

ETHICAL MARKETING POLICY

We commit to honesty in marketing

We pledge to:

- Never use dishonest marketing tactics for our own or client marketing campaigns, including:
 - False advertising: exaggerating values and benefits of our services
 - Fake or overly doctored reviews and testimonials
 - Inflated analytics or results when creating messaging for clients or within our advertising
- Only use information in our marketing and communications that are representative of a client's overall impact and not present misleading data
- Provide accurate descriptions of the services we provide and use appropriate language and words to reflect them

We commit to on-going project-based reflections

To ensure our whole team considers the ethics of our marketing approach we ask everyone involved in a campaign to consider several questions:

- Is any of our messaging exaggerated or misleading to our target audiences?
- Is our language honest about the value and impact of our services?
- Are any quotes used, whether from clients, partners or the team, accurate?

We commit to rejecting impact washing

Impact washing is when impact-focused claims are made by a company without any demonstrable positive social or environmental impact.

We commit to rejecting the practice of impact washing. We will not exaggerate our positive impact to gain marketing advantage, or distract from any socially or environmentally negative impacts.

We pledge that:

- We will not inflate numbers, manipulate data, or mislead audiences with stories that aren't reflective of overall outcomes of our projects
- We will not make unrealistic claims about expected results
- We only share stories and create impact initiatives that are centred on our mission, to enable companies to prosper by helping them become a force for good, and not purely for marketing benefits
- Our campaigns are fully honest and transparent about the social and environmental impacts of our or our client's work

- We will review marketing and communications strategies and tactics to ensure that they are not engaging in impact-washing

We commit to cultural sensitivity in campaign creative

Many marketing campaigns and messages have the potential to be insensitive. It takes a combination of self awareness and inclusion of others in the creative process to avoid marketing campaigns that are insensitive.

Our marketing projects will avoid the saviour complex

Sometimes well-intentioned people target a perceived need for support without including and empowering the affected community. They may use their access to resources to provide a solution solely from their external position of privilege. This approach can be characterised as a saviour complex and resulting communications, solutions, and power dynamics are often problematic and reinforce systems of oppression.

Dignity vs focusing on the problem

As marketers we choose how to represent people. Typically people who have barriers in their lives are in the best position to remove those barriers. The process of dignification, deep understanding, and empowerment are the first steps toward solving key social issues. It is also important to recognise and understand the social and economic systems that lead to the issue in the first place. Any complex issue likely has multiple causes and multiple potential solutions and it's important as marketers for organisations that are trying to address any social or environmental issue that we humble ourselves and commit to exploring various perspectives and options for how to build campaigns aimed at promoting products or services as solutions to long standing issues.

Using images of people in need, especially stereotypical images, to elicit an emotional response and drive engagement and/or donations from the audience is problematic. This approach all too often misrepresents or oversimplifies issues while dishonouring real people and communities that are in need of support. While it may be tempting to take this approach, it can easily lead to insensitive campaigns and messages that may disempower the communities that we are striving to empower.

We pledge to:

- Take steps to avoid any exploitation, appropriation, or stereotyping of underrepresented or historically oppressed people or groups within marketing content.
- Seek out feedback on the appropriateness and sensitivity of marketing content. This looks different for different projects, but often involves working with the client to seek stakeholder input, and engaging the target audience via surveys, focus groups, or interviews.
- Ongoing internal training to increase awareness of cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness.

We commit to permission-based email marketing

This is marketing where the recipient of the marketing messages provides permission to send them marketing materials.

We pledge to focus our email marketing on:

- Creating value within any free content (including videos, blogs, online resources, social media posts, etc.)
- Being GDPR compliant
- Maintaining the trust of email lists by continuing to offer value and restricting messaging to content related to what the original opt-in intent

We commit to ethical digital advertising

Aside from considering the accuracy and honesty of the content, we must also consider the ethics of the targeting approach. Digital advertising brings its own unique set of ethical issues related to data privacy. Facebook, Google, and many other digital media companies have developed sophisticated tracking technologies in order to understand, profile, track, and target users online so that their paying advertisers can reach their exact target audience via their digital advertising products and services. This kind of granular targeting often comes at the cost of individual users' privacy. As consumer attitudes and technologies change, the ethical considerations that surround digital advertising are rapidly evolving. It is highly likely that the line of what is both legal and ethically acceptable will shift many times over the short and long term.

