PROACT

Copywriting style guide

2021

Document control

Document type	Internal - None Customer Facing		
Company	Proact IT Group AB		
Address	PO Box 1205 SE-164 28 Kista Sweden		
Telephone	+46 8 410 666 00		
Primary contact	Anna Linde	Role	Group communications manager

Revision history

Issue date	Author	Version	Revision description
04/08/2020	Anna Linde	v 0.1	Add to new template
07/08/2020	Hayes Thompson	v 0.2	Tweaks
09/11/2020	Danny Duggal	v 0.3	Document structure

PROACT

This document

This document is meant to help establish a clear and consistent voice across Proact. Whenever we create written copy, we should follow these guidelines to ensure that our communications are consistent, clear, easy-to-understand and meet the needs of our audience. All content we produce should reflect, reinforce and demonstrate our core values – integrity, commitment and excellence. We should write all Proact collateral in British English, as opposed to American English. British English is the standard in the EU.

These guidelines apply to both internal and external communications. If you have any questions surrounding messaging, tone or grammar, please contact our Group Copywriter or Group Communications Manager who will be able to help with your request.

Our brand foundation and writing principles

We want to be perceived as a trusted advisor and data management specialist with focus on data centre and cloud services. As a data management specialist, we want to be recognised for an innovative and customer-aligned portfolio, as well as being a thought leader in our field. We also want to be a sustainable company and a great place to work at and to partner with. We want to be associated with characteristics, such as modern, trusted, innovative, flexible, established, glocal and highly-skilled.

Our core values should shine throughout all internal and external communications, as they express the fundamental beliefs, concepts and principles that underpin our culture. Before we look at how we can express our values through our copy, let's remind ourselves of what our values are and what they mean.

- **Integrity**
  Honesty. Trustworthiness. Respect. Independence.
  Integrity means you can depend on us, our solutions, our principles and our actions. We are independent and navigate by our own compass which is based on honesty, trust and transparency. We are open and clear in our communication. We trust each other and those we do business with and show them respect and understanding. We always deliver on our promises and agreements.
- **Commitment**
  Engagement. Service. Flexibility. Customer focus. Fairness. Heart.
  Commitment is the foundation on which we build our relationships. We formulate clear goals and keep them in focus, with the customer's needs in mind. We engage on projects to assure the highest service levels and flex in response to changing demands. We share challenges, share the big picture and share our energy. We always act with fairness and heart.
- **Excellence**
  Quality. Skilled. Experienced.
  Excellence is what we contribute and what we build with. Excellence is our essence. Decades of experience have given us the wisdom to apply our knowledge well. Employee recruitment, training and development reflect deepening specialist competence. We use our skills and tools to create ingenious solutions for new challenges, in a lasting way.

Within every content we publish, we aim to:

- **Obtain trust.** We need to demonstrate we have our reader's best interests at heart. We need to communicate how they benefit. Transparency and camaraderie also build trust. So does discussing problems and offering solutions, which is exactly what we do. We should combine this with a tone of empathy and support. Where possible, we should back up our claims with data (facts, figures and numbers). Communicate we're on the same side. Again, this isn't hard. We're all about working with the customer; acting as part of their team. Emphasise how we know the whole market, are independent, and use our knowledge to help choose what's best for the customer, rather than push our own particular products and services.

- **Respect.** It's important that we try to treat readers with the respect they deserve. Put yourself in their shoes and don't patronise them, try to confuse them or mislead them. Remember that people are busy. Try to be considerate and inclusive. Don't market at people; communicate with them.

- **Speak truth.** Try to understand the challenges of potential and existing customers. Avoid dramatic storytelling and provide real accounts of the services we offer. Focus on our current strengths and what we can deliver today.

- **Establish relationships.** Ensure that people know that we're here to help not just to sell products and services. Use language that informs and encourages the audience to make the most of our solutions. Convey that we're a partner not a merely a reseller. Be helpful. Be honest. Imagine you're talking to a friend or family member – someone you will have a relationship within a few years' time.

- **Educate.** Tell readers what they need to know, not just what we want to say. Give them the exact information they need, especially when it comes to benefits, along with opportunities to learn more. Remember that we're the experts when it comes to our solutions. Readers might not have access to everything we know and offer.

Klantnaam

- **Guide.** Think of yourself as a tour guide for our reader. Whether we're leading them through an eBook, our website or a brochure, communicate in a friendly and helpful way.

- **Help bridge the gap between business and IT.** Much is made of the gap between business and IT. Copywriting can play an important role in helping to bridge this gap by using clear and simple language that everyone can understand.

- **Inspire.** It might not always be possible (not everything is super-exciting) but, where possible, we should try to communicate enthusiasm and excitement, to elicit the same response in our reader.

