

The Alliance Code of Conduct



About this Code of Conduct

The Alliance Code of Conduct sets the standard of conduct that the Alliance seeks for the independent marketing agency community.

It's a code (of honour, integrity and creativity) to which all Alliance members must strive to adhere. In addition, of course, to all statutory legal and self-regulatory business requirements.

It stands as an agreement between you, the Alliance, your fellow members, your employees, clients and customers. This Code applies to all members.

No exceptions.

It aims to encourage fairness, equity and respect and, as a consequence, to cultivate a vibrant, diverse, profitable and successful wider commercial independent agency community.

The Alliance is committed to, and believes passionately in, a 'people-first' approach. Because by having policies and principles that put people first, you'll create a great people agency. One with a vibrant socially responsible culture that pushes ground-breaking work that will, in turn, attract the very best talent and client relationships. After all, it's no surprise that people want to work for and with agencies with good employment practices.

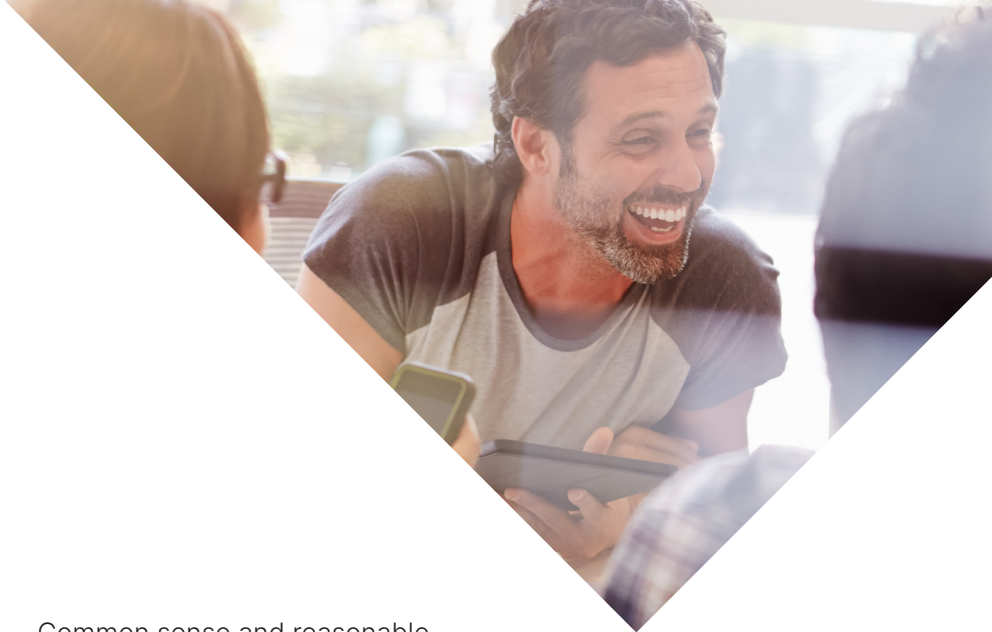
It's imperative to us that we get things right and foster our unique position in the market. Our commitment to high standards is embodied in our Code of Conduct, which is set out in full in this document.

All elements of this Code of Conduct should be viewed as the eventual destination for all Alliance members. However, we know that some agencies are further down the road on some aspects than others – so, some parts should act as a best practice guide for those still on their individual journeys to improve the standards as part of the wider independent agency community.

Common sense and reasonable expectations should prevail.

For example, getting your people policies right and making sure your business practices are professional and ethical, are absolutely fundamental and should be in place today. However, some aspects of this Code should be viewed as aspirational but no-less-important goals to achieve as soon as possible – such as your diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy and policies being fully enacted; or the degree to which your sustainability programme has been developed and put in place; or your willingness not to pitch for free.

The Alliance is here to help independent agencies 'build back better' and to make 'doing good' across all our core principles part of our member agencies ability to 'do well' – today and tomorrow.



Our core principles

1. Put your people first, by

- Making great people a priority. Attract and retain the best and brightest (and most willing-to-learn) talent.
- Putting staff wellbeing at the top of the agenda.
- Recruiting talent from diverse sources.
- Committing to continuous learning and development.

2. Create a socially responsible culture, by

- Promoting and supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Developing (and maintaining) an Action Plan for sustainable business practices.

