

Editorial governance and AI-assisted content operations framework (selected excerpts)

Selected excerpts from a scalable editorial governance system designed to improve narrative consistency, AI-assisted drafting quality, and cross-functional content alignment across distributed teams.

Prepared by Justin Lambert
Director of Content Marketing

Context and purpose

As content operations scaled across distributed teams, external agencies, subject matter experts, and AI-assisted workflows, maintaining clarity, consistency, and editorial quality became increasingly difficult.

I developed this governance framework to create a scalable editorial operating system that aligned narrative strategy, audience orientation, AI-assisted drafting, and voice standards across multiple contributors and business functions.

The framework established:

- A structured drafting and review hierarchy
- Audience-first messaging governance
- AI drafting safeguards and operational constraints
- Editorial standards for clarity, accountability, and narrative consistency
- Repeatable workflows for scaling high-quality content production

The selected excerpts below demonstrate how editorial governance, AI-assisted workflows, and narrative systems were operationalized to support scalable content creation across a complex enterprise environment.

Editorial governance hierarchy

The framework established a structured order of operations to ensure audience alignment, conceptual consistency, and editorial clarity before stylistic refinement occurred.

[COMPANY] content governance system (FY26)

This document bundles five peer governing references that together define how [COMPANY] content is created, reviewed, and enforced across marketing, sales, and AI-assisted drafting.

Each document governs a specific dimension of correctness. No single document is sufficient on its own.

These documents are designed to be used together, not selectively.

The five governing documents

This system consists of:

- 1. Persona-based messaging governance
- 2. Voice and tone guidelines
- 3. Core concepts defined
- 4. Solutions and offerings
- 5. AI drafting playbook

Each document retains its own authority, scope, and purpose. None replaces or subsumes the others.

Governing document	Primary question it answers	What it governs	What it explicitly does not govern
Persona-based messaging governance	Who is this for, based on accountability?	Responsibility clusters, persona orientation, usage rules	Tone, style, intent, offerings, concept definitions

Voice and tone guidelines	How should the language behave?	Sentence structure, tone calibration, AI language rules	Personas, intent selection, concepts, solution detail
Core concepts defined	What do our core ideas mean?	Definitions, correct usage, conceptual framing	Personas, tone, offerings, selling vs. thought leadership
Solutions and offerings	How does [COMPANY] deliver value?	Practices, capabilities, integrated program delivery	Personas, tone, concept meaning, messaging strategy
AI drafting playbook	How should drafting be executed and enforced?	Prompt structure, stop conditions, drafting behavior	Strategy, meaning, personas, authoritative definitions

How to use this table

- Writers: use it to diagnose why feedback is being given
- Reviewers: use it to identify which rule was violated
- AI systems: use it to determine which authority to apply at each step

If a draft feels vague, inconsistent, or generic, the issue is almost always a failure to apply one of these documents in the correct order.

All AI-assisted drafting should begin with the Universal Content Drafting Intake Prompt defined in the AI Drafting Playbook.

Order of operations (mandatory)

Content creation and review must follow this sequence:

1. Identify the Primary Responsibility Cluster: Establish who the content is for, based on accountability rather than job title.

2. Select intent: Determine whether the content is Thought leadership, Positioning, or Selling.
3. Apply Core Concepts: Use shared definitions to frame meaning, reasoning, and cause-and-effect.
4. Explain how [COMPANY] delivers value: Draw from Solutions and Offerings to describe integrated, program-based delivery.
5. Apply Voice and Tone rules: Govern how language behaves once framing and substance are correct.

If guidance appears to conflict, responsibility, intent, and clarity override style or structure.

Authority and precedence

- Core Concepts Defined is the authoritative source of meaning and terminology.
- Persona-based messaging governance determines audience orientation and accountability.
- Solutions and Offerings defines how value is delivered through integrated programs.
- Voice and Tone governs language behavior, not strategy or meaning.
- AI Drafting Playbook governs execution and stop conditions, not content truth.

