Hello. Hi.

Tone of voice

Our tone of voice is how we say what we say and a reflection of our personality.

Tone of voice

Principles

Sage is more than a company; it's people with a passion for helping small and medium businesses make their dreams a reality.

Our tone of voice builds trust by showing that Sage is as human as our customers. While tone can be adjusted to fit the circumstances or medium, customers should hear a consistent voice across product lines and border lines, whether in tweets, emails, or website landing pages.

To write in the Sage tone of voice, apply the three simple principles shown here.

Always make sure your message aligns with the Sage values:

Customers first

Velocity

Do the right thing

Innovate

Make a difference

Confident

Our customers have dreams; we're the experts they rely on to help bring them to life. So we should always sound smart, positive, and action-oriented.

Focused

In a digital world, we have mere seconds to engage, so keep your message short and snappy. Be mindful of today's shorter attention spans: if you can make your point in 140 characters, readers will appreciate it even if it's not a tweet!

Human

Our tone is human and conversational, without using jargon or fancy words when simple phrases will do. Imagine you are speaking to a colleague rather than a stranger, and focus on solving for the customer's needs.

Tone of voice examples

Confident

Just right

When we've worked out what the problem was, we'll make sure it doesn't happen again.

Why? Active voice, takes responsibility, uses simple and straightforward language.

Too cold
Only when investigators are able to determine why an event or failure occurred will they be able to specify workable corrective measures that prevent future events of the type observed.

Why? Uses the passive voice, hides behind jargon, and doesn't sound like something you'd naturally say. Doesn't give the reader confidence that someone's taking responsibility.

Too hot
Our expert investigators are currently carrying out a detailed investigation of the issue. Once they have reported back, we will, of course, implement actions to make sure that there can be no possibility of repeating the event at any time in the future.

Why? Too much irrelevant information, overpromises.

Key to examples

Too cold
Passive or timid communications or those lacking data aren't compelling enough to generate a response.

Too hot
An aggressive approach can be off-putting.

Just right
Try to capture the right balance of humanity, confidence, and brevity to inspire a positive reaction.

Tone of voice examples

Confident

Just right

Our experts are here to help you. Call us on 414-555-0189 or email us at support@sage.com

Why? Clear and reassuring call to action

Too cold
HAVING PROBLEMS? CALL US NOW ON 414-555-0189 OR EMAIL HELPME@SAGE.COM!

Why? Using all capitals looks like we're shouting, and along with the tone, adds to a sense of panic.

Too hot
We're so confident our software is so easy to use that you'll never have any issues.

Why? We shouldn't be so arrogant to presume we always get things right. Giving customers reassurance that we can deal with things if they go wrong gives them confidence in us.

Key to examples

Too cold
Passive or timid communications or those lacking data aren't compelling enough to generate a response.

Too hot
An aggressive approach can be off-putting.

Just right
Try to capture the right balance of humanity, confidence, and brevity to inspire a positive reaction.

Tone of voice examples

Focused

Just right

Here's the document we went through in the workshop. Could you please take a look at it again and let me know how I can make sure the message is clear and easy to understand? Thank you.

Why? Clear structure and direction about what action to take. Saying please and thank you always helps too.

Too cold
Following on from the workshop where we went through the doc I'd written, I just wanted to get your thoughts if possible? I've attached them both for comparison (the doc numbered 4 is the rewrite).

Why? Confusing to read, no clear call to action.

Too hot
I need you to look at this document for me.

Why? Although this communication is short and to the point, the tone is rather demanding. Better to give some context and specify what you want the reader to do and ask politely.

Key to examples

Too cold
Passive or timid communications or those lacking data aren't compelling enough to generate a response.

Too hot
An aggressive approach can be off-putting.

Just right
Try to capture the right balance of humanity, confidence, and brevity to inspire a positive reaction.

Tone of voice examples

Focused

Just right

We're here 24/7.

Call us: 012-345-678

Email: support@sage.com

Live chat

Why? A little context adds reassurance and provides focus for relevant information.

Too cold
There are many different ways to contact us. Select the one that's most appropriate for you, phone, email or live chat.

Why? While the language in this example is friendly, it's impersonal, and it's always better to get to the point and cut out unnecessary words.

Too hot
012-345-678
support@sage.com
@sagecom
facebook.com/Sage/

Why? A little context would help guide customers in this example. Use the most appropriate and relevant information. Twitter and Facebook links may not be the best choice here.

