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BMC Guide to Voice, Tone, and Style

Language

Language

Diversity and inclusion

It's a whole new world out there beyond your screen, and it's more important than ever to be mindful of diversity and inclusiveness when you speak to your audience. Companies around the world have recognized that historical terms have problematic origins and associations and are working to redefine those terms. To that end, BMC has joined the Inclusive Naming Initiative, a cohort of industry leaders dedicated to promoting and facilitating the replacement of harmful and exclusionary language in information technology.

Our current public-facing statement on inclusive language and accessibility, which can be used in customer deliverables, is:

> *BMC is committed to creating an Autonomous Digital Enterprise that includes everyone. The BMC Product Experience team is applying inclusive and gender-neutral principles throughout all three areas of UX design: content, interaction, and visual design, including adopting neutral pronouns and inclusive phrases that avoid assumptions and stereotypes and creating illustrations and graphics that are age, gender, orientation, cultural, racial, body type, and ability inclusive.*
>
> *We internally develop solutions with the assistance of accessibility expert resources and in compliance with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), Revised Section 508 standards, and EN 301 549 requirements to ensure that our products, content materials, services, and websites are equitably accessible. Our interaction design is focused on usability, reduced cognitive load, and accessibility and our color palette has been overhauled to ensure that our one stylesheet is more accessible.*

LANGUAGE ▾
Diversity and inclusion
Examples

Here, we've compiled specific examples of representation to keep in mind as you create content—words and visuals. This is by no means exhaustive but addresses some of the easiest, often unconscious, mistakes and biases.

ABLEIST
Speech and colloquialisms that refer to some sort of physical or emotional disability should not be used. Avoid terms such as crazy ("This may sound crazy"), insane ("insane profit margin" or "sanity check"), etc. If you are discussing people with different abilities, don't describe people without disabilities as "normal" or "healthy." Use "nondisabled" person, sighted person, hearing person, etc., instead. Do not quantify a disability with, "victim of, suffering from, wheelchair-bound," etc. Use "experiencing, living with, uses a wheelchair," etc., instead.

AGEIST
Unless it's relevant to your content, do not write about age. If it is relevant to the context of your content, avoid terms such as "elderly, aged, seniors, senior citizens, and X years young" and use "older adults or aging population," common generational terms ("Millennials" or "Baby Boomers"), or the relativity to another person discussed (parent, sibling, etc.).

GENDER NEUTRAL
When possible and appropriate, avoid using "he" and "she" and instead change to "you," pluralize the actor ("they") and the verb ("are, were," etc.), or reword the sentence to remove the actor altogether. Avoid terms that assign the male gender such as "salesman, manpower, mankind, or man-hours" and instead use "salesperson, workforce, humankind, and person-hours." The Chicago Manual of Style has nine tips for avoiding gendered use. If you are interviewing someone to be quoted, ask what their preferred pronouns are so you can attribute quotes correctly.

GEOPOLITICAL
BMC is a global company, so don't assume that your audience is US-based. Avoid region-specific holidays, sports, cultural practices, and colloquialisms that may alienate some of your audience. Remember that global audience, too, when you select images and video.

RACIAL INSENSITIVITY
Avoid terms that connote racial bias or have negative historical overtones. Instead of "master" and "slave," use "primary" and "subordinate." Instead of talking about a system "hanging" up, use "hiccup" or "interruption." If you are referring to a specific race or ethnicity in your content, it should be capitalized: "Black, Asian, Indigenous, Latino/Latina/Latinx" etc.

For additional information on a spectrum of diversity and inclusion topics, see The Diversity Style Guide and AP Stylebook guidance on race.