In order to achieve these goals, we should make sure our content is:

- **Clear.** Understand the topic you're writing about. Use simple words and sentences while integrating standard industry vocabulary. There's no need to simplify every term, why write more words when one could do? Make the reason you're writing apparent in the introduction, don't bury your messaging. Ensure your content has a clear call to action.

- **Useful.** Before you start writing, ask yourself: what purpose does this serve? Who will read this? What's their role? What do they need to know? What will they want? What problems do they face? How can we empathise with them? Help them?

- **Appropriate.** Write in a way that suits the situation. Just like you do in face-to-face conversations, adapt your tone depending on who you're writing to and what you're writing about.

- **Jargon-free.** Where possible, we should avoid jargon, especially that which we use a lot internally, or within marketing. The way we speak to each other is not necessarily the way we should speak as a brand to customers.

- **Brief.** It's really important to edit your work. Write freely then go back and look at how you can make it shorter and clearer. Make sure you're not repeating words or ideas over and over again. People are busy and skim read. The ideal is to write copy that makes is easy and enjoyable to read, rather than a chore. Reading a lot of copy is like this, which is a lot of people don't read. Using short sentences and short paragraphs will help.

Personas and buyer's journey

We've done quite a bit of research into different personas – different kinds of people in different roles who we might be speaking to. It can be helpful to remind yourself of these personas, the people behind them, their needs and the kinds of messages that we should be delivering to them.

CIO	The CIO is the decision maker in the sales process, so their opinions are crucial. They are often the visionary of the organisations, developing strategies and innovative propositions. Despite not being scared of out-of-the-box thinking, they may be very critical of new ideas and developments.
	Writing tailored to the CIO needs to be business objective focused and not too technical. Improving and accelerating the business is likely to be their main goal, so content must be forward-thinking and clearly demonstrate how we can offer tangible results. They are likely to take the safe way out if possible, so our messaging needs to convey advanced research and knowledge for them to make new steps with us.
	Main focus could include agility, speed, innovation, stability, reliability, innovation, flexibility, budget, market demands, security, time to operational value, accelerating business, compliance.
IT manager	The IT manager recognises that their role is important to the organisation as a lot depends on IT. They have responsibility for budget, managing people and role delegation. As an important advisor in the boardroom, the IT manager plays a role somewhat like an internal salesperson. They're likely to initiate discussion surrounding new technologies and solutions needed to improve IT and are often looking to minimise risk.
	To successfully communicate with an IT manager, we need to relate to their many KPIs such as efficiency, costs, performance, capacity and security. We need to demonstrate not only the advantages of our solutions and how they will help with current challenges, but how we will add value after they've been implemented.
	Main focus could include minimise risk, efficiency, reducing costs, justifying spending, usability, speed, security, resource capacity, short term focus, readiness.
IT operations	The person responsible for IT operations often acts as the source of information for others and will be involved in a number of projects. Troubleshooting takes up a lot of their time and they're often the first to see potential problem areas in the infrastructure, data or systems/applications.
	It's key that we suggest improvement ideas to the IT operational which could make their role easier. They want to stay ahead of the game so create content which evokes that we're innovative and forward-thinking. As they're likely

Klantnaam

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>to deliver direct visible results, messaging around user satisfaction can be key and how we've delivered tangible results for others. Make writing tailored for the IT operational relatable, they're at a stage in their career where they're willing to learn and improve.

Main focus could include execution, optimisation, business improvement, updates/upgrades, efficiency, performance, capacity, security, end-user satisfaction, future environment, disaster recovery, backup.</td></tr>
</table>

Buyer's journey

Campaigns developed by Proact follow the structure of a pre-defined buyer's journey. This has systematically been developed so content is created which embodies the feelings, pains and priorities of a buyer persona at any given time during the sales' cycle.The messaging and tone we use at each stage will differ so below are some key techniques to consider when writing at various points of the journey. You might like to apply these ideas to other types of communication. Simply ask yourself where on this journey your reader might be.