Key to examples

Too cold
Passive or timid communications or those lacking data aren't compelling enough to generate a response.

Too hot
An aggressive approach can be off-putting.

Just right
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Tone of voice examples

Human

Just right

We're here to help answer any questions you may have about your products and services. Our experts will visit you to really understand your business, show what the products can do, and demonstrate how they can help you work more efficiently.

Why? Simple and straightforward language that highlights the benefit to the reader and focuses more on "you" than "us."

Too cold
The team is here to provide ongoing relationship management and can assist with everything from queries regarding new modules and services through to assistance with customization. The field-based team facilitates face-to-face reviews and demonstrations of the product suite, as well as strategically exploring improvements to your business solutions.

Why? Formal and unnatural sounding language, speaks more about "us" than "you."

Too hot
We're like your best friends forever. We're here to help you with absolutely anything you need. We'll come round to your place and demonstrate how to get that business of yours into shape, with these fabulous products you simply have to have.

Why? Too informal and not professional enough, patronizing, danger of under delivering on promises.

Key to examples

Too cold
Passive or timid communications or those lacking data aren't compelling enough to generate a response.

Too hot
An aggressive approach can be off-putting.

Just right
Try to capture the right balance of humanity, confidence, and brevity to inspire a positive reaction.

Tone of voice examples

Human

Just right

It's web based, so it's easy to customize to your business.

• Simple to use
Get your employees up and running in minutes.

Why? It's simple and straightforward language that focuses on the benefit to the customer.

Too cold

It's a powerful, web-native, and highly scalable business management solution unrivalled in its ease of customization and rapid user adoption.

Why? Full of jargon, tries to pack too much into one sentence, and leaves the reader wondering what it is.

Too hot

This awesome new web solution is the answer to all your business needs, big or small. It can do literally anything you need for your business, and your employees will love it.

Why? It's great to be enthusiastic about our products and services, but we need to offer some evidence of real business benefits and be careful that we don't promise things we can't deliver.

Key to examples

Too cold
Passive or timid communications or those lacking data aren't compelling enough to generate a response.

Too hot
An aggressive approach can be off-putting.

Just right
Try to capture the right balance of humanity, confidence, and brevity to inspire a positive reaction.

Tone of voice

Our brand personality

We are

smart, flexible, dependable, capable, honest, confident, down to earth, open minded, willing to listen

We are not

arrogant, self-absorbed, disconnected from reality, judgmental, passive

We

tell the truth, help solve problems, show empathy, promote freedom, encourage curiosity, help others navigate the world around them, create awesome products and experiences, expect nothing less than amazing

We will always

champion the voice of the entrepreneur

Tone of voice

Our brand personality

While all communications should sound as if they are coming from one voice, that voice can adapt to suit the circumstances. Adjust your tone from formal to informal depending on the communication and the audience.

Product discontinuation notice

To partners

As of the latest release, no new versions of Sage 60 will be made, but we will continue to support Sage 60. Your customers will have the opportunity to upgrade to Sage 70 at a discounted price, and we wanted you to be aware of all its enhanced features so you're prepared to answer any questions.

!BG8G;89B6HFBA@CBEG4AGA9BE@4GBAE4G;8E G;4A@4E>8GA:FC84>#4EGA8EFA887G;8946GF4A7 G;87E86GBA@BIA:9BEJ4E7

To customers

Connect with your customers the way they prefer! Get to know Sage 70, which has all the features of Sage 60 plus the ability to connect anytime, anywhere. And as a Sage 60 customer, you can upgrade to Sage 70 for 50% off the listed cost. **Don't wait!** No new versions of Sage 60 will be released, and Sage will discontinue support for your product in December.

*;8AE8?4LA:G;8F4@8A9BE@4GBAGB6HFGB@8EF J89B6HFBAG;858A8GFGBG;8@47787984GHE8F :E84GB8EE4G;8EG;8EA:4AG;8A8:4GI8A8JF

Our brand personality

Offer extension due to Sage error

To partners

Your customers may have reached out to you regarding an erroneous link provided with our most recent offer. As you know, we do our best to make sure these mistakes don't slip through the cracks, but occasionally something like this happens. We've contacted your customers with a corrected link and an offer extension to make up for our mistake.

