TomTom

Writing

Con-tents

Say hello

Think of our brand as a person. Like you, we have a personality. How we talk is a big part of it. Our voice, tone and way of speaking defines us.

This guide is designed to help anybody write in TomTom's voice. You'll learn who we are and how we think, and the details of our writing style.

Step into our shoes

Writing in our voice begins with seeing the world like we do. So, what do we see? That the world is stuck. Too much traffic, too many road accidents, too many emissions. This troubles us, but also drives our motivation. We're committed to solving these problems, always looking for ways to improve, innovate and keep the world moving toward our vision.

Our vision A safe, connected, autonomous world that is free of congestion and emissions.

Our mission To create the most innovative technologies to help shape tomorrow's mobility.

Our values

We care We put our heart into everything we do. We care about our people, partners, customers. And go the extra mile to make their lives better. We always do good, and do it well.

We build trust Trust is everything. And is earned through our actions. When we say something, we do it. We set the example.

We create We have that fire inside. Burning to create, to test, to improve. To do what's never been done before. Because this is how we make a difference. This is how we're changing the world. And we're just getting started.

We are confident We are pioneers. We are specialists. We know what we're talking about. And our technology is tried, tested, trusted. But we don't boast. (It never helps.)

We keep it simple Life is complex. But not with us. We cut through the noise. We get to the point.

We have fun We're serious about what we do. But we don't take ourselves too seriously. We see the lighter side. And we keep it friendly. Because life's too short to be boring.

Get into our head
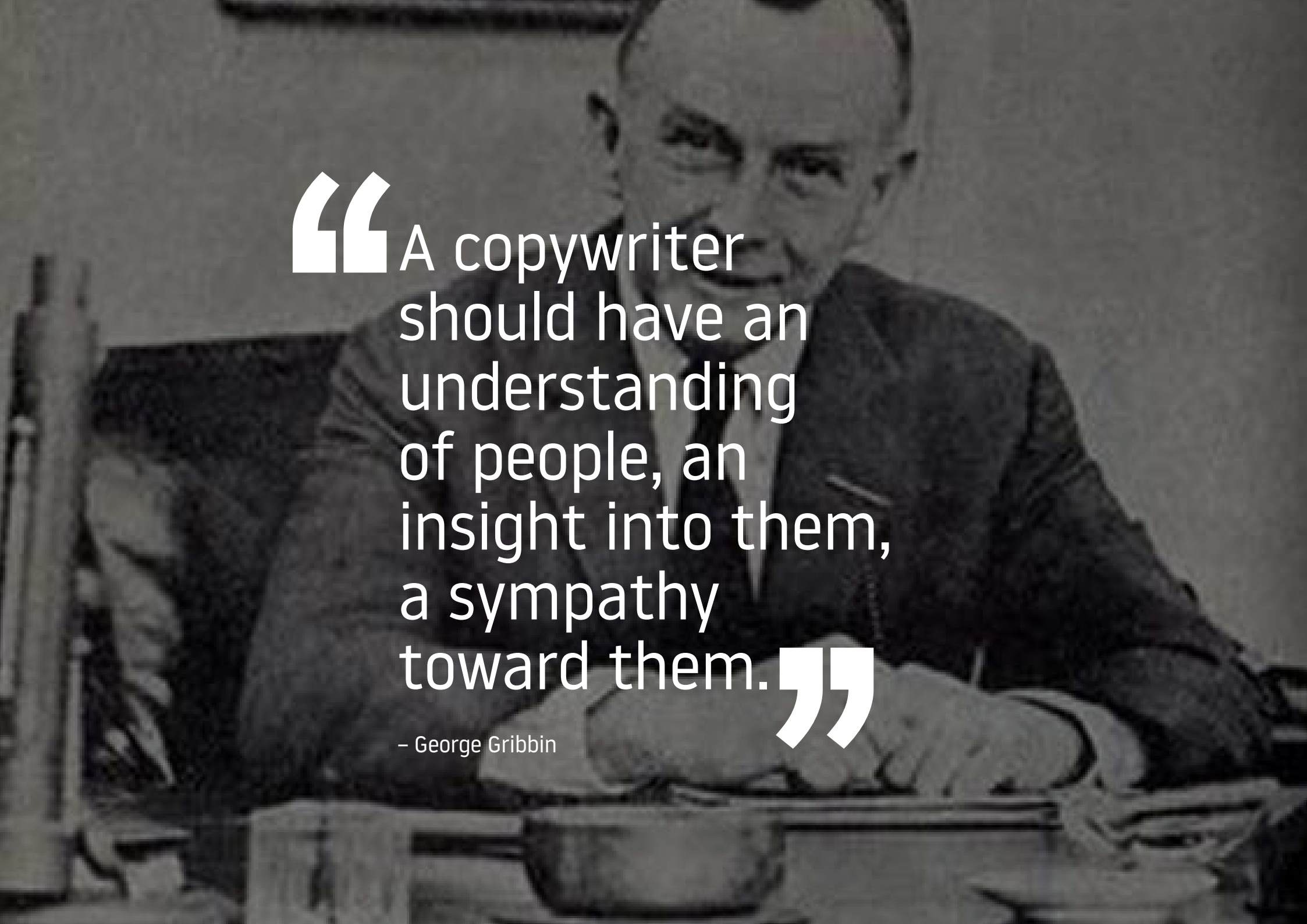
We all have our quirks and defining personality traits. It's part of what makes us unique. The same is true for TomTom. Try to bring out the below traits in your brand writing.