Awareness	The prospect could be unaware that they have an issue with their IT, so we need to inform them about the potential problem and make them relate this back to their environment. At this stage we need to demonstrate a long-term vision and imprint the word "cloud" in the mind of the prospect. Consider what the prospect's priority initiatives are likely to be, asking questions to trigger what they really see as important. Make the prospect think about the potential success they could have, prompt this with results-driven content which can evoke an emotional response. Writing produced at this stage needs to establish a sense of urgency – this can be done by making it issue-based.
Interest	Discuss issues which could be relevant to the company featuring business pains which they'll recognise. The prospect can then go away and research this area, following social and news developments. At this stage the prospect often realises their vision on IT, initiating project plans around their business pain. The interest phase is centred around knowledge, all content must be informative and provide a sense that the prospect can gain control of the situation. They need to start thinking that the potential solutions to their business pains are future-proof. Make the prospect name their goals and think about how their current environment is preventing them from reaching these. Provide reliable information and convey that Proact shares this experience and has a vision in this area. The prospect needs to realise that there will be consequences if action isn't taken soon.
Learn	Within this phase the prospect discovers how they can solve the business pain themselves, referring to multiple sources of information and if necessary, seeking support from suppliers. This is where Proact could be considered as they might ask for help from reliable partners – no decisions will be made yet. The prospect is learning about potential solutions to their issues which may or may not be a product/service, therefore content shouldn't be too Proact-focused. In-depth research and information needs to be presented on relevant subjects – this can be discussed amongst the ranks and ultimately in the boardroom. Our content needs to try and shape the orientation process and our messaging needs to shift from being issue-based to solution-based. Try to develop a roadmap/vision for the organisation, how their future could be with the solution when the problem has been fixed. Don't push Proact's credentials too much at this stage, concentrate on solving the problem.
Consideration	At this phase the prospect will choose one or more of the possible solutions they're presented with. They will be evaluating suppliers and making a shortlist, obtaining quotes to help them shape their decision. As verdicts are starting to be made, we need to emphasise the business case and how we could have a positive impact upon the organisation – this can involve using case studies. Financial clarity is important as often decisions are made based on figures – we should present the prospect with costs vs benefits. The prospect needs to truly understand that Proact offers the right products and services and must trust that our information is transparent and true. Provide customer-specific goals and link these to proven technology. In essence, make the reader think that Proact is the best – we deliver results and we have proof that our clients are satisfied.
Justification	Here we must remove any element of doubt that we're the right choice by justifying our credentials. Feeling and finance will play a part at this stage and will influence a list of pros and cons that have been aligned with various solutions and providers. Keep pushing messages that illustrate what we will deliver to the customer and how we will cooperate. Stress that we will develop a real relationship so we can truly understand the prospect's business drivers. Our main asset is our

	experience and knowledge so all content must refer back to this – it's this factor which could create added value for the customer.
	Content should focus around references, business cases, how we organise a partnership and why we are the right match in terms of culture.
Purchase	The prospect buys from Proact but could negotiate their deal with one or more candidates. The provider with the best offer and the best business case will win.
	We need to reinforce that choosing Proact was the right decision and need to provide proof which relates to the service we will provide. Is there any more value we could get from this customer? Let them know about any additional support/services we can offer.

Voice and tone

One way of writing informative yet persuasive copy is by being aware of our voice and tone. What is the difference between voice and tone? Think of it this way: you have the same voice all the time, but your tone changes.

Voice

Our voice is human. It's knowledgeable, friendly and straightforward. Our priority is to explain what we do and how we work, so that they can see that we'd make a great partner to help them find IT solutions that help them achieve their organisation's goals. We want to educate people without patronising or confusing them.
One way to think of our voice is to compare what it is to what it isn't. Our voice is:

- Confident but not cocky
- Smart but not boring
- Informal but not sloppy
- Informative but not overbearing
- Expert but not bossy
- Friendly but not laidback
- Innovative but not unrealistic

Tone

Our tone is usually informal, but it's always more important to be clear than entertaining. When you're writing, consider the reader's state of mind. Are they under pressure to meet business demands? Are they puzzled by a technological question? Are they curious about how a cloud partner could help? Once you have an idea about their emotional state, you can adjust your tone accordingly.
Ideally, we'd like to demonstrate our expertise so that the reader can have complete confidence that we are the partner for them. We should make them feel comfortable about choosing us or working with us. We should back any claim we make up with evidence, to demonstrate our credibility and suitability.

We use a tone that is appropriate to our audience. It's not too familiar or too stuffy but it is human. A great tone can inspire desirable emotional responses in our readers, and they can play a big role in decision-making. Our tone should:

- Enact the values we espouse and that customers desire – integrity, commitment and excellence
- Engage our readers by making it enjoyable to read
- Stimulate positive feelings that become associated with our brand
- Tie our tone to our business goal: to become most trusted partner
- Try to communicate enthusiasm and excitement (to elicit the same response in our reader)

We should try to inject a bit of emotion where possible, by talking about hopes, dreams and fears, or simply, feelings. This ties back to authenticity – "*When we write with authenticity, we share our feelings both directly through the words that we choose and indirectly through our phrasing, sentence structure and grammatical quirks. Many of us default to a formal style that deliberately conceals the author's thoughts and feelings. I urge you to shake this habit…. Think of your emotional content as rich spice and insert it sparingly.*"

It may be hard to weave emotions all the way throughout the copy, so it could be an idea to focus on the headline (E.g. 'Unleash the power of data' features emotional language. So does 'Heart-stopping IT failure. Make sure your organisation doesn't skip a beat'.