Our approach to ethical advertising includes the following considerations:

- **False advertising:** If an advertisement makes untrue claims about a product or services or clearly misrepresents what is being offered then it is false advertising which is clearly an unethical marketing tactic
- **Issues with Advertorial Advertising:** It is important that an online user can tell what is paid advertising vs what is editorial content. Advertorial content is content that looks like unbiased editorial/earned media but is actually paid advertising. This type of content can take place on written articles, social media posts, written reviews, or videos. Influencer marketing often relies on the process of well connected social influencers promoting products or services to their audiences, often through content that would be considered advertorial if the influencer is not transparent that the content is a paid promotion. While advertorial content may be seen by some as an ethical grey area, it is increasingly becoming clear that misleading users into believing that a brand mention is based on editorial merit alone, when in fact the placement was paid for by the brand is an unethical marketing tactic by both the publisher and brand buying the paid content.
- **Pop ups, pop unders and modal windows:** Pop ups or pop unders (that create new tabs or windows behind the main browser window) are now widely considered unethical marketing tactics. They often offer misleading statistics about how many people actually see their content and few users actually engage with this type of content. The modal window is a term for using similar techniques within your own website where the pop up is part of your own web page. Modal windows are often used for contact forms, email signups and other strategies. When properly implemented modal windows can be helpful for the user and very effective for marketing, however when overused they can become annoying and can degrade the user's experience of your website. Examples of best practice for modal window use:
 - Use them in ways that offer clear value

- Limit how often they are used, allow people to opt out of modal windows
- Make it easy to close them
- If a user closes a modal window save that info so that they don't see them over and over again
- If a user completes a modal window for an opt in, then you don't need to show that user the window again

We commit to ethical search engine optimisation (SEO)

Search engines use algorithms to determine what content to show at the top. In the world of SEO and content marketing, any tactics that are considered manipulative or unethical are typically referred to as “black hat” tactics. On the opposite end of this spectrum, you'll find ethical or “white hat” SEO tactics based on providing valuable and useful content that aligns with what users and search algorithms are looking for.

Through the use of white hat SEO we will provide valuable and useful content that aligns with what users and search algorithms are looking for.

We practice and encourage the following best practices for white hat SEO and content marketing:

- Link building: Create valuable content that people will want to link to
- Using PR and aligned partnerships to build links
- Proper use of redirects to help users find the right content
- Creating helpful, well branded 404 pages with useful navigation
- Put the user first, focus on value, create content that aligns with our mission

Black hat SEO: tactics that we avoid and discourage

- Purchasing links – Paying for links from other websites. Links should be built organically out of merit and from real relationships and partnerships
- Automated link building – Using software or online bots to build links
- Hidden content and links – Intentionally hiding content or links so that only the search engines can see them
- Automated, stolen or plagiarised content generation – Using content scraping technology, AI content development, or direct content theft to generate high volumes of content to build your site's size and perceived authority
- Keywords stuffing, over optimisation – There is a fine line between manually optimising content for SEO best practices (white hat onpage optimisation) and over optimisation which can also be called keyword stuffing. It takes experience and a deep understanding of the latest algorithms to learn where this line is. As the algorithm changes, the line may shift over time

- Misdirection – Unethical redirects: Cloaking and doorway pages. There are a variety of shady redirection schemes used in black hat SEO. These typically involve redirecting people away from long form content into pages that are more focused on conversions/sales, affiliate marketing, or paid advertising. In these cases the content that appealed to the search engine algorithm which resulted in the high organic ranking is not what the user sees after they click the link

We commit to update these practices as the industry evolves

We expect for ethical marketing practices to continue to evolve along with the technologies marketers use to discover, reach, and engage audiences. The line that separates ethical from unethical marketing practices can shift rapidly as major online platforms such as Google, Facebook, and other search and social applications roll out updates and new options for data-driven targeting. We will continue to monitor the state of the field across different marketing channels and tactics and update our practices accordingly.

Thank you for reading this. Let us know if you have any feedback or questions.