The AI Drafting Playbook is subordinate by design. It enforces correct application of the other documents and does not override them.

Draft completeness standard

A draft is considered complete only when:

- The correct Primary Responsibility Cluster is identified and respected
- Intent is explicit and consistently executed
- Core Concepts are used accurately and concretely
- Value delivery is explained through programs, not tools or claims
- Language complies with Voice and Tone rules

Drafts that fail any of these checks require revision, not polish.

Non-negotiable enforcement rules

- Do not blend multiple responsibility clusters unless explicitly instructed
- Do not redefine concepts outside Core Concepts Defined
- Do not position [COMPANY] as a product, platform, or ecosystem
- Do not allow AI to infer missing persona or intent inputs

This system exists to reduce variance, prevent drift, and ensure content reflects how work, decisions, and behaviors actually change.

Voice and tone operational standards

Voice standards emphasized clarity, operational realism, and human-centered AI positioning to prevent generic or hype-driven enterprise messaging.

Voice and tone guidelines (FY26 – governing reference for humans and AI)

Primary voice stance (non-negotiable)

All [COMPANY] content must consistently feel:

- Confident – Clear assertions, no hedging or hype
- Grounded – Anchored in real enterprise behavior, not abstraction
- Human-first – Centered on people, decisions, and learning
- Outcome-oriented – Focused on what changes and why it matters

If a sentence sounds impressive but cannot be explained plainly, it must be rewritten. Language should be repeatable by leaders with different responsibilities, reflecting how outcomes, execution, experience, or adoption show up in their day-to-day accountability. Outcomes should be framed in terms of both improvement and consequence—what changes when things work, and what leaders continue to absorb when they do not.

Priority rules (use this hierarchy to resolve conflicts)

When guidance appears to conflict, apply these rules in order:

1. Clarity beats metaphor
2. Outcomes beat aspiration
3. Explanation beats brand language
4. Adoption beats innovation
5. Human judgment beats technology capability
6. Accountability beats abstraction – language should make clear who feels the impact when outcomes are not achieved.

Do not blend multiple responsibility clusters in a single narrative unless explicitly instructed; blended personas dilute accountability and weaken decision relevance.

This hierarchy applies to all content and overrides stylistic preference.

AI positioning (mandatory)

All AI-related content must reinforce a human-first, adoption-at-scale framing.

AI should be described as:

- supporting human judgment
- embedded in real workflows
- dependent on trust, learning, and adoption for value

AI should be framed in terms of reducing decision risk, execution friction, and adoption failure—never as a shortcut around leadership responsibility.

Avoid any implication that AI:

- operates autonomously
- replaces ownership or accountability
- delivers value independently of human behavior

Maintain operational realism

Avoid messaging that minimizes or denies the operational impact AI is already having on workforce structures, execution models, and enterprise operating systems.

Do not rely on overly simplistic claims such as:

- “AI will not replace jobs”
- “AI only helps people work better”
- “nothing fundamentally changes”

Instead:

- acknowledge that AI is reshaping portions of enterprise work
- frame transformation as operational redesign rather than workforce panic
- reinforce that human judgment, governance, accountability, and orchestration remain critical in AI-enabled systems
- maintain a measured, executive-oriented tone grounded in operational realities

Preferred messaging should:

- balance realism with responsibility
- avoid both AI hype and AI fatalism
- emphasize sustainable organizational adaptation
- position AI transformation as a governance and execution challenge, not only a tooling challenge

Tone characteristics:

- credible
- measured
- future-aware
- strategically grounded
- operationally mature

Maintain urgency without sensationalism.

Sentence construction rules (strict)

Required patterns

- Direct, declarative sentences
- Clear subject → action → outcome structure, with ownership implied or stated where relevant
- Plain language executives can repeat

Prohibited patterns

- Binary contrast constructions (e.g., “X is not Y—it is Z”)
- Em dashes used for dramatic contrast
- Long compound sentences that obscure the main point

Em dashes may be used only for brief clarification within a sentence.