How can we create certain tones to support our values and our business?
We did a little research around marketing best practices and looked at what our competitors are up to. We always consider which buyer persona we're talking to and where they are in the buyer's journey.

How can we make sure our writing reflects our values?
Let's look at each value individually.

- **Integrity** – Means the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. So we should try to be as honest and transparent as we can when we talk to customers. This has a vital part to play in helping us become the world's most trusted IT partner. We shouldn't try to create false impressions by boasting or making wild marketing claims. This doesn't mean being too honest. For example, if we're writing a Group brochure and a certain service is only available in certain countries but not in others, we might not say this outright but say something like 'we offer a range of different services across different countries. Please contact your local office for details'. Having a consistent tone of voice in itself helps create an impression of trustworthiness. It shows people care about we create. It shows we have standards. It shows we're a group of people you can trust with your IT and your data.

- **Commitment** – It's not immediately clear how you'd go about reflecting 'commitment' in your copy, but if we look at what this value means to us – and the words associated with it – things become clearer. We use commitment to also mean 'Engagement, service, flexibility, customer focus, fairness and heart.' There are endless lists of 'how to make your copy more engaging' on the web if you're interested in finding out more. Regarding customer focus, it's obviously a key copywriting technique to do that. Too often, we talk about ourselves. Try to tweak that slightly to talking about how we help the customer achieve their goals. Fairness and heart may be trickier to address, though if we're honest and passionate and allow that to come across in our writing, then we'll have these aspects of commitment covered, too.

- **Excellence** - What do we mean by excellence? We mean the quality of our work and of our partners' technology, we mean the skill of our people, and we mean the experience that they bring to bear on solving customers' challenges. As always, it's better to demonstrate these facets, rather than simply talk about them, though often we will simply mention them. We strive for excellence when it comes to our copy, too. This means researching properly, following best practice, editing, spell-checking, acting on feedback, continually tweaking and improving.

How can we create an 'innovative' tone?
Be brief, be succinct and simply articulate. Use conversational language. Let customers speak for you.

How can we create a 'dependable' tone?
Use words that feel warm and comfortable. Avoid colloquialisms, exclamation marks or high-emotion devices. Rely on traditional rhetorical devices.

Style Tips
Here are a few key elements for writing in our voice. For more information, please see our Grammar and Mechanics Guide.
- **Active voice.** E.g. Telema invested in new infrastructure NOT New infrastructure was invested in by Telema
- **Avoid slang and jargon.** Write in plain English. If the meaning of a word isn't immediately apparent, don't use it. Having said that, if we know we're talking to our peers, there may be technical terms we can use that everyone will understand, though we should realise that our audience may involve non-technical business people, too
- **Write with enthusiasm and excitement.** To elicit the same response in our reader
- **British English.** Content should be written using British spelling, rather than American spelling. But we should avoid using phrases and expressions that only an English native would

Grammar and mechanics

Adhering to certain rules of grammar and mechanics helps us keep our writing clear and consistent. This section will lay out our house style, which applies to all content unless otherwise noted.
- **Write for all readers.** Some will read every word you write whereas others will just skim. Help everyone, no matter how they read, by grouping related ideas together and by using descriptive headings and subheadings.
- **Focus your messaging.** Create a hierarchy of information. Lead with the main point or the most important content, in sentences, paragraphs, sections and pages.
- **Be concise.** Use short words and sentences. Avoid unnecessary modifiers.
- **Be specific.** Avoid vague language. Cut the fluff.
- **Be consistent.** Stick to the copy patterns and style points highlighted in this guide.

Guidelines

Abbreviations and acronyms	• If there's a chance your reader won't recognise an abbreviation or acronym, spell it out the first time you mention it. Then use the shortened abbreviation for all other references. If the abbreviation acronym is well known, like HTML, use that initially (and don't worry about spelling it out).

Active voice	• Use active voice. Avoid passive voice. In active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence has the action done to it.
	  o Yes: Proact closed the deal.
	  o No: The deal was closed by Proact.
	
	• Words like "was" and "by" may indicate that you're writing in passive voice. Scan your content to see if these appear and then check if the sentence is passive.
	
	• One exception is when you want to specifically emphasise the action over the subject. In some cases, this is fine.
	  o Your request was sent to our marketing team.

Capitalisation	• Don't capitalise random words in the middle of sentences. Here are some words that we never capitalise in a sentence.
	  o Environment
	  o Infrastructure (unless naming Infrastructure as a Service)
	  o Hyper-converged
	  o Email
	  o Online
	  o On-premises

Contractions	• They're great! They give your writing a human, friendly tone. In most cases, use them as you see fit.

