CLASSIFIED

Food Services of America

FSAfood.com Website

Content Style Guide

CLASSIFIED

YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT...

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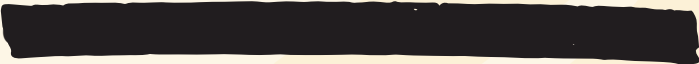
Your Mission

Our corporate website is one of the most central and visible marketing tools we have. It is our front door to potentially three billion consumers with Internet access. It's also the gateway for your local efforts to be broadcast to our customers. Since it's our central marketing piece, we should realize that everything we do here is either building our brand or detracting from our brand.

We are asking for our target audiences to trust us every step of the way in our relationship with them. To do that, we need to establish that they can depend on us, rely on us, and that we will consistently deliver what we promise.

To support this consistency in our brand promise, we need consistency in our voice, tone, and messaging. You, as a valued member of our marketing team, will be contributing to our website, especially about the local efforts and events which are important to our customers. These ▬▬▬▬ shared guidelines will help us be consistent.

Through our intelligent and intentional use of content and imagery, we will be able to successfully tell the FSA story to advance our brand and become more influential in the marketplace. ▬▬▬▬ ▬▬▬▬ ▬▬▬▬ ▬▬▬▬

Our Audiences

As content providers, we need to remember who we are talking to. There are three categories of site visitors we are interested in communicating with:

- Current customers.
- Potential customers.
- Potential Associates.

All three of these groups are valuable to us and should be the focus for the content we are creating. We should strive to provide content that is relevant and provides value to the audience. If we can't say why this information is important to one of the three audiences, chances are it might be a waste of time and space. ▬▬▬▬

When we keep our audience members in mind, we have the potential to provide valuable information which can make our customers successful. And our customers' success is our success.

The value we can provide with our content comes mainly in these four solutions:

- Product solutions.
- Service solutions.
- Tool solutions.
- Information solutions.

The nature of this website allows us to provide personalized content to our audiences depending on their profile. When you consider what's valuable to these audience members, it furthers our chances of connecting with them.

One Team, One Voice

The FSA website promises to offer content that is both deep and wide, meaning there will be articles that probe certain subjects in detail and other articles that will cover a broad array of subjects.

With this content style guide, we can attain consistency in the presentation of information, while supporting our brand and feeding the American Dream for our customers and Associates.

The attitude we want to convey about FSA is that we are:

- Trustworthy.
- Reliable.
- Honest.
- Friendly.
- Helpful.

The voice and tone we want to use should generally follow along these lines:

- **Be personal.** Write like you're talking to a person; like you're having a conversation. Generally, that means we say *you* and *we*. Avoid referring to ourselves (and them) in the third-person. Here's an example:

    - Wrong: "Here at Food Services of America, we provide the customer the highest level of service."
    - Right: "We give you the highest level of service."

    Exception: We will sometimes include *Food Services of America* to make sure our Search Engine Optimization (SEO) efforts recognize *Food Services of America* as a key phrase in the content (see *Search Engine Optimization,* pg. 6). But generally, don't overuse the third-person references.

- **Be concise.** Long blocks of text are hard to read, so be brief. Use short words and avoid long, complex sentences.

- **Write to be easily understood.** Simple explanations are preferred, and commonly-used words are better. Less can be more. For example:

    - Wrong: "Strive to avoid obfuscation with obtuse references and archaic terminology."
    - Right: "Don't confuse people with complex writing."

- **Explain jargon.** This is related to the previous point. We use all sorts of acronyms that we understand, but a site visitor may not. The general rule is to spell out the acronym the first time you use it and follow it with the acronym in parentheses. An example of this would be:

    - "We have been certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) since 2012." After this, you can use "MSC" without explanation.

- **Use the active, not the passive, voice.** The active voice is easier to understand since it places the subject of the sentence first before the action is described. For example:

  - Active: "Our drivers watch a safety video every year."
  - Passive: "A safety video is watched by our drivers every year."

How about that? Things your English teachers always told you to do are actually coming in handy.