*8>ABJ6HFGB@8EFE846;BHGGBC4EGA8EF4F
B8A4FG8L6BAG46GHFHE48EGBBCFBHE
C4EGA8EFAGB48G844E8B9G8FFH8
4A7E8FBHGBAFBG8Ln58AB87:84588A
6HFGB8EF6BAG46GG8

To customers

Oops! Were you surprised that the offer link didn't work? So were we! So we're extending the expiration date to make sure you still can take advantage of this great opportunity.

L>88CA:G;8GBA89HA4A7C?4L9H?J8
46>ABJ?87:8BHE8EEBE4A79B6HFBA;BJJ8nE8
@4>A:G:BB7

Tone of voice

Writing style

In order to maintain consistency across all Sage properties and communications, we've established specific writing guidelines. The information applies to all Sage-branded internal and external pieces, including digital and in-product text.

Sage writing guidelines

The goal of these writing style guidelines is to provide Sage colleagues, copywriters, and agencies with general writing guidelines, as well as specific guidelines for format, style, and usage.

Localization for spelling

Minor differences exist between American English and U.K. English. For example, in America, the word "center" is preferred whereas in the U.K. "centre" is more common. Be mindful of your audience and use language and spelling they will be most familiar with. For mixed audiences and global products, use American English.

Reference authorities

The information found here supplements and clarifies the rules presented in our reference authorities. The guidelines that follow take precedence over these authorities:

- *The Gregg Reference Manual*, Eleventh (Tribute), Tenth, or Ninth Edition

- *88E64A8EG4:86GBA4ELB9G8 English Language*, Fifth or Fourth Edition

- *6EBFB4AH4B9GL89BE86A64 H564GBAF*, Fourth or Third Edition (use for questions not addressed in The Gregg Reference Manual)

- *8FFB64G87E8FFGL85BB* (use only for press releases)

- *9BE74A474A6GBA4EL* Second Edition (for Canada)

- *9BE7A:F6GBA4EL* (for U.K.)

What about the red squiggle?

You're better off following the following Sage "format and style" than relying on Microsoft Word or Outlook for spell check. There are some words Microsoft indicates as errors that are correct according to Sage style. For example, words with hyphenated prefixes like nonabbreviated and sixfold are correct per *The Gregg Reference Manual* but errors according to Microsoft Word. In cases like these, simply click "ignore" or add them to your program's dictionary.

Tone of voice

Format and style

While Sage follows *The Gregg Reference Manual* for most style rules, certain items have been standardized specifically for Sage communications.

Ampersand (&)

Use "and" instead of the ampersand symbol (&) unless there is essentially no space to do so (or in the case of third-party branding).

Bold, italics, and underlining

When calling out text to be stressed, don't use more than one of these options at a time. Bold is the easiest to read and is the preferred option. Don't use underlined text on any digital copy unless the words are linked.

Bulleted lists and periods

When using bullet points you should:

- Use a colon at the end of the sentence preceding the list of bullet points.

- Capitalize the first word of each bullet point.

- Add a period (full stop) to the end of each list item if the bulleted information is a complete sentence or completes a sentence including the bullet intro.

- Be consistent (parallel) in bullet construction.

Capitalization

In general, use sentence case for all copy, including headlines, subheads, and buttons. You may use all uppercase lettering in short headlines for maximum impact, but avoid typing in all uppercase letters in body copy.

Dates

When writing for global products, avoid unnecessary characters when writing dates. For example, write —4AH4EL instead of —4AH4ELG;. When the date consists solely of the month and year, do not include a comma (January 2010). Localize date style if necessary to avoid confusion by your audience.

Ellipsis (. . .)

Ellipsis marks are three spaced periods, with one space before and after each period. For example, I don't know the meaning of life . . . but who does?

Em dash (—)

Use with no spaces on either side of the dash and avoid using the shorter en dash (–) in its place. For example, Football—it's what he lived for.

Note: Some email applications have coding limitations that do not allow for a proper em dash. In this case, two side-by-side short dashes, with no spaces before and after them, may be used. For example, Football–it's what he lived for.

En dash (–)

Use primarily to mark the space between dates or time in a chronological range. For example, *His tenure at Sage (1992–2014) was CE8FFl8*. Also, *The meeting is F687H879Bl4——*⊙@. Do not use in place of the longer em dash.

Footnotes

Place superscripted footnotes after punctuation in text. For example, &G4A74E7E4G8F4CC?L

Format and style (cont.)

