

IBM Watson here to help you construct words you won't regret

July 17 2015, by Nancy Owano



The office door closes; the boss sits down to his PC and takes a deep breath. Time for employee memos. We're closing the Miami office. Pulling the plug on London's project. Forget the show in Vegas.

The information has to get out in a way where there's nothing between the lines that interferes with intentions and nothing in the lines that will ignite what could have been avoided. Whether it's the Ouch factor in sending off an email in business or the Ouch factor in sending off a personal email or social networking post, you wish you could have said it better—avoiding any miscommunications in the mix.

Well, here comes IBM with a clear message from the IBM Watson crew: Rama Akkiraju, Distinguished Engineer, Master Inventor, IBM Watson User Technologies, announced Thursday that IBM is offering an experimental service free to explore as a communication solution. This is IBM Watson Tone Analyzer.

"Helping humans assess and refine tone in written communication is an interesting challenge in the Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Sciences fields," he stated. "At IBM Watson, we are beginning to answer this [question](#)."

The Tone Analyzer service uses linguistic analysis for what you write. It detects emotional tones, social propensities, and styles. The service offers suggestions for improvements.

How does it work? On the IBM Watson Developer Cloud page it gives you a demo:

"[Input](#) Text," it says. "Choose what text you would like to analyze by using the example text, writing, or pasting your own text below."

Then you see a percentage distribution of factors: Emotion, Social, Writing tones. Subcategories include cheerfulness, negative, anger, openness, tenuous, confidence. Tone Analyzer analyzes the text and gives back insights about the emotional, social and writing tones reflected in that text.

("Writing Style/Tone" refers to how analytical, confident and tentative one's writing is. "Analytical tone shows a person's reasoning and analytical attitude about things. Confidence tone indicates the degree of certainty exhibited by an individual towards something. Tentative tone shows the attitude of inhibition," said Akkiraju.)

You can click on any highlighted word in the demo's sample paragraph and get a synonym depending on if you want to soften or strengthen the [word](#).

This is a "service that helps people comprehend, consume, and revise the language tone of their writing for more efficient communications or online self-presentation management," according to IBM.

Built upon linguistic analysis, it detects types of tones and helps the writer understand how tones are derived from various linguistic signals. It is designed to offer suggestions for revision. "Based on the analysis," said IBM, "authors can revise their text to portray the tone that is appropriate for the targeted audience before sending a message, potentially avoiding regrets and miscommunications." You get started on something called "IBM Bluemix." This is a [cloud](#) platform in which you deploy applications that you develop using Watson Developer Cloud services.

IBM's service is ambitious, considering the English language is so textured—full of opportunities for layers of humor, sarcasm, demographic nuances, fast-changing morphs in popular cultural meanings.

Steve Dent in *Engadget* had this experience in trying out the service: "The main problem is that Watson was missing context, especially for words that have multiple meanings. In the sentence 'I know the times are difficult!' it nonsensically suggested 'arithmetic operation' for 'times.' It

also doesn't understand sarcasm, humor and other styles, and just picks out individual words to determine the [tone](#)."

Nonetheless, it is one more interesting step in experiencing the power of Watson.

More information: — tone-analyzer-demo.mybluemix.net/

— [www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/e ... d/tone-analyzer.html](http://www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/en/ibm-watson/words-wont/d/tone-analyzer.html)

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