Sincerity Down-to-earth, honest, cheerful
Excitement Daring, spirited, imaginative
Competency Reliable, intelligent, successful
Openness Collaborative, tolerant, optimistic

"A copywriter should have an understanding of people, an insight into them, a sympathy toward them."

– George Gribbin

Approach writing like a conversation. Focus on who you're talking to. What interests them? Choose words that answer this question and leave unnecessary information out. Remember that it's not about you and that while clever is good, confusing is bad. Clarity is key.

Start writing

Follow these tips to get your writing right

Be relevant
If your audience doesn't care, don't write it. Make it meaningful.

Be clear
Use simple words and short sentences, putting the main point up front.

Be concise
Everyone's time is tight and valuable. Respect that.

Be helpful
Your writing serves a purpose. Make it easy for people to benefit from it.

Be human
We're all human. Relax and write like one, as if you're talking to someone.

Be real
Tell it how it is. There's no need to overpromise or dress things up.
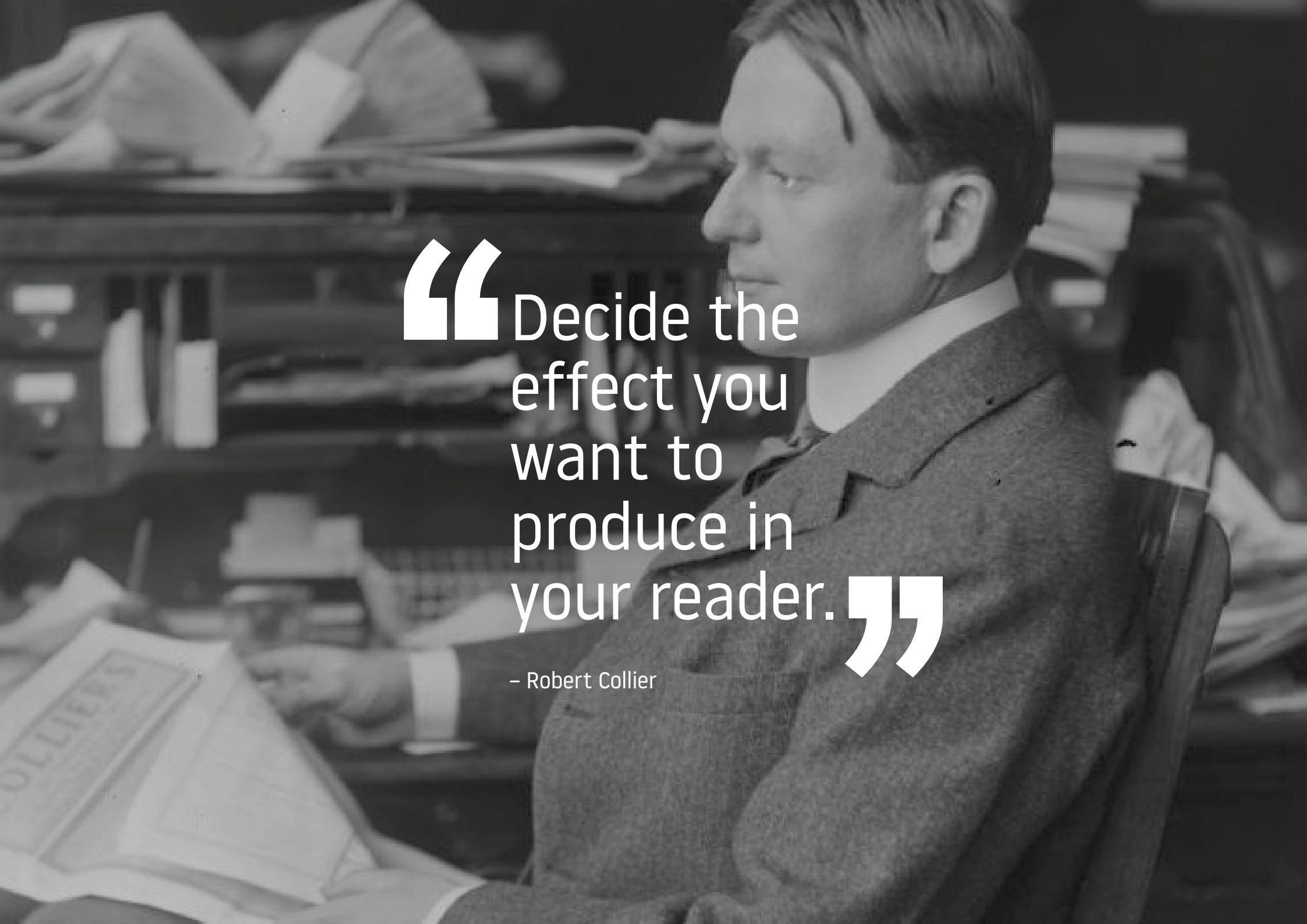
Be kind
We all have feelings. Don't say anything that might offend someone.

Be friendly
Have a little fun, be honest and don't make promises you can't keep.

Be appropriate
Match your tone to the situation. Again, think of your audience (and see Tone).

> "Decide the effect you want to produce in your reader."
>
> – Robert Collier

No matter who you talk to, your voice is your voice. It doesn't change. Your tone does, but not your voice. Such consistency makes it easy for people to recognize you when you speak. Same goes for our brand.
Our voice reflects our approach to technology. We strive to understand people's needs, be helpful and bring some smiles. We don't need to shout to be heard and know that forced jokes aren't funny. We prefer wit with a wink.

