stand collateral. You can do the explaining once your headline has grabbed the audience and pulled them in.

Handouts. Treat handouts, leaflets, and flyers as if writing for social. Stay short, sharp, and on point.
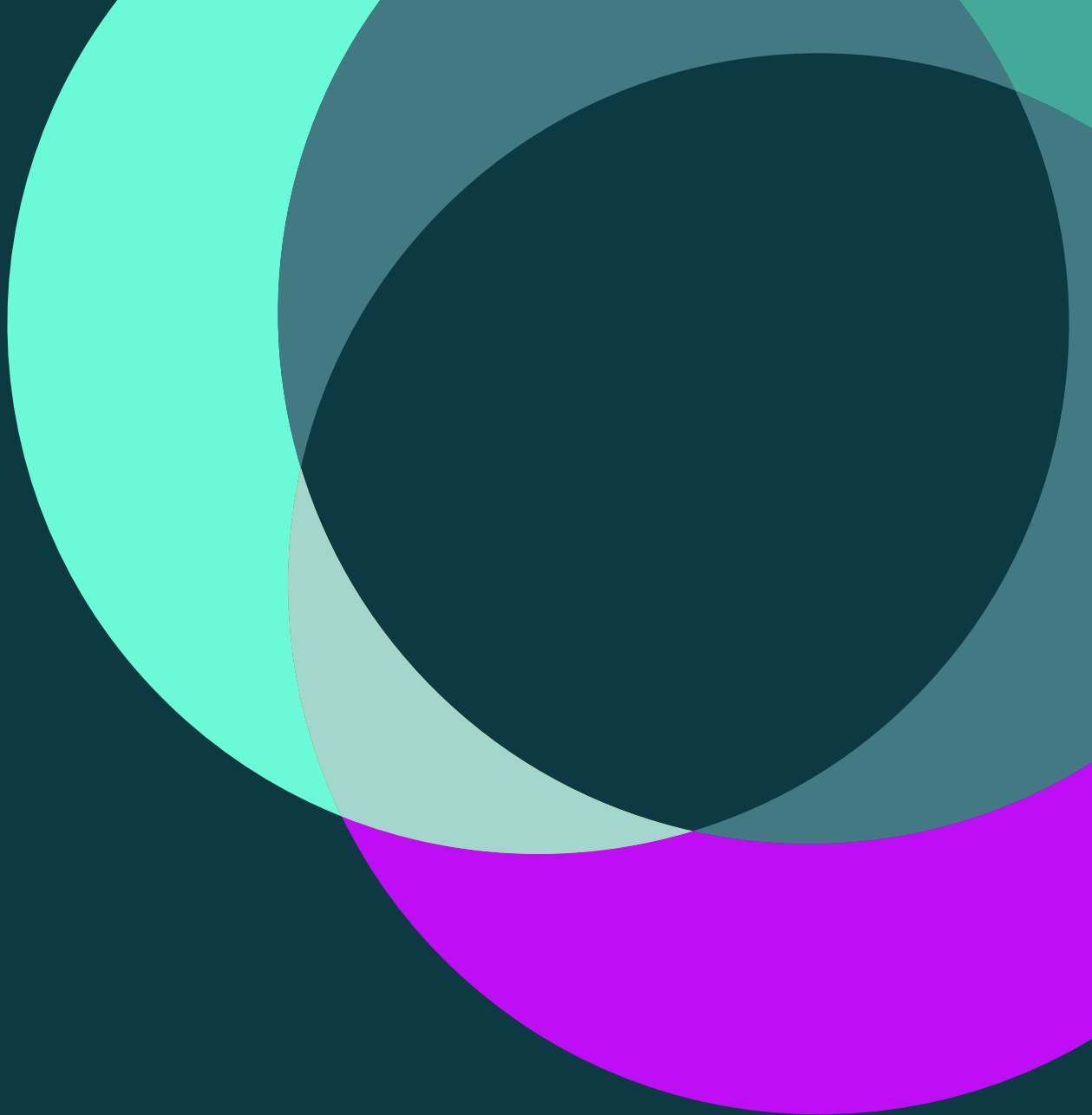
Design. When designing event materials, remember that this style guide is just that. It can be flexible so you achieve what you need aesthetically in the interest of good design. Consider using capitals or omitting punctuation but always double check that your copy still makes good sense.

Need more information or have any suggestions?

This is a living document, and will evolve over time. If you have any questions about how to use our guidelines, or would like to suggest an addition or amendment, please contact brand@trustmarque.com