

## A TEMPLATE CODE OF ETHICS

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### Introduction

This template Code of Ethics (CoE) is based on Ethical Reading's own CoE. To adapt it to your needs, you will need to change text text which appears in angle brackets ("`<`" and "`>`") and adapt the rest of the text as appropriate to fit your organisation's needs.

The purpose of a CoE is to establish expected values and standards of behaviour for all organisation workers and representatives both internally and externally. For the CoE to be effective, these standards need to be embedded into the core processes and procedures inside the organisation. The accompanying guidelines for implementation aim to support organisations in doing so.

We believe having clear expected standards of behaviour as exemplified by a CoE is a crucial step in developing a healthy and ethical workplace.

### Acknowledgements

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- Neil Thompson, Director, WorkInConfidence
- Kieran Magee, UNITE Convener, Reading Borough Council
- Richard Lawrence, Founder, Resourcing Solutions Ltd
- Adam Jacobs, Owner, Jacobs the Jewellers Ltd.
- Nicola Ellen, Corporate Responsibility Director and Consultant, Shoosmiths Ltd.

Any errors or omissions in this document are of course, our responsibility.

## The Code of Ethics in summary

Value	Definition	Business Benefits	Implementation ideas
<b>Compassion</b>	Concern for the welfare and feelings of others leading to action.	Improves understanding of others and reduces likelihood of conflict	Communicating clearly and with sensitivity the reasons behind tough decisions e.g. redundancy. Allowing sufficient time off for major life events such as a serious illness or death of a family member.
<b>Responsibility and accountability</b>	Acting in line with duties and obligations, taking responsibility for what one has done.	Creates an agile business able to respond appropriately to challenges, improves reputation.	Creating a climate where people are willing to speak up if they think things are wrong, helping people to learn from mistakes when they happen.
<b>Fairness</b>	Treating people in ways that are unaffected by irrelevant differences between them.	Helps preserve institutional knowledge and staff capital through better staff retention, improves employer reputation, increases staff motivation and productivity.	Formulating anti-harassment policies in a way that emphasises fair and thorough investigation of allegations followed by fair and proportional responses, ensuring equitable access to incentive schemes.
<b>Respect for rights</b>	Treating people in accord with their inherent dignity.	Helps ensure a strong, diverse workforce, helps preserve institutional knowledge and staff capital through better staff retention, improves staff morale.	Ensuring all hiring and promotion processes are driven by the organisation's core values, ensuring environmental respect is embedded in organisational practices.
<b>Integrity and honesty</b>	Consistently holding oneself to high moral standards.	Enhances business reputation, secures a more loyal customer base.	Have a clear statement of your organisation's values, ask staff to sign a pledge agreeing to abide by ethical constraints.
<b>Teamwork/ Collaboration</b>	Working cooperatively towards good ends.	Maximises the value of human resources.	360-degree reviews, incentive schemes which recognise the role of teamwork in achieving goals.
<b>Social purpose</b>	Aligning the work people do with the social value the work adds to society.	Improves the reputation of the organisation, benefits around consumer activism about social values, improves staff hiring and retention (especially with respect to younger staff).	Refraining from aggressive tax avoidance, dealing promptly with suppliers, identifying and targeting relevant social needs the organisation can contribute to.

## <Organisation X> Code of Ethics

### <Organisation X> vision and purpose

<Replace the paragraph below with your organisations vision and purpose

Our vision is of a Reading where organisations have a deeply rooted sense of ethics and are strongly engaged with the local community to make Reading a better place to live and work. To that effect, Ethical Reading's purpose is to inspire, educate and collaborate with Reading's community, its businesses and organisations.>

### <Organisation X> values and ethical standards

This organisation is committed to high ethical standards. Both as a group and as individuals, we are committed to:

- Treating people connected with our organisation **compassionately**—including customers, suppliers, co-workers, funders/owners, and the wider community.
- Acting **responsibly** and being **accountable** for what we do.
- Treating people connected with our organisation **fairly**.
- Treating people in ways that **respect** their rights.
- Having **integrity** and **honesty**.
- Looking for ways to **work together** to achieve valuable ends.
- Never losing sight of our organisation's **social purpose**.

These standards are wide enough to encompass activities in many different sectors covering relationships with customers, suppliers, co-workers, funders/owners and the wider community. Below are brief explanations of these standards.

**Compassion** involves concern for the welfare and feelings of others. Compassion often leads to action, for example in helping others avoid harm or recover from a harm that has already hit. Admittedly, some jobs foreseeably involve doing to some others what they do not like. Examples are imposing punishments, opposing others in legal conflicts, denying to some people a scarce resource because others need or deserve it more, making people redundant, etc. To do such a job compassionately involves avoiding unnecessary harms to others and taking reasonable steps to mitigate harm when it is unavoidable.

To **act responsibly** is to act in accordance with one's duties and obligations. Of course these include not only duties to the organisation but also duties to the wider community, including being transparent and open in the provision of appropriate information (i.e. information that is not confidential or sensitive). '**Being accountable**' includes taking responsibility for what one has done.

**Treating people fairly** involves treating people in ways that are unaffected by irrelevant differences between them. Differences in religion, race, gender, and cultural background are of course typically irrelevant. Furthermore, fairness requires that people are not

required to do what they cannot do and that people get fair warning about any special requirements or constraints they are under while acting for the organisation.

**Treating people in ways that respect their rights** is here meant to be equivalent to treating people in accord with their inherent dignity, an equal status people have because of their shared membership of the human species. This dignity is crystallized in, and protected by, people's moral rights. Respect for the moral importance and rights of others cannot be incompatible with recognition of one's own moral importance and rights. Treating people in ways that respect their rights also requires respecting the need people have for a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

**Honesty** of course requires avoidance of lying. **Integrity** involves reliability about doing what one believes to be right, consistently holding oneself to high moral standards. It also involves reliability about not pretending to believe something one doesn't believe or pretending to have expertise in an area where one lacks it.

Normally, people can improve their own prospects or the prospects of others best by **working cooperatively**. The vast majority of humanity's biggest contributions to aggregate well-being would not have been possible without extensive **collaboration**. However, just as openness is sometimes wrong, there are situations in which cooperation is morally and legally unacceptable in a market economy. Price fixing and other anti-competitive business practices are examples of unacceptable cooperation.

An ethical business recognises that increasing individual wealth (either in terms of salaries or shareholder dividends) and satisfying consumer demand cannot be the sole motivating forces in an organisation. In addition, an organisation needs to have a **social purpose** in identifying and helping to deliver relevant social goods. Different organisations may have different specific social purposes (e.g. a small local producer might identify the social need to improve local employability skills or their local environment as part of their social purpose, while a multinational energy producer might have an aim of reducing global carbon emission levels, or a large corporate financial services provider might focus on the need to improve the financial literacy of citizens). Nevertheless, at the most general level, the relationship between an organisation and the society it serves should be grounded on meeting the obligations imposed by recognition of social purpose (e.g. in terms of respecting the spirit, not just the letter, of reasonable taxation systems, dealing promptly and efficiently with suppliers and customers, etc).

## Contributors

We would like to thank the following organisations for their support in developing this code of ethics.