Voice

In short, our voice is

Conversational
But not
too chatty

Helpful
But not
bossy

Confident
But not
cocky

Funny
But not
silly

Professional
But not
too formal

Experienced
But not
inaccessible
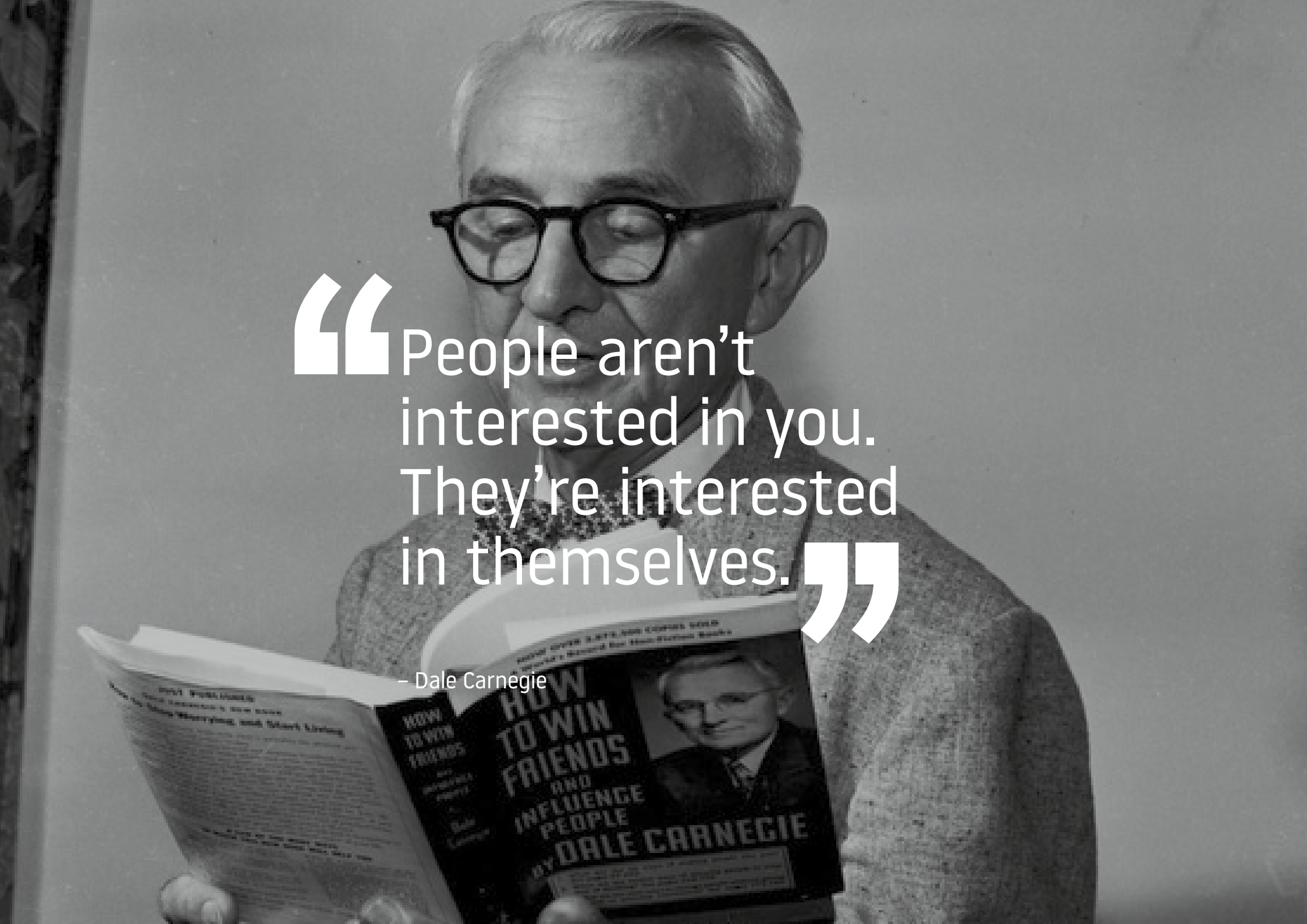
Playful
But not
childish

The same way you'd adjust your tone talking to your best friend, boss or grandmother, we adjust our tone based on who we're talking to.

To get the right tone, think first about your audience. What do you know about them? What are their needs? How can you help? Based on this information, decide the best way to bring out different attributes of our voice.

Tone

> "People aren't interested in you. They're interested in themselves."

