

Writing Your Partner and Solution Profiles: Best Practices

This guide will help you to create clear, compelling entries for your Partner and Solution Profiles. Following these guidelines for both profiles will ensure that your Pinpoint Profile is consistent—helping you to target the relevant customers with accurate information.

Pinpoint Profiles are quick, fact-based reads with a focus on business value to customers. Because customers will often read your Profile quickly, it's important that your entries are concise and easy-to-read.

After scanning your Pinpoint profile, customers should know the following:

- Your company's expertise and the kinds of products and services you offer.
- How you can help them resolve their business and technology issues.
- How to contact you.

With a strong profile, you can:

- Generate qualified leads.
- Build a strong foundation for lasting customer relationships.

1. Top Tips for a Successful Profile:

Less is more

- People are busy and will only scan your profile pages.
- Think of your profiles as the online equivalent to an elevator pitch.
- You get two seconds or less to capture a customer's attention using your headline.
- You get between 30 seconds and two minutes to convince them to contact you using your company/solution description.

Stay focused on customer needs

- Write as if you are speaking directly to a customer.
- Tell customers exactly how your offerings address their needs.
- Avoid technical jargon—use simple, everyday language, even if you are describing something very technical.
- Focus on benefits, not features.

How can you increase the chances of a customer contacting you?

- Be specific about what your company does and how your offering benefits customers.
- Acknowledge the business and technology issues that your customers face.
- Tell them how your products and services resolve those issues.
- Provide contact information for a real person at your company, not a general phone number or e-mail alias.

2. Pinpoint Content Guidelines

In this section you'll find grammar, style, and punctuation rules to follow when writing your Partner and Solution Profiles. Correct and incorrect examples are provided. If you have any queries that are not addressed by this document, the Pinpoint editorial team can help. You'll find our contact details at the end of this document.

3. Pinpoint Editorial References

The Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications (MSTP) is the official editorial style guide for Microsoft publications, including Web content. In addition to the MSTP, the Pinpoint editorial team refers to the following reference publications, which can be found online:

- American Heritage Dictionary
- Chicago Manual of Style
- Roget's Thesaurus

Voice

Voice refers to the relationship between the grammatical subject of a sentence and the verb. In active voice, the person or thing performing the action of the verb is the grammatical subject of the sentence. Partner profiles should be written in active voice.

Example:

Correct (active voice):

*"You can divide your documents into as many sections as you want."
(The subject of the sentence is the person performing the action—'you'.)*

Incorrect (passive voice):

*"Your document can be divided into as many sections as you want."
(The subject of the sentence is 'document'.)*

Person

Person refers to the relationship between the writer and the grammatical subject of a sentence or clause. Second person, also known as direct address, should predominate in most writing because it focuses the discussion on the reader/customer.

Example:

Correct:

"If you are creating multiple personalized e-mail messages, mail merge will save a lot of time."

Incorrect:

"When creating multiple personalized e-mail messages, mail merge saves a lot of time."

Note: Never use "I" in your Profiles. Say "We provide the following services..."

Tense

Use the simple present tense wherever possible. This will make your entries easier to read, particularly for a worldwide audience, and will help readers scan your profiles and extract information that's relevant to them. It's important that your potential customers can learn about you and your products without spending a lot of time deciphering complex sentences.

Be as concise as you can**Example:**

Correct:

"The next section describes how to write an object-focused description."

Incorrect:

"The next section will describe how to write an object-focused description."

Tone

Tone defines the relationship between the writer and the reader. Microsoft tone should convey:

Empathy: We understand our customers' needs. We are more focused on solving problems than on describing product features.

Responsibility: We think about how our comments will be perceived. We aim to help our customers by suggesting solutions that address their challenges, but not to tell them what they should or shouldn't do.

Example:

Correct:

"Free technical support is available when you purchase our products."

Incorrect:

"You must register with our company to receive free technical support."

Passion: Passion for our customer informs everything we do. This passion is as much a part of our content as it is of our software. We strive to make content usable and useful with a minimum of effort on the reader's part.

Inspiration: We must help our customers solve their problems, but we can also help them create opportunities by using our products in ways they had not thought of before.

Headings and Subheadings

Headings and subheadings should convey as much information as possible about the text that follows. Your aim is to help readers scan the content of your profile and locate information quickly.

- In headings, capitalize the first letter of each word, apart from conjunctions and prepositions ("joining" words such as "and", "in", "on").
- In subheadings, capitalize only the first word.
- Avoid headings of more than one line.
- Do not use ampersands (&) in headings. Write "and".
- In the first sentence following any heading, do not assume that the reader has read the heading.

Example:

Correct:

"Finding Information in Help

When you click Help on the menu bar, Help commands appear."

Incorrect:

"Finding Information in Help

You can do this easily form the menu bar."

Note: When you use a verb in a heading, as in the example above, use the 'ing' form for the verb rather than the infinitive.

Correct:

"Running Programs and Managing Files"

Incorrect:

"To Run Programs and Manage Files"

Commas

In a sentence listing a series of three or more elements, separate the elements with commas. When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series, use a comma before the conjunction.

Example:

Correct:

"Chapter 15 is an alphabetical reference to commands, procedures, and related topics. You need a hard disk, an EGA or VGA monitor, and a mouse."

Do not join independent clauses with a comma unless you include a conjunction. Separate into two sentences or use a semicolon.

Example:

Correct:

*"Click Options, and then click Allow Fast Saves."
"Click Options; then click Allow Fast Saves."*

Incorrect:

"Click Options, then click Allow Fast Saves."

For compound predicates, do not use commas.

Example:

Correct:

"Open the program and then run the application."

Incorrect:

"Open the program, and then run the application."

Lists

For a series of concepts, items, or options that do not need to be in a specific order, use lists marked by a dash (-) for each entry. For a sequence of events or steps, use a numbered list. Capitalize the first word of each entry.

- Make sure that the entries are lined up with each other.
- End each entry with a period if they are complete sentence, or a mixture of complete sentences and fragments, or if they all complete the introductory sentence or fragment.
- If entries are not complete sentences, a period is not needed.
- If you introduce a list with a fragment, do not treat the list and its introduction like one continuous sentence.
- Don't use semicolons or comas at the end of a list entry.
- Don't insert "and" before the last entry in a list.