AI-assisted drafting governance

The system incorporated explicit safeguards and drafting constraints designed to improve consistency, reduce ambiguity, and maintain editorial quality across AI-assisted workflows.

AI drafting rules (binding)

The following rules are mandatory when using AI to draft [COMPANY] content.

Intent check (required)

If the human requester does not explicitly specify intent, the AI must pause and ask which intent to use before drafting.

Valid intents:

- Thought leadership – establish authority and shape perspective
- Positioning – connect ideas to how we help, advisory tone
- Selling – drive direct action or engagement

Do not assume intent. Do not draft until intent is confirmed.

Always do

- Describe how work, decisions, or behaviors change
- Anchor claims in adoption, enablement, or execution
- Prefer specificity over polish
- Choose clarity over cleverness
- Reflect how different leaders experience the same issue differently, based on their scope of responsibility
- Anchor framing to the audience's primary accountability before adjusting tone, depth, or language

Never do

- Describe [COMPANY] as an ecosystem, platform, or product
- Lead with tools, vendors, or technologies
- Use generic AI hype language
- Imply transformation happens automatically
- Use generic executive framing that could apply equally to multiple leadership roles without change in accountability, decision scope, or outcomes

Persona orientation (required)

Before drafting, the Primary Responsibility Cluster of the intended audience must be identified and applied. Tone, framing, and emphasis must reflect the accountability context of that cluster. Job titles may vary or be unknown; Primary Responsibility Clusters are required and authoritative.

Do not infer persona from channel, format, or seniority alone. If the appropriate responsibility cluster is unclear, drafting must stop and clarification must be requested.

Default substitutions

When tempted to use	Use instead
ecosystem	model / system / approach
holistic	connected / coordinated
end-to-end	across execution / across the organization
leverage AI	embed AI into workflows or decisions
transformation	adoption-ready change / sustained execution

Reduce usage of	Prefer
“Organizations are failing to...”	“Organizations are navigating...”
“Employees resist AI”	“Workforce behaviors and incentive systems evolved under different operating assumptions”

“Legacy systems are holding teams back”

“Existing systems were optimized for prior operating conditions”

“AI adoption is stalled because...”

“AI execution complexity is exposing operational gaps...”

“Broken workflows”

“Workflows designed for different coordination demands”

“Companies are behind”

“Execution expectations are evolving faster than many operating systems were designed to support”

“AI won’t replace people”

“AI is reshaping how work is executed and governed”

“AI simply helps employees work faster”

“AI changes execution speed, coordination, and workflow design”

“Humans stay at the center of every workflow”

“Human accountability and judgment remain essential within AI-enabled workflows”

“AI adoption”

“AI-enabled operational transformation”

“Deploying AI tools”

“Redesigning workflows and execution systems for AI-enabled operations”

“The workforce must learn AI tools”

“Organizations must evolve how work, governance, and accountability operate alongside AI-enabled execution”

Approved examples

- “We help leaders embed AI into everyday decision-making so teams adopt it with confidence.”
- “Our work focuses on how decisions are made, how work flows, and how change is sustained.”
- “Value appears when new capabilities are adopted at scale, not when tools are deployed.”

Disallowed examples

- “We deliver a holistic ecosystem for AI-powered transformation.”
- “Our platform orchestrates end-to-end enterprise optimization.”
- “AI autonomously drives business performance.”

Final rule

If a draft complies with these rules but still feels vague, rewrite it with more concrete detail.

The objective of AI-assisted drafting is scalable consistency, clarity, and reduced editorial rework while preserving human judgment and narrative quality.

Every draft should help leaders answer: “What will actually change in how we work, who will experience that change, and why will that matter to outcomes?”

Closing perspective

This framework was designed to help distributed teams scale content quality without sacrificing clarity, consistency, or human editorial judgment.

The broader objective was not simply governance for its own sake, but the creation of repeatable systems that enabled faster collaboration, stronger narrative alignment, and more reliable AI-assisted execution across complex enterprise content environments.