– Dale Carnegie

An overview of our main audiences follows this page. Use it as a starting point. Once you know your particular audience, dig deeper. Discover what makes them tick. Use that information to get your message across in the most meaningful way.
Imagine that your audience is unfamiliar with TomTom and your topic. Avoid jargon and internal shorthand to help them understand.

Audi-
ence

Automotive

B2B focus with a B2C attitude. We deal directly with carmakers, including engineers and board room executives. However our main audience is the carmakers' customer: everyday drivers. Just like the carmakers, our ultimate goal is to solve real problems for real people.

Think: confident, experienced, professional, conversational

Enterprise

A little B2B with a lot of B2Developers. We partner with big tech companies (Microsoft and Uber, to name a few). Developers are also important, as individuals and teams in all kinds of businesses around the world use our APIs and SDKs to build location-based apps.

Think: experienced, helpful, playful, conversational

Consumer

100% B2C. We're talking to everyone who uses or might use TomTom Consumer technologies. Product variety means different audiences, such as the TomTom Camper crowd or motorcyclists rallying with the TomTom Rider.

Think: experienced, helpful, playful, funny, conversational

Employees

While we are a highly diverse group of individuals, the majority of TomTom'ers are engineers. You're talking to the people who create our innovative technologies that are shaping tomorrow's mobility, and everyone else who makes things happen at TomTom. We care about our company's vision, values and success.

Think: conversational, helpful, playful, funny, professional

Future employees

Same as employees. We talk to people the same way before and after they're hired. So again, the audience is mainly engineers.

The key is getting their attention. Once we start the conversation, we'll have plenty to talk about. Focus on the technology and their potential impact while sharing TomTom's good energy, vision and values.

Think: conversational, helpful, playful, funny, professional

"Make it simple.
Make it memorable.
Make it inviting to
look at. Make it
fun to read."

– Leo Burnett

Are you writing for the web, email, social media? People interact with content differently in different places. Check the following tips to write best for your channels. And remember that there's a lot of noise out there. Aim to fit in, but be sure to stand out.

Chan-nels

Websites
Extend a warm welcome to your visitors. Be a friendly, helpful host throughout their visit.

Email
Serve up a delightful, satisfying snack. Spam clogs up the internet's arteries and leaves a bad aftertaste.

Social media (posts and comments)
Be the friend people are happy to see.

Online display ads
Give visitors a reason to come inside after peeking through the window.

Print ads/print marketing materials
Make it worth the paper it's printed on.