Job titles

Do not capitalize a job title unless it directly precedes the name. For example, B5&@G¡l68CE8F78AGB9 B@C4ALJ4FCE8F8AG. However,)68#E8F78AGB5&@G;B9 B@C4ALJ4FCE8F8AG

Numbers

In general, spell out numbers one through ten. Use figures for 11 and above. You may use figures for numbers under 11 in email subject lines and headers but not in body copy. Exceptions include percentages and monetary amounts, which always use numbers. See *The Gregg Reference Manual*, Section 4.

Percent and percentage

Use of the percent sign (%) and spelling out "percent" are both acceptable. Maintain consistency throughout pieces.

Possessives

Do not use Sage or Sage product or service names in the possessive form (Sage's). These are trademarked names, and trademark rights can be jeopardized if the marks are not used properly.

Prefixes and suffixes

In general, do not use a hyphen to set off a prefix at the beginning of a word or a suffix at the end of a word. For example, write *coworker* instead of *co-worker* and 6B@C4ALJ78 instead of 6B@C4ALJ78. Of course, there are exceptions, as cited in *The Gregg 898E8A68 4AH4*

Pronouns

Refer to readers with second-person pronouns. This helps to focus on the needs of the reader rather than the needs of the writer (for example, write LBH64A, not *we allow*). Second-person pronouns also moderate the formality of the tone and help you to avoid gender-specific pronouns.

Quotation marks and punctuation

Periods and commas always go inside the closing quotations mark. For example, 4E>J4AF47p*;8A LBH64G6¡4A4786GI8>??Gq Never use single quotation marks except to denote a quote within a quote.

Spacing

Only use one space after any punctuation, not two.

Telephone numbers

Separate with hyphens, as in *000-000-0000*. Do not use parentheses for the area code, and do not separate with periods.

Time

Use 4@ or C@ and avoid :00. For example, 4@. An exception may be made in tables: In a column that only shows the time, when some table entries are given in hours and minutes, add a colon and two zeros to exact hours to maintain a uniform appearance.

Time zones

Use the generic *ET* or # For example, ☾@©

Website references

Whenever possible, structure your messages to have the URL link listed at the end of a paragraph, following a colon. For example, please visit: &4:86B@

Tone of voice

Word usage

In order to standardize word choices across Sage, we've developed the following list to provide consistency across communications and product lines.

business partner

Use instead of *dealer* or *solution CEBI78E* For example, tt9LBHA887;8?CJG;6HFGB@E8CBEGFC?84F86BAG46GLBHE&4:85HFA8FFC4EGA8EBE6BAFH?G4AG68EG879BEAF8EGCEB7H6GA4@8 In subsequent references, it is acceptable to simply say 5HFA8FFC4EGA8EBEE8F8??8E

customer

Use instead of *user* or *end user* whenever possible. *User* is acceptable when writing about security rights, licenses, or other technical issues.

email

Do not hyphenate. Only capitalize "e" when it starts a sentence. Similar words like e-commerce retain the hyphen.

free

Use only if your offer is for something that normally requires a purchase and is available for a limited time. For example, 9E88GE4?B9&4:8 If your offer is for something that never requires a purchase, choose a different description. For example, *There is AB6BFGGBBAGF8564FGHF:8G 45BAHFG8C4C8E6BC8AGF B94:8*

log on/logon

Use *log on* (two words) as a verb. Do not use *log in* unless you are writing about a term in the user interface that is misspelled. Use *logon* (one word) as an adjective and as a noun, as in *customer logon*. Do not use *login* unless you are writing about a term in the interface that is misspelled.

on-premises

Use to describe one of two deployment options for Sage solutions: BACE8@F8FFBJ4E8 or FBJ4E84F4F8EI68&44&. Do not use BACE8@F8, as this phrase is incorrect.

web and website

Use lowercase terms, such as J85 54F87GE4AA: or IFGG;86BECBE4G8 J85FG8.

webcast vs. webinar

The standard is J8564FG which is the choice highly preferred for all promotional materials. Don't use J85A4E or *85©Kunless referencing third-party branding. Localize if a different word is more easily recognized in your region.

white paper

Write as two words (lowercase) instead of one.