- **Think like the customer.** Think about what's important to them, not to us. Does the product, technology, or service save the customer time or money? Does it make their lives easier? Tell them.

Our Main Messaging

When we refer to our main messaging and reinforce the major points, we are adding to the FSA brand. In telling our story, you can use the phrases below:

WHY we exist: *Your success is our success.*
- We believe the customer is the boss.
- We grow when you grow—it's why we exist.
- We provide the highest level of service in the industry.

WHAT we do: *We have the ingredients for your success.*
- We provide you the right products, services, and tools for your operation.
- We are your one-stop shop for everything you need to thrive.

WHERE we serve: *We are your local team.*
- We live and work in the communities we serve so we can best respond to your needs.
- We care about our communities.
- We are a family-owned company, like most of our customers.

WHO we are: *Our people are the FSA Difference.*
- Our dedicated and committed Associates enjoy close and rewarding relationships with customers and teammates.
- We are a great place to work.

General Usage and Peculiar Exceptions

There are some generalities that we follow when we are communicating with external audiences:

- **We do not publish specific numbers.** Often these are proprietary and provide our competitors with information which could weaken our business. Those numbers include things like how many miles we drive, how many customers we serve, or the square footage of our distribution centers.
- **Use title case capitalization for headlines.** There are two general forms of capitalization for book/movie/article titles or headlines: title case and sentence case.

  - Title case: Capitalize the major words while leaving conjunctions (and, but, for), prepositions (at, by, from), and articles (a, an, the) lowercase. For example, look at the title of this document: "FSAfood.com Website Content Style Guide."
  - Sentence case: only capitalize the first word, the way you would any regular sentence: "FSAfood.com website content style guide."

We use title case because it makes headlines more recognizable.

- **Capitalize the word "Associates."** In our writing, we capitalize "Associates" because it's a point of differentiation in how we treat our Associates as our most valuable resource.

- **Use the Oxford comma.** Sometimes called the serial comma, this comma is used as the final comma in a list. This is purely stylistic, but it's something that we should standardize across the website. To clarify, the Oxford comma appears after *reliable* in this example:

  - Wrong: "Diners want to know that their favorite restaurants are clean, safe, reliable and provide a memorable experience."
  - Right: "Diners want to know that their favorite restaurants are clean, safe, reliable, and provide a memorable experience."

- **Capitalize Associates' titles.** When using an Associate's name and we include their title, we always capitalize it. For instance:

  - Wrong: Slade Stewart, executive vice president and COO.
  - Right: Slade Stewart, Executive Vice President and COO.

- **Numbers.** We use the Associated Press style of spelling out all the single digit numbers from one through nine. For 10 and up, we use Arabic or cardinal numerals. For ages and percentages, always use Arabic numerals, including numbers less than 10.

  Spell out numerals that start a sentence, even if that number is more than 10. Like this:

  - Wrong: "13 nationally-recognized companies are our Summit Partners."
  - Right: "Thirteen nationally-recognized companies are our Summit Partners."

- **Abbreviating states.** We abbreviate states' names in the Associated Press style. And we don't use ZIP codes. Take Montana for example:

  - Wrong "MT"
  - Right: "Mont."

- **Operating Units.** Use *Portland* instead of *Woodburn* and use *Seattle* instead of *Kent* or *Everett*—unless using the specific city name is intrinsically necessary to the story. Also, say *Fargo* instead of *Dakota Group*.

- **For SSA locations.** Use *Northern California* instead of *Tracy* and *Southern California* instead of *Fontana*. If you want to abbreviate these distribution centers, please use the following for both Northern and Southern California (these are in order of preference):
  - Northern California
  - N. California
  - ▓▓▓▓▓ N. Calif.

Search Engine Optimization

Just to make things trickier, one of the things you'll need to remember is to write each of your articles in a way that makes it appealing to our customers and easier for search engines such as Google to index it. The actions we take to make our articles rank highly is called Search Engine Optimization (SEO). *See what we did there? We spelled out the words of the acronym first.*

As web content providers, it's our responsibility to fill in the elements needed for search engines to recognize what our page is all about and index it so our audience can find the information they need whether they are searching online or by voice search on devices like Google Assistant, Alexa, or Echo.