White papers and LinkedIn articles
Think of how your favorite teacher would explain it.
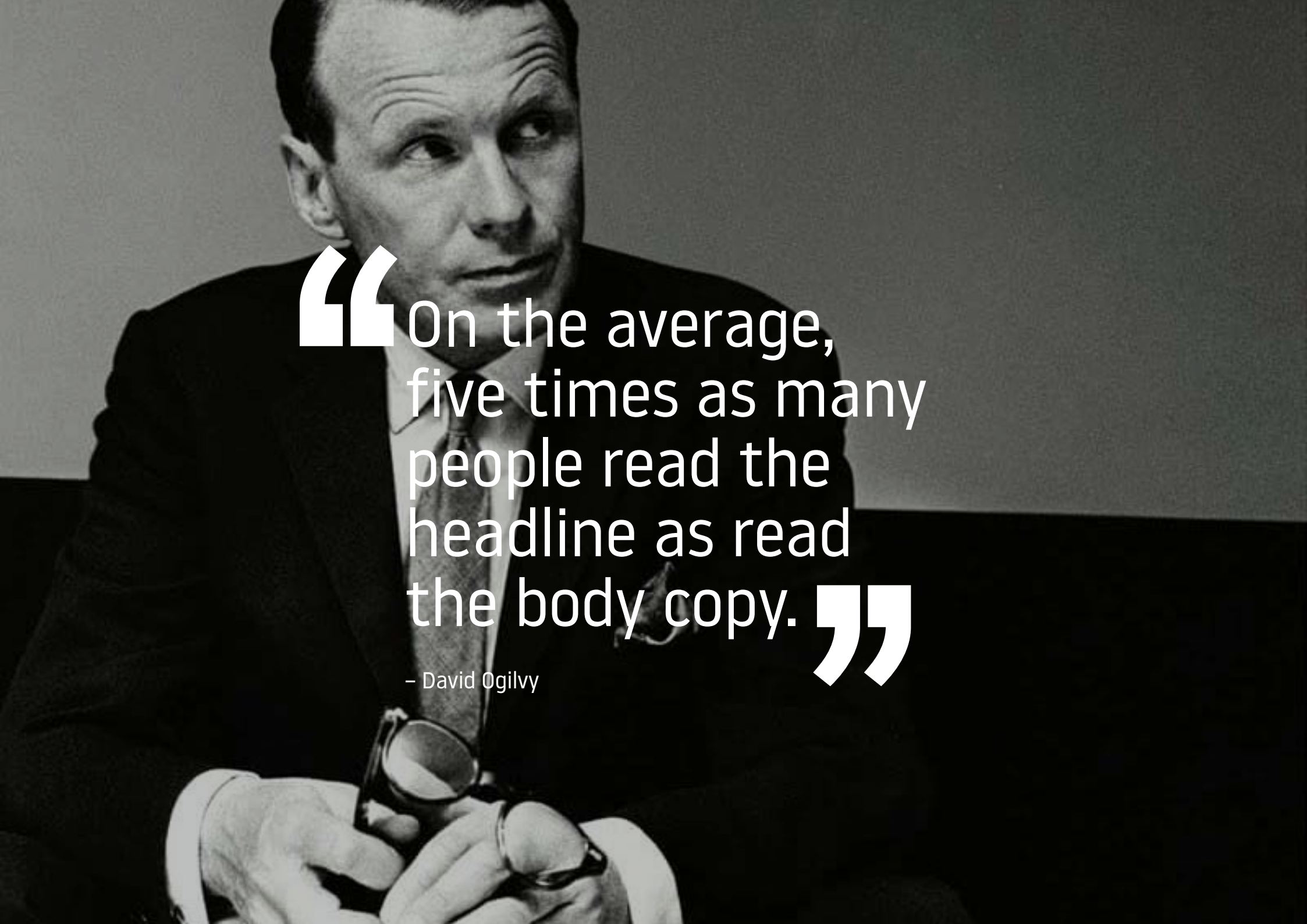
Video and voice over scripts
Write like you speak and don't fear silence; it is your ally.

PowerPoint
Show don't tell. Less is more. It's PowerPoint, not a storage facility.

"On the average,
five times as many
people read the
headline as read
the body copy."

– David Ogilvy

If you know that your work (first done in American English) will be translated into different languages, be sure to follow these guidelines.

Trans-
ation

General

Avoid idioms and slang

Use clear, plain language

Keep it short

Use consistent language
to refer to a concept

Leave room
(German is, on average,
30% longer than English)

Headlines and taglines

These are often the most difficult to translate, as they're typically short and use colorful, clever, attention-grabbing language. Focus first on effectiveness and second on translation needs.

We like to use these words when we talk about ourselves and want people to use them when they talk about us. They are building blocks that inspire, connect and reflect our position as a leading location technology company.

Words we like

Collaborate

Integrate

Efficient

Moving

Maps APIs

Progress

Smarter

Responsibility

Community

Leading

Create

Mapmaking

Safety

Mobility

Forward-thinking

Autonomous

Accurate

Partner

Software

Trusted

Data

Sustainable

Real time

Precise

Freedom

Equality

Connected

Electric vehicles

Empower

Seamless

Flexible

Efficient

Traffic

Words to watch

Some words are particularly tricky.
Find your cheat sheet on the next page.