Questions about writing style, word usage, or business terms?
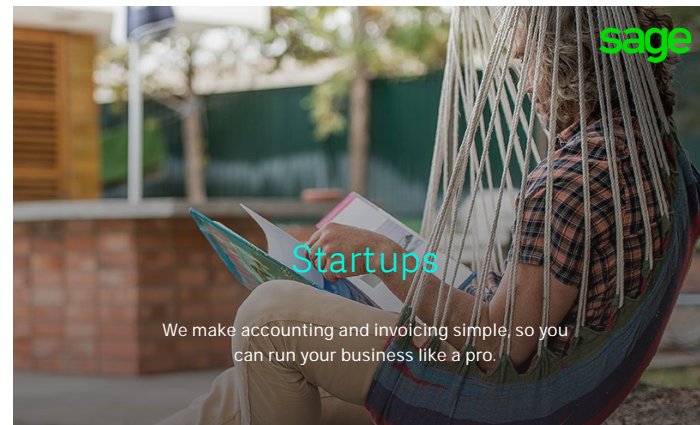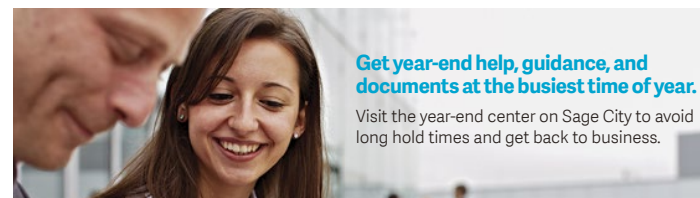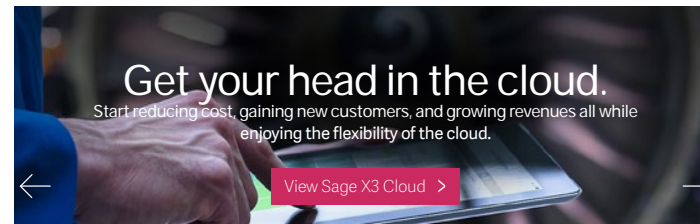
Send questions to brand.clinic@sage.com

Tone of voice

Digital and social

As Sage is a digital-first brand, it's imperative that our digital communications follow our tone of voice. When writing for a digital or social environment, copy should always be short and specific, be optimized for search, and have clear calls to action, as seen in the examples on the following pages.


Get your head in the cloud.
Start reducing cost, gaining new customers, and growing revenues all while enjoying the flexibility of the cloud.

View Sage X3 Cloud ›

Get year-end help, guidance, and documents at the busiest time of year.

Visit the year-end center on Sage City to avoid long hold times and get back to business.

sage

Startups

We make accounting and invoicing simple, so you can run your business like a pro.

Tone of voice

Digital and social

Sage Live: Business in the moment

Header graphics should always be concise while promoting confidence.

Sage X3: Now available in the cloud

Read how this Sage X3 example uses active language to build confidence without getting overly technical. Instead it focuses on solving real-world challenges, like moving to cloud, simplifying processes, and keeping pace with business growth.
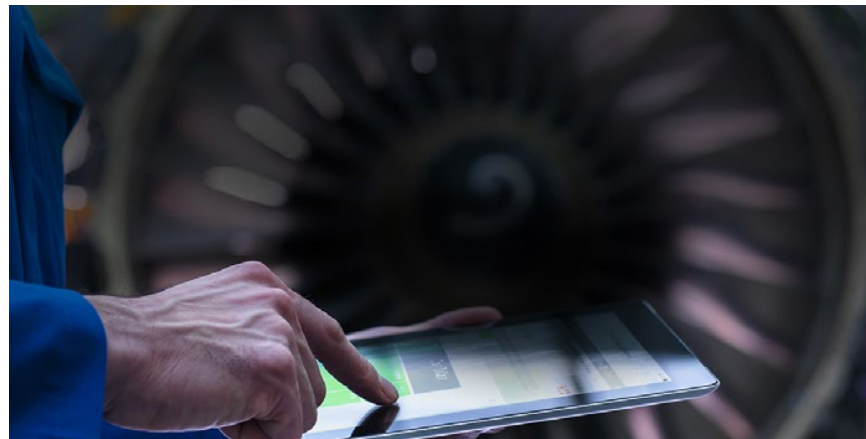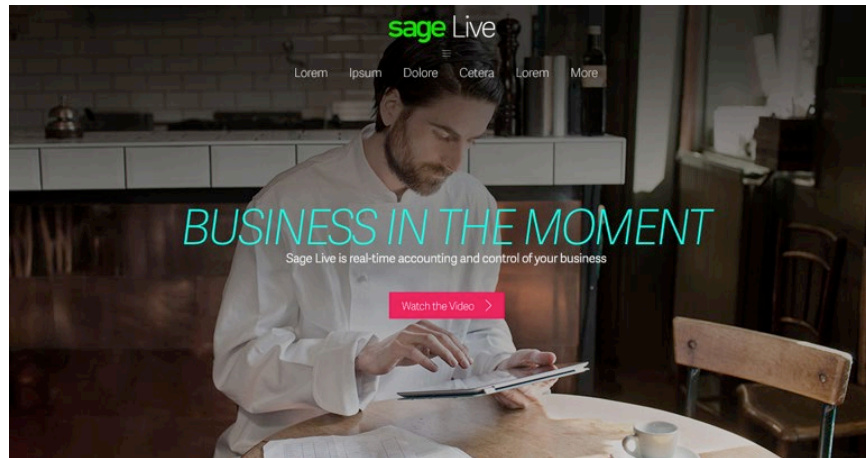
&4:8+G4>8FG;86B@C?8KGLBHGB9EHAAA:LBHE5HFA8FFttGF@C?8F8l8ELC4EGB9LBHE
BC8E4GBA?84IA:LBH?84A4A7E847L9BEJ;4G8l8E6B@8FA8KGJ;8E8l8ELBH4E8AG;8JBE?7