Numbers	• Spell out a number when it starts a sentence. Also write out numbers below 10, so one to nine. Use numerals for ordinals, percentages, dates and times.
	  o Eight new employees started on Monday at 9am.
	  o We updated three systems within 24 hours.
	  o Proact won 1st prize.
	
	• Numbers over three digits get commas:
	  o 999
	  o 1,000
	  o 150,000
	
	• Write numbers up to 999,999 in full. In a 2nd instance we're happy for you to use the appropriate abbreviation e.g. 999k.
	• In its first occurrence 1million should be written out but thereafter it can become 1m.

Dates	• Dates should take the dd-mm-yyyy format. / or – signs can be used to break numerals. When written, dates should take the following format "Wednesday 4th September, 2016" • If you would like to refer to Proact's age, we recommend saying we've been active "since 1994" rather than writing the number of years. This will give the copy more longevity without the need to update the figure.
Percentages	• Avoid writing out the word "percent" – use the symbol %.

Units	• Use a space to separate a number and unit of measurement.
	  o 105 MHz
	  o 100 PB
	  o 37 ºC

Ranges and spans	• Use a hyphen (-) to indicate a range or span of numbers. o It takes 20-30 days.

Telephone numbers	• Use spaces to make the number easier to digest.
	• If your content will be used in multiple countries, include the relevant country code.
	  ○ Country codes should be formatted as follows:
	  ○ +44 (0) 1246 266300

Time	• Use numerals and am or pm without a space. Don't use minutes for on-the-hour time.
	  ○ 7am
	  ○ 7:30pm
	• Use a hyphen between times to indicate a time period.
	  ○ 7am-10:30pm
	
	• Specify time zones where relevant, normally if people from numerous countries are attending an event. Your default time zone should be the main area your content will be distributed within.
	
	• Abbreviate time zones as follows:

BST	BRITISH SUMMER TIME	UTC + 1
CEST	CENTRAL EUROPEAN SUMMER TIME	UTC + 2
CET	CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME (standard time)	UTC + 1
EEST	EASTERN EUROPE SUMMER TIME	UTC + 3
EET	EASTERN EUROPE TIME (standard time)	UTC + 2
GMT	GREENWICH MEAN TIME	UTC + 0

	• Abbreviate decades when referring to those within the past 100 years:
	  ○ the 00s
	  ○ the 90s
	
	• When referring to decades more than 100 years ago, be more specific:
	  ○ the 1900s
	  ○ the 1890s

Punctuation

Apostrophes	• The apostrophe's most common use is making a word possessive. If the word already ends in an s and it's singular or plural, just add an apostrophe.
	  ○ Proact improved Auxillis' infrastructure…
	  ○ All of Proact's staff…
	  ○ James' sandwich…
	• Apostrophes can also be used to denote that you've dropped some letters from a word, usually for emphasis. This is fine but do it sparingly.

Colons	• Use a colon (rather than an ellipsis, em dash or comma) to offset a list.
	  ○ The customer ordered three types of fruit: apples, pears and bananas.
	
	• You can also use a colon to join two related phrases. Don't capitalise the word after the colon.
	  ○ The customer was faced with a dilemma: the team at Proact seemed like a better fit.

Commas	• When writing a list, don't use the serial/Oxford comma.
	  ○ Yes: Proact can help with backup, storage and software.
	  ○ No: Proact can help with backup, storage, and software.
	• Otherwise, use common sense. If you're unsure, read the sentence out loud. When you find yourself taking a breath, use a comma.

Dashes and hyphens	• Use a hyphen (-) without spaces on either side to link words into a single phrase, or to indicate a span or range.
	  ○ First-time user
	  ○ Monday-Friday
	• Use an em dash (–) without spaces on either side to offset a clause in your sentence.
	• Em dashes should not be typed as hyphens (- or --).
	  ○ Storage as a Service – one of our Managed Cloud Services – is a highly flexible, available and cost-effective solution.

Klantnaam

	• The business thought the IT team was lazy and delaying time to market, but they were wrong – it was the ageing infrastructure.

Ellipses	• Ellipses (…) can be used to indicate that you're trailing off before the end of a thought. Use them sparingly. Don't use them for emphasis or drama and don't use them in titles or headers.
	  o "Why is my computer running so slow?" Boris asked. Hugo said, "I don't know…"
	• Ellipses, in brackets, can also be used to show that you're omitting words in a quote.
	  o "Our IT team had far fewer burdens placed upon them [...] it was great to work with Proact."

Full-stops	• Full-stops/periods go inside quotation marks, at the end of sentences and inside bracket clauses if these aren't part of a wider sentence.
	  o Stephen said: "The project went well."
	  o Proact completed the project (and finished within timescales).
	  o We worked with the IT Manager and the IT Administrator. (The CIO was unavailable.)