General

Mapmaking (noun), map-making (adjective)

Real time (noun), real-time (adjective)

Email (not e-mail)

Internet (lowercase in sentences)

Online

Hashtag

Homepage

Website

URL or URLs

Afterward (no 's' at the end)

Adviser (preferred to advisor)

E.g. means 'for example'

I.e. means 'in other words'

Signup (noun), sign up (verb)

Login (noun), log in (verb)

Autonomous driving (lowercase used
generally in sentences), Autonomous Driving
(TomTom product unit)

HD maps (in general),
TomTom HD Map (TomTom product)

North, south, east, west, northeast, etc.
(lowercase in sentences)

The Northeast, Midwest
(capitalize specific regions, e.g. of the USA)

American vs. British English

Color
Not colour

Favorite
Not favourite

Organization
Not organisation

Analyze
Not analyse

Traveled
Not travelled

Canceled
Not cancelled

Among
Not amongst

Learned
Not learnt

You go to the hospital
Not to hospital

Always introduce the full written name first, including the acronym in parentheses if you'll refer back to it later. In general, try to limit the use of acronyms and complex names.

Example: TomTom introduced World Class Leadership (WCL). Now all employees can benefit from WCL.

Acro-nyms

CA – common acronyms

BU – business unit

PU – product unit

BUA – Automotive (business unit)

BUE – Enterprise (business unit)

BUC – Consumer (business unit)

LT Products – Location Technology Products (technical unit)

NDS – Navigation Data Standard (also a product unit)

CPP – content production platform (product unit)

AD – autonomous driving / Autonomous Driving (product unit)

NAV – navigation / Navigation (product unit)

LNS – Location and Navigation Services (product unit)

TTI – Traffic and Travel Information (product unit)

WCL – World Class Leadership

AV – autonomous vehicle

EV – electric vehicle

AI – artificial intelligence

ML – machine learning

IoT – internet of things

API – application programming interface

SDK – software development kit

UX – user experience

HMI – human-machine interface

Follow these guidelines to help you write in TomTom's style. When you have a pesky question like 'How do we write the date?' or 'Is it mapmaking or map-making?', refer here.

Gram- mar & style

Consistency is critical in brand writing. Maintaining our style boosts recognition while building credibility and trust.

Matters of style

We write in American English. Our go-to style is Associated Press (AP). In general, the AP style is easy to read, accurate, concise and free of bias (non-offensive). However for the sake of clarity and ease of reading, we do bend the rules here and there.

The basics

American English

Active voice

Strong verbs

Show more than tell

Say more with less

Capitalization

As a general rule, only capitalize the first word in sentences and formal names.

Never capitalize every word – not in a headline, sub-head, email subject line, anywhere. See the Typography section in the Brand Design Guide for further guidance.

Yes: TECHNOLOGY FOR A MOVING WORLD
No: TECHNOLOGY FOR A MOVING WORLD.

Yes: Technology for a moving world
No: Technology for a Moving World.

Yes: Our vision is a safe, connected, autonomous world that is free of congestion and emissions.
No: OUR VISION IS A SAFE, CONNECTED, AUTONOMOUS WORLD THAT IS FREE OF CONGESTION AND EMISSIONS

Job titles

Capitalize formal titles only used as modifiers.

Yes: Adam Smith, Director of Finance
No: Adam Smith, director of finance

Yes: Director of Finance Adam Smith
No: Director of finance Adam Smith

Yes: Adam Smith is the director of finance.
No: Adam Smith is the Director of Finance.

Only capitalize the first word in a hyphenated title.

Yes: Co-founder
No: Co-Founder

URLs

Don't add http:// or www when writing URLs. For key TomTom web addresses, add a forward slash then the defining word.

Yes:
tomtom.com
tomtom.com/automotive
tomtom.com/developer
tomtom.com/navigation
tomtom.com/careers

No:
http://tomtom.com
www.tomtom.com
developer.tomtom.com

Numbers

Use figures for numbers 10 and above, as well as for ages, percentages and lists.

Spell out numbers below 10 and numbers that start a sentence.
Yes: There were nine cars.
No: There were 9 cars.