3. Take care of your clients, by

- Maintaining the highest professional and ethical standards in all business activities.
- Creating an atmosphere of trust and empowerment.
- Building open, collaborative relationships.
- Doing great work that reflects a fair and inclusive world.



Make the working environment a safe and supportive space (everyday)

Attracting and retaining the best and brightest (and most willing-to-learn) talent.

Use honest and open recruitment processes.

Have a fair, transparent and reciprocal relationship with recruitment agencies.

Set clear expected DEI standards from your recruitment partners.

Recognise the importance of cultural diversity in the workplace – race, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, religion.

Recognise the importance of celebrating different cultural events and perspectives to create a shared sense of belonging.

Create flexible working and job-design practices.

Commit to combating salary inequality by elevating experience, market benchmarking and similar internal role comparison above current/last salary.

Agree to pay all interns.

1

Put your people first

Putting staff wellbeing at the top of the agency agenda.

Make the working environment a safe and supportive space (everyday).

Be proactive about putting psychological safety to the top of the priority list.

Demonstrably support the [#timeTo](#) initiative to stamp out all forms of sexual harassment in the advertising and marketing industry.

Whether it be HR, line managers or senior management – or a combination of all three – have clearly defined responsibilities to demonstrate that there is a strategy in place, and that mental health is an issue that matters to the agency.

Commit to train mental-health first aiders and peer coaches to provide awareness and support the wellbeing of your people.

Set realistic expectations around hours, deadlines and the 'always on' culture.

Being committed to continuous learning and development.

Ensure all employees are given access to ongoing training and development, are aware of the Alliance Code of Conduct, and encouraged to take the time to continuously improve their skills and craft.

Commit to train your employees to be inclusive leaders and colleagues.

2

Create a socially responsible culture

Promoting and supporting diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

While UK legislation – covering age, disability, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation among others – sets minimum standards, recognise that an effective diversity and inclusion strategy goes beyond legal compliance and seeks to add value to your agency by contributing to employee wellbeing and engagement.

Value everyone in the organisation as an individual.

Allow different perspectives to be heard.

Set clear DEI goals and timelines for improving diversity, equity and inclusion and communicate goals and progress with transparency.

Clearly set expectations for staff, clients and suppliers around your position on diversity and inclusion.

Appoint a DEI Champion and inclusive team to design your DEI plan and drive action.

Share building accessibility in advance with all visitors – preferably with clear instructions on your website.

Value everyone in the organisation as an individual

Developing an Action Plan for sustainable business practices.

Be intentional about your strategy, hold people accountable and measure the results.

Invest time in training employees on the importance of sustaining the environment and share what the organisation is doing to help conserve resources.

Maintain a list of sustainable friendly vendors and make it a priority to only use organisations that embrace sustainable business practices.

Consider how your agency can adopt policies that reduce, re-use and recycle – to understand and improve the world around us.

3

Take care of your clients

Maintaining the highest professional and ethical standards in all business activities.

Conduct your business in a manner that will reflect positively on the image, reputation, standing and good name of your clients as well as the wider independent agency community.

Conduct yourself and your business activities with due regard to the national laws, regulations and official policies of the discipline in which you operate.

Make sure confidential information is kept exactly that.

If you handle data, handle within the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Be an ambassador for the **Way of the Independent.**

Creating an atmosphere of trust and empowerment.

Foster collaboration and mutuality in your ways of working.

Trust must be earned. Walk your talk and keep your promises. Building trust is worth the effort because once trust is lost, it can be very difficult to recover.

Act objectively; not giving preferential consideration to any approach dictated by your aptitude, skillset and background and always deferring to experts appropriate to the specific client need.

Use internal inclusion teams to feed into your strategic and creative output and take accountability for reflecting a fair and inclusive world in the work you produce for clients.

Encourage honest dialogue and foster accountability by building in processes that become part of the relationship, such as an evaluation of every project (positives, negatives, things to change, etc.)

Be clear and honest about any conflicts of interest.

Be fair and transparent in your billing and payment practices.

Be circumspect about speculative or contingent-upon work.

Don't pitch for free – be crystal clear, nurture and communicate your area of expertise, and your credentials, so that it's easier for clients to find the right agency partner instead of playing the client-agency 'swipe left or right dating game'!



Alliance of
Independent
Agencies