*G;&4:8+LBH4E86;BBFA:G;8A8L:8A8G8GBGEFSMS:BUADE;EFRLBH&4:8G4AD;8VEUD9T
LBHE8AG8ECEF8GB:EB94FG8E8G8HEA4A4:8E6BUFA:ABGHEKLBH4E8
4:86BBE64

Tone of voice
Digital and social

Social media

With their built-in character limit, tweets must be short and specific. But that doesn't mean your humanity can't shine through! These examples show how short lines can easily portray all three of our tone of voice elements.
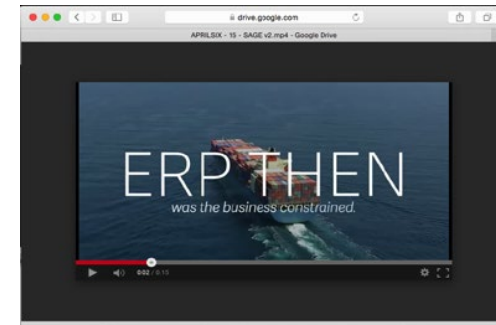
Other media

See how our tone of voice translates easily to video in the Sage X3 promo clips on this page.
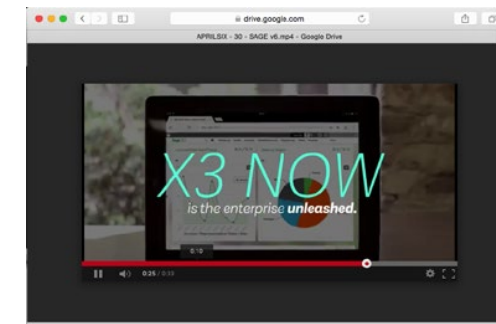
Social media

Other media

15-second cut
https://drive.google.com/open?id   0B3x   HtXUJf-0czFtRVZKeVhOQ0U

30-second cut
https://drive.google.com/open?id   0B3x   HtXUJf-0bkIFZHRmYlZqcEE

Tone of voice

Boilerplate

If you need to include general corporate information in a communication, please use the Sage boilerplate. Please check this page prior to publishing to verify that your version is current.

About Sage

Sage is the market leader for integrated accounting, payroll, and payment systems, supporting the ambition of the world's entrepreneurs. Sage began as a small business in the U.K. 30 years ago, and over 13,000 colleagues now support millions of entrepreneurs across 23 countries as they power the global economy. We reinvent and simplify business accounting through brilliant technology, working with a thriving community of entrepreneurs, business owners, tradespeople, accountants, partners, and developers. And as a FTSE 100 business, we are active in supporting our local communities and invest in making a real difference through the philanthropy of the Sage Foundation.

&4:8G;8@4E>8G?8478E9BEAG8:E4G87466BHAGA:C4LEB??4A7C4L@8AG FLFG8@FFHCCBEGA:G;84@5GBAB9G;8JBE?7nF8AGE8CE8A8HEF

For more information, visit www.sage.com

Tone of voice

Copyright

Use the following copyright lines, based on your release dates. The copyright should be translated into the language of the communication. The year used should be when the product or piece was created, which may be different from when it is released or published. For example, a marketing piece may be created and finalized in 2016 but is not used or published until 2017. In this case the copyright date would be 2016.

The longer copyright line should be used on any communications which feature third-party content.

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