Yes: Nine cars passed by.
No: 9 cars passed by.

Use a hyphen to connect one word ending in 'y' to another in large numbers.
Yes: Thirty-four people attended.
No: Thirty four people attended.

Use comma(s) to separate groups of thousands.
Yes: 1,000
No: 1000

Use a period to indicate a decimal point.
Yes: 1.75
No: 1,75

Write out million, billion, trillion, etc.
Yes: 600 million
No: 600M

Dates

Write the month, use a figure for the day followed by a comma and the year. Never add st, nd, rd or th to the day.

Yes: January 4, 2020
No: January 4th, 2020
No: 4 January 2020

When using the date in a sentence, add a comma after the year.

Yes: On January 4, 2020,
we celebrated our milestone.
No: On January 4, 2020
we celebrated our milestone.

Add an 's' when referring to a decade.

Yes: The 1990s
No: The 1990's

Use the 'en dash' without spaces to indicate a range in date.

Yes: 1991–2019
No: 1991 – 2019
No: 1991-2019

Time

Use the twelve-hour clock. Add a lowercase 'am' or 'pm' with no space. Note that 12:00pm is noon and 12:00am is midnight.

Yes: 5:00pm
No: 17:00

Yes: 9:00am
No: 9:00 am

For singular times on the hour, it is acceptable to use the number only, next to am or pm.

Example: 9am

Use the 'en dash' without spaces to indicate a time range.

Yes: 9:00am–5:00pm
No: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
No: 9:00 am–5:00 pm

Yes: 9–11am
No: 9-11 am
No: 9 – 11 am

Commas

Don't use the 'Oxford comma' in a simple series. Only add the comma before the 'and' in complex sentences where it adds clarity.

Yes: Our logo is red, white and black.
No: Our logo is red, white, and black.

Use commas to indicate a word or phrase that means the same thing as a word or phrase next to it.

Yes: I saw Harold, TomTom's CEO, in Amsterdam.
No: I saw Harold, TomTom's CEO in Amsterdam.

Spacing

After a period, use one space – not two – before your next sentence.

Yes: I use one space. Using two spaces is an outdated typewriting habit.
No: Using two spaces after a full stop is incorrect. Use one.

Colon

Use a colon to introduce an item or series (a list). Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the beginning of a complete sentence.

Example: TomTom's logo includes three colors: red, white and black.
Example: TomTom's fully autonomous car got a new name: Trillian.

Quotations

Use double quotes ("). There is one exception: Use single quotes (') for quotes within a quote. Place quotation marks outside of punctuation.

Yes: She told me, "The logo has three colors."
No: She told me, 'The logo has three colors'.

En dash

Use the 'en dash' (–) instead of a comma to add greater emphasis in a phrase. It is longer than a hyphen (-) and shorter than an 'em dash' (—). Also use the 'en dash' to show a range of time (see dates and time).

Yes: The car moved smoothly through traffic – never coming close to an accident.
No: The car moved smoothly through traffic - never coming close to an accident.

Yes: This guide is designed to
help you – writer by trade,
or not – create content that
consistently reinforces our brand
and packs a more meaningful punch.
No: This guide is designed to
help you—writer by trade,
or not—create content that
consistently reinforces our brand
and packs a more meaningful punch.

Hyphen

Use a hyphen to create compound adjectives that modify nouns.

Yes: Our map-making platform
No: Our mapmaking platform

Yes: Real-time mapmaking
No: Real time mapmaking

Do not use the hyphen to create compound adjectives when the modifier comes after a verb.

Yes: TomTom Traffic is in real time.
No: TomTom Traffic is in real-time.

Don't use a hyphen after adjectives ending in y.

Yes: Highly innovative mapmaking.
No: Highly-innovative mapmaking.

Your words matter. Thanks for using them to make a difference with us.

If you run into any issues or have questions, say hello: brand@tomtom.com.

Enjoy