Question marks	• Use these in the same way you would use full-stops.
Exclamation marks	• Use exclamation marks sparingly and never more than one at a time. They should be positioned in the same way as full-stops. • Never use exclamation marks in failure messages or alerts. When in doubt, avoid!

Quotation marks	• Use quotes to refer to words and letters, titles of books and direct quotations.
	• Full-stops and commas go within quotation marks. Question marks also follow the logic of full-stops.
	• Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.
	  o Who was it that said, "Business and IT can't work together"?
	  o Alex said: "A wise man once told me, 'Proact is the best cloud provider.'"

Semicolons	• Don't overuse semicolons. They usually support long, complicated sentences that could easily be simplified. Try an em dash (–) instead or simply start a new sentence.

Ampersands	• Don't use ampersands unless it's part of a company or brand name.
	  o Ben and Dan
	  o Ben & Jerry's
	• We also accept useage in service taglines and headings, but not within body copy.

Word Choices and Formatting

Pronouns	• If your subject's gender is unknown or irrelevant, use "they", "them" or "its" (as a singular pronoun).
	• Don't use "one" as a pronoun.
	
	• We refer to businesses and organisations as singular entities, therefore:
	  o Proact is selling this service.
	  o Proact is growing – it now has over 600 employees – and profits are increasing.
	
	• But, try to use 'we' where possible. It's warmer, more friendly and it helps us talk about ourselves in a personal way, instead of us talking about a separate entity.

Names and titles	• The first time you mention a person in writing, refer to them by their first and last names. In all other instances, refer to them by their first name.
	• Capitalise the names of teams and departments, but not the words "team" or "department".
	  o The Marketing team is working hard to deliver its targets.
	  o The Sales department performed well this quarter.
	• Capitalise individual job titles which are attributed to a single person, but not generalised usages of titles.
	  o Danny Duggal, VP of Commercial, worked on this project.
	  o Danny Duggal is based in the Malmo office.
	  o Danny Duggal, the copywriter at Proact, makes excellent cocktails.
	  o The increasing demands of end-users mean that IT managers are having to face new challenges.

Slang and jargon	• Write in plain English. If you need to define a technical term that's advanced even for an IT professional, briefly define it so everyone can understand.
Cliches	• Try to avoid them
Text formatting	• Avoid using italics, use quote marks to indicate the titles of works. • Use bold to highlight important messages/words. • Left-align text, never centre or right-aligned. • Leave one space between sentences, never two.

Write positively	• Avoid words such as "can't", "don't" etc.
	   o Yes: To get the most out of the software, you need to follow the instructions.
	   o No: If you don't follow the instructions you won't get the most out of the software.

Referring to Proact	• To make Proact seem inclusive and caring, we usually refer to ourselves in the first person. This warmth is important. It helps people to see us as more dependable. This means using the words "we" and "our". • There is no need to repeat phrases like 'Here at Proact'. • There is no need to repeat our name for SEO purposes on our website, either. Our 'Proact' url will ensure we're associated with any other key phrases we're using.

Talk directly to people	• Where possible, refer to the audience as "you" to bring power and relevance to our communications. There will be circumstances where we need to discuss "customers", but in these instances try to state why the statement is beneficial to the reader.
	   o We can help you reach previous unknown levels of data availability.
	   o We have customers across almost every vertical which clearly illustrates that we have the skills and acumen to make a difference within your company.
	• As a rough rule of thumb, try to use the second person pronoun "you" as a first choice, with scatterings of "our customers/clients" to portray the successful work we've already completed.

Writing for translation

We should bear in mind that any copy we write, especially that of 'Group', is going to be translated into other languages. For that reason, we don't use language that relies heavily on colloquialisms. We keep it simple, clear and succinct.

Basics

Try to write all of your content in standard, straightforward English than can be understood by people for whom English isn't their first language. It's much easier for a translator to clearly communicate ideas written in easy, uncomplicated sentences.

Here are some guiding principles to follow:
- **Use active voice.** Always aim for this, especially when writing for translation.
- **Use the subject-verb-object sentence structure.** It's not used by all languages but it's widely recognised.
- **Keep it simple**
- **Keep it clear**
- **Keep it succinct**

Guidelines

Consider cultural differences	• When writing text that will be translated, be careful about making references to things of local or regional importance. Also be wary when using idioms as descriptions.
Prioritise clarity	• Keep your copy brief, but don't sacrifice clarity for brevity. You may need to repeat or add words to make the meaning of your sentences clear to a translator.