Page Content and Keywords

In trying to figure out what your article is about, search engines look at which words are used, how those words are used, and how frequently they are used. Those significant words are called *keywords*. A keyword is the word or phrase that is the focus of the article. When creating your content, it's necessary to think of the words which best describe what the article is about.

We make it easier for the search engines to figure out our keywords by:

- Including them frequently in the article.
- Including them in the page title.
- Including them in the meta description.
- Including them in the alt text for images.

Page Title

This title is what you will see on a search engine results page as the clickable, **bolded text**. It is also displayed on the tab in your browser.

Your page title should follow these guidelines:

- The title should be under 70 characters.
- Include a keyword for which you want your page to be ranked.
- Each page title on our website should be unique.
- Except for our home page and contact us page, our page titles should NOT include *Food Services of America*.

Page Title

Meta Description

Meta Description

The meta description is the short paragraph describing what the page is about. One place this shows up is on a search engine results page under the page title helping people decide if the page contains what they are searching for.

Food Services of America - your foodservice distributor
www.fsafood.com/ ▾
We are one of the nation's largest broadline foodservice distributors, serving customers in states throughout the west, midwest and Alaska. Your success is our ...

The meta description should follow these guidelines:

- Provide the reason for why someone should visit our page instead of others they might see on the first page of their search results.
- Make sure the description is consistent with what the page is actually about.
- The length of the description might be cut off depending on the user's device. Google will display as many as 320 characters. We think it's a good idea to limit your meta description to ~~160~~ *160* characters.

Internal Links

When we hyperlink words and phrases to other pages on our site, it helps improve our overall SEO. It's recommended that you create one or two links to pages with related content that link back to the page you're optimizing.

It's best to hyperlink the word or phrase that best describes what the linked page is about. For example, ~~████████████████████████████████~~ you might want to link to a page about our quality assurance efforts. Insert the link on the words *quality assurance efforts*. This is more effective than to link to phrases like *learn more* or *click here*. Neither of these describe the gist of the page where you want to direct visitors. Search engines reward us for linking to a page about quality assurance with a link highlighted as quality assurance. We get no reward to linking to the page about quality assurance with phrases like *learn more* or *click here*.

Images

Should you use an image for your article? Yes, please. The website is all about offering compelling content to our audiences and studies show that articles with an image are getting 94% more views. Not surprisingly, visuals that offer more information to the story or show people tend to score higher than decorative or stock photos.

There are two easy ways to get images to accompany your articles:

The FSA Marketing Portal Shared Images folder.

Google images that are available without license. Visit the Corporate Communications Resource page to learn how to filter images through Google to see which ones you can use.

Making our images searchable means we have to make a couple of tweaks with them:

- Create a fitting file name for the image that connects it to the article. You should separate each word with a dash (-). The name of the file should ideally have a keyword or key phrase in it. If we have an image of Pamela Lewis from FSA Portland standing with the trash bins (like the one to the right) in an article about the zero waste initiative, an ideal name would be "pam-lewis-fsa portland-zero-waste.jpg." This name gets the essence of the article which includes FSA, Portland, and zero-waste.

- Add *alt text* that describes the image. It's used to make the information about the image available for people who can't see images on web pages – that means users who use screen readers or have low-bandwidth connections. Google also uses the alt text you provide on the image – along with computer vision algorithms and the contents of the page – to better determine what the image is about.

- Fill in the alt text field to describe what the photo shows, but not only what the photo shows. Google wants us to provide the context of the photo to the article, which we can do by making the alt text match the file name, but without dashes.

  - Wrong: "Lady standing with trash can."
  - Right: "Pam Lewis promoting zero-waste at the FSA Portland food show."

We're Counting on You

The FSAfood.com website is a modern site with dynamic content that provides a rich experience for our visitors. The key to its success is the valuable content you provide.

Your consistent and careful efforts to provide the information that our audiences value will continue to differentiate us from our competition.

We work as a team. When we combine our know-how and ideas, we are stronger than we could ever be individually.

This message will now self destruct in 3..2..1

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