

## Code of Ethics / Conduct

By: [Green Plus](#) | Posted in: Human Resources & Employee Effectiveness |

### What It Is

A code of ethics, also known as a code of conduct, clarifies “an organization’s mission, values, and principles, linking them with standards of professional conduct.” A code of conduct serves as a reference for managers and employees when making decisions at work.

### Why It Matters

A code of ethics can help your organization to:

1. Show customers that it values integrity.
2. Define the terms of ethical behavior at work.
3. Guide decision-making in difficult situations.

After the scandals that occurred at [Enron](#) and WorldCom, American consumers have become more concerned with business ethics. According to [Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases](#), the prevailing attitude among consumers is that American businesses care more about profits than workers, consumers, or the environment.

Michael Connor, editor and publisher of [Business Ethics](#), states, “The reality these days is that [a business without] a code of ethics subjects itself to a much greater risk in its day-to-day operations. If there is an unfortunate incident, they expose themselves to much greater risk [of legal trouble].”

### Getting Started

When writing a code of ethics for your organization:

- **Step One:** Consider your organization’s mission, values, and goals, including its position on sustainability.
- **Step Two:** Use clear language to make the code user friendly.
- **Step Three:** Include expectations for general conduct at work, as well as examples of unethical behavior.

According to David Blood, Senior Partner at Generation Investment Management, “Sustainable solutions will be the primary driver of industrial and economic development in the coming decades.” As such, incorporating sustainability into your company’s code of ethics can help your company grow.

You should tailor the code of ethics to your organization. However, some of these examples and suggestions can help you get started.

1. [Sample Code of Ethics](#)
2. [Sample Values](#)
3. [Creating a Company Code of Ethics](#)
4. [How to Write a Code of Ethics](#)

## **Going Further**

When creating a code of ethics, some companies may wish to consult an ethicist or a human resource specialist. These people can help ensure that the code of ethics meets the needs of the company, its staff, and is attentive to its customer base. A manager may also consider appointing someone to enforce the code of ethics. This person, perhaps a human resource specialist or just a trustworthy employee, can help ensure that the staff upholds your organization's values and principles. Appointing such a person will also help incorporate ethics into your company's culture.

## **Best Practices**

In his article "Put It in Writing: Your Business Has Ethics," Jeff Wuorio sums up the best practices for creating a code of ethics:

- Focus on your specific business practices and issues.
- Tailor it to fit your business. Include employees in developing a code of ethics.
- Provide practical training in what ethical behavior means in your workplace. Post your code of ethics internally and set up a reporting system.
- Consider appointing a compliance person, that is, someone to enforce the code of ethics.
- Follow up on any ethical violation you uncover.
- Live it from the top down. Make sure management follows the code of ethics.

A code of practice is a good way to state clearly your organization's position on important subjects like equality, ethics, contracts, conflict of interest and duty of care. Often these matters get overlooked in the process of buying and selling, only to surface later and cause problems because they've not initially been properly explained or understood. Being able to provide a solid and fair code of practice is therefore important in order to establish a clear common understanding of expectations between employer/employee, employee/employee, and employee/customer.

## **EXAMPLES:**

### **Confidentiality**

We are committed to maintaining the highest degree of integrity in all our dealings with potential, current and past clients, both in terms of normal commercial confidentiality, and the protection of all personal information received in the course of providing the business services concerned. We extend the same standards to all our customers, suppliers and associates.

### **Ethics**

We always conduct our own services honestly and honourably, and expect our clients and suppliers to do the same. Our advice, strategic assistance and the methods imparted through our training, take proper account of ethical considerations, together with the protection and enhancement of the moral position of our clients and suppliers.

### **Duty of care**

Our actions and advice will always conform to relevant law, and we believe that all businesses and organizations, including this consultancy, should avoid causing any adverse effect on the human rights of

people in the organizations we deal with, the local and wider environments, and the well-being of society at large.

### **Conflict of interest**

Due to the sensitive nature of our particular consultancy services, we will not provide a service to a direct competitor of a client, and we generally try to avoid any dealings with competitor companies even after the cessation of services to a client.

### **Contracts**

Our contract will usually be in the form of a detailed proposal, including aims, activities, costs, timescales and deliverables. The quality of our service and the value of our support provide the only true basis for continuity. We always try to meet our clients' contractual requirements, and particularly for situations where an external funding provider requires more official parameters and controls.

### **Fees**

Our fees are always competitive for what we provide, which is high quality, tailored, specialized service. As such we do not generally offer arbitrary discounts; generally a reduction in price is only enabled by reducing the level or extent of services to be delivered. That said, we always try to propose solutions which accommodate our clients' available budgets and timescales. Wherever possible we agree our fees and basis of charges clearly in advance, so that we and our clients can plan reliably for what lies ahead, and how it is to be achieved and financially justified.

### **Payment**

We aim to be as flexible as possible in the way that our services are charged. Some clients prefer fixed project fees; others are happier with retainers, and we try to fit in with what will be best for the client. We make no attempt to charge interest on late payments, so we expect payments to be made when agreed. Our terms are generally net monthly in arrears.

### **Intellectual property and moral rights**

We retain the moral rights in, and ownership of, all intellectual property that we create unless agreed otherwise in advance with our clients. In return we respect the moral and intellectual copyright vested in our clients' intellectual property.

### **Quality assurance**

We maintain the quality of what we do through constant ongoing review with our clients, of all aims, activities, outcomes and the cost-effectiveness of every activity. We encourage regular review meetings and provide regular progress reports. This consultancy has been accredited under a number of quality assurance schemes. Further details are available on request.

### **Professional conduct**

We conduct all of our activities professionally and with integrity. We take great care to be completely objective in our judgement and any recommendations that we give, so that issues are never influenced by anything other than the best and proper interests of our clients.

### **Equality and discrimination**

We always strive to be fair and objective in our advice and actions, and we are never influenced in our decisions, actions or recommendations by issues of gender, race, creed, color, age or personal disability.