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Watch Your Tone. No, Seriously.

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One of the more colorful exercises I was privy to at a recent meeting of Winning Workplaces' Board of Directors was the think-outside-the-box practice of encapsulating our organization as a person as well as a car.

While group consensus on both of these is still up in the air as we do some homework on our overall strategy, one thing I remember about the person part of the exercise was that beyond his or her look, we talked about the tone that this person took when giving our elevator speech, or saying anything else. Here we did reach some consensus: the tone is that of a trusted advisor who shares wisdom in a reassuring way – and in a manner that is not overwhelming for the person talking with us.

Since that meeting I've had this tonal quality in the back of my mind and have carried it over to my writing here. I hope someone who is knowledgeable, trusting, caring, and eloquent comes through when you read our posts.

This endeavor got me thinking about how, **at least to some extent, our honored small businesses have their own human-like tone** – whether or not they're conscious of it. A few examples from my perspective:

- 2009 Top Small Workplace Radio Flyer – a friend or neighbor who's ready to step in to encourage your child's imagination and ensure their safety.
- 2008 Top Small Workplace King Arthur Flour Company – the MacGyver of the kitchen, who's eager to share tips and also has a sense of humor.
- 2007 Top Small Workplace NRG Systems – an excellent math and science student who has grown up to use this knowledge to green their lifestyle, and who's there to help you do the same.

How does this exploration relate to team building and employee engagement activities? Well, defining (or redefining if you've done this before) how your company would speak and come across to others in the world if it were a person is an excellent opportunity to bring your people together and learn from group consensus. In turn, any changes to your tone that come about from this process can inform your workplace culture.

In one sentence, what's your organization's tone? Does it mesh with your mission and products/services?

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