Klantnaam

Repeat helping verbs which belong to multiple verbs	• Yes: Proact will send your brochure in the post or can send your brochure in an email. • No: Proact will send your brochure in the post or in an email.
Repeat subjects and verbs	• Yes: Premium Support + includes 24x7 support, but standard support does not. • No: Premium Support + includes 24x7 support, but not standard support.
Repeat markers in a list or series	• Yes: Use Proact to monitor your systems, to back up your files and to secure your data. • No: Use Proact to monitor your systems, backup your files and secure your data.

Avoid ambiguity

Many aspects of our everyday speech have the potential to cause confusion for translators and non-native English speakers. Here are some of the big trouble spots to avoid:

Avoid unclear pronoun references	• Yes: Many believe that their data is secure because they have anti-malware. This software doesn't provide sufficient protection and data security breaches can happen which can put your information at risk. • No: Many believe that their data is secure because they have anti-malware. This isn't the case and can ultimately put your information at risk.
Avoid –ing words	• In English, many different types of words end in –ing: nouns, adjectives, progressive verbs etc. However, a translator who is a non-native English speaker may not be able to recognise the distinctions and might try to translate them all in the same way. Because of this, we need to try and avoid using –ing words when possible, but not when they're part of a noun's name e.g. "graphing calculator".
Gerunds (not applicable for all languages)	• Yes: In this article we will talk about infrastructure management. • No: In this article we will talk about managing infrastructure.
Adjectives	• Yes: As a top priority, there is the management team with smiles on their faces. • No: As a top priority, this is the smiling management team.
Parts of verbs	• Yes: Several developers are currently working on that feature. • No: Several developers are working on that feature. (When you can't easily avoid the –ing word, it may help to add an adverb to clarify the meaning.)
Parts of phrases modifying nouns	• Yes: From our office, we could see the delivery van that arrived at the gates. • No: From our office, we could see the delivery van arriving at the gates.
Other mechanics to avoid	• Slang, idioms and clichés • Contractions • Shortened words, even if they're common in English • Uncommon foreign words (use "genuine" not "bona fide") • Unnecessary abbreviations (use "for example" not "e.g.") • Double negatives

Beware of words with multiple meanings	• Where possible, find alternative phrases.
	  o **"Once"** could mean "one time", "after", "in the past" or when"
	  o **"Right"** could mean "correct", "the opposite of left" or "politically conservative"
	  o **"Since"** could refer to a point in time or be used as a synonym for "because"
	  o **"Require" plus an infinitive** could confuse the relationship between subject and object
	  o **"Has"** or "have" plus past participle

Numbers

Measurements	• When writing for an international audience, use the metric system. Spell out all units and avoid abbreviations.
Currency	• Indicate currency by using its three-letter abbreviation, such as EUR or GBP, before using currency symbols. • Avoid colloquial phrases that relate to money such as "quid

Word list

All collateral written by Proact should use British English as this is the preferred choice of our European audience and distinguishes us from our US competition.

The following spellings are worth considering:

UK spelling (preferred)	US spelling
Organisation	Organization
Data centre	Data center
Recognise	Recognize
Analyse	Analyze
Travelled	Traveled
Defence	Defense
Licence (dependent on context)	License
Catalogue	Catalog or catalogue
Behaviour	Behavior
Categorise	Categorize
Centralise	Centralize
Channelled	Channeled
Colour	Color
Computerise	Computerize
Digitised	Digitized
Favour	Favor
Fulfil	Fullfill
Instil	Instill
Manoeuvre	Maneuver
Metre	Meter
Mobilise	Mobilize
Mould	Mold
Pretences	Pretenses
Prioritisation	Prioritization
Scrutinise	Scrutinize
Stabilise	Stabilize
Tyres	Tires
Unrivalled	Unrivaled
Visualisation	Visualization
Virtualisation	Virtualization

Klantnaam

Acronym library

Acronym	Explanation	Description
API	Application Programming Interface	A set of functions and procedures that allow the creation of applications, which access the features or data of an operating system, application or other service.
BCA	Business Cloud Alignment	Business cloud alignment is a methodology to find the optimum solution that considers both business objectives and the cloud requirements of an enterprise.
BPM	Business Process Management	An expense where the benefit continues over a long period, rather than being exhausted in a short period. This expenditure is non-recurring and results in the acquisition of permanent assets.
CapEx	Capital Expenditure	Funds used by a company to acquire physical assets. Typically it's a one-time investment to own equipment.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	Highest-ranking person in a company or other institution, ultimately responsible for making managerial decisions.
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	A senior executive with responsibility for the financial affairs of a company or other institution.
CIO	Chief Information Officer	A job title commonly given to the most senior executive in an enterprise responsible for the information technology and computer systems that support enterprise goals.
CISO	Chief Information Security Officer	A senior-level executive within an organisation responsible for establishing and maintaining the enterprise vision, strategy and program, ensuring that information assets and technologies are adequately protected.
CPO	Chief Procurement Officer	An executive level employee with responsibilities such as sourcing, supply management and procurement.
DevOps	Development and Operations	A culture, movement or practice that emphasises the collaboration and communication of both software developers and other information-technology (IT) professionals while automating the process of software delivery and infrastructure changes.
DTAP	Development Testing Acceptance Production	A rather common acronym in IT expressing a phased approach of software testing and deployment.
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning	Business process management software that allows an organisation to use a system of integrated applications to manage the business and automate many back office functions related to technology, services and human resources.
HR	Human Resources	The people who make up the workforce of an organisation, business sector or economy.
ITaaS	IT as a Service	An operational model where the IT organisation of an enterprise is run much like business, acting and operating as a distinct business entity creating products (including services) for the other business functions within the enterprise.
OpEx	Operating Expenditure	An ongoing cost for running a product, business or system. For larger systems like businesses, OpEx may also include the cost of workers and facility expenses such as rent and utilities.

Klantnaam

PaaS	Platform as a Service	A category of cloud computing services that provides a platform allowing customers to develop, run and manage applications without the complexity of building and maintaining the infrastructure typically associated with developing and launching an app.
POC	Proof of Concept	A demonstration that has the purpose of verifying that certain concepts or theories have the potential for real-world application. POC is therefore a prototype that has been designed to determine feasibility.
SaaS	Software as a Service	A software licensing and delivery model that involves centrally hosted software being licensed. It is sometimes referred to as "on-demand software". SaaS is typically accessed by users using a thin client via a web browser.
SPOC	Single Point of Contact	A person or a department serving as the coordinator or focal point of information concerning an activity or program.
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership	A financial estimate intended to help buyers and owners determine the direct and indirect costs of a product or system.
VDI	Virtual Desktop Infrastructure	The practice of hosting a desktop operating system within a virtual machine (VM), running on a centralised server.
WAN	Wide Area Network	A telecommunications network or computer network that extends over a large geographical distance.
XLA	Experience Level Agreement	In today's business environment, IT is getting too important to be steered with just technical and input-based metrics. Consequently XLAs (experience level agreement) are used to monitor IT success by looking at the experiences of consumers, business, end users and business stakeholders.
SLA	Service Level Agreement	A service level agreement (SLA) is a commitment between a service provider and a client. Particular aspects of the service – quality, availability, responsibilities – are agreed between the service provider and the service user.

Frequently asked questions

Some stylistic concerns regularly occur when writing Proact collateral. Have any to add? Contact the Copywriting VT to submit your suggestion.

Should I write using British or American spellings?
To differentiate our tone of voice and to keep our communications consistence, we encourage the use of British English.

Who should I contact if I'm not sure if my writing is correct?
Contact Hayes Thompson, Group copywriter. He'll be happy to answer your questions, proofread text you've written or help craft some copy in the first place.

What materials do these rules apply to?
All written communications, including customer-facing copy, such as emails, brochures and press releases, and internal communications, as well.

1.1 Common Mistakes

Hyphens in service names	• Yes: Proact offers Infrastructure as a Service. • No: Proact offers Infrastructure-as-a-Service.
Referring to Proact as a plural	• Yes: Proact is a leading cloud storage integrator and cloud service provider, and with its head office in Chesterfield, your data won't be stored far away. • No: Proact are a leading cloud storage integrator and cloud service provider, and with their head office in Chesterfield, your data won't be stored far away.
Apostrophe in SLAs	• Yes: We'll help you meet your demanding SLAs. • No: We'll help you meet your demanding SLA's.
On-premises	• This is to be written as one word with a hyphen. In alignment with our partners, we refer to "on-premises" rather than "on-premise".
Wi-Fi	• Write as above, not "wifi" or "WiFi".
CapEx and OpEx	• To be written with a capitalised "E", not as CAPEX or Capex.
Capitalisation of "cloud" when it isn't the name of a service	• Yes: Proact offers services for the public cloud. • No: Proact offers services for the Public Cloud.

Vendor names	• Here at Proact our vendor relationships are important to us. For both clarity and respect, please ensure that vendor names are spelt and formatted correctly. For example:
	  o VMware
	  o NetApp
	  o Commvault
	  o SimpliVity

Data centre	• In accordance with our boilerplate text which acts as our company mission statement, "data centre" is two words and spelt in British English.
24/7	• To explain a round-the-clock services, use a forward-slash not "x" (not 24x7).
Business Cloud Alignment	• Don't hyphenate this term. We also capitalise this as it is the name of a Proact service.
Roadmap	• Write "roadmap" as a single word.
Service Management	• We need to be a little careful here. Service Management (with capitals) is our fully-comiprehensive support package. Service management is management of a service.