

Ethical Media Policy Framework, written by Seb Ross and published by Ethical Media Ltd.

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## INTRODUCTION

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We want to be a successful ethical business. The policies and principles set out in this document have been developed to ensure that ethics are central to our business and that the drive for profit is in line with our social and environmental values.

### **Advantages of this approach:**

Ethics are not an afterthought, they inform the day-to-day behaviour of the firm.

Our stakeholders can use the policy statements set out in this document to hold us to account.

**Effective implementation of ethical practices in a small business requires more than statements of intent. To be taken seriously and acted upon, ethics must be properly aligned to the firm's culture. We have found that establishing regular meetings that engages staff in examining:**

Their personal values and beliefs – what they think is good for society and the environment;

How these values can be translated into the daily behaviour of the firm;

How the firm as a whole can then have a positive impact on society and the environment;

Has been central to the development of a business culture that encourages ethical practices.

**All aspects of Ethical Media's business practices are influenced by the personal and shared values of our staff. Our approach to business ethics is founded firstly on developing a clear common understanding of these values and then making sure the business behaves in a way that is consistent with those values.**

## OUR CORE VALUES

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Ethical Media's policies are based on five values. Their selection is based on the collective experience of the individuals working for the firm and they are the current synthesis of an on-going dialogue with both internal and external stakeholders.

### **We aim to be:**

**1 AUTHENTIC**

**2 INNOVATIVE**

**3 PROFITABLE**

**4 SUSTAINABLE**

**5 ACCOUNTABLE**

## VALUES INTO PRACTICE POLICIES 2003

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The policies address each of the core values. We recognise that as a small firm with limited time and resources it has not been possible to implement all our ideas about how an ethical communications agency should operate. However, we intend to revise the policies annually, to allow us to update and improve our business practices.

# 1 AUTHENTIC

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We have decided to specialise in working solely for clients who share our social and environmental values. Authentic working means we invest our time and talent only on projects we value – that will make a difference.

Specialising in this way means we have become experienced in developing communications which meet certain types of objectives, typical to the sectors we work in.

Working on projects we truly care about also makes for a more creative, productive, fun and healthy working environment.

# POLICY 2003/2004

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**The decision about which types of clients to work with is the primary statement of the social and environmental values of our staff.**

We currently work for clients in the following sectors, helping them to achieve their potential:

Sustainable development;

International development;

Corporate social responsibility;

Community regeneration;

Music and the arts;

Accessibility and the digital divide;

Education and training;

Environmental protection and enhancement;

Drug rehabilitation and care.

Social enterprises.

## 2 INNOVATIVE

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Our clients' interests will be propelled further by the quality of our communications solutions. Because of the types of clients we choose to work with this has a beneficial impact on society and the environment.

To develop high quality communications solutions we need to develop products and services that address the specific and changing needs of the sectors in which we operate – and the culture in which they must compete.

This means that in addition to using established tools and processes for effective communication, we must employ highly creative individuals and invest time and money in researching and developing innovative new ways to meet the needs of our clients as they change.

## POLICY 2003/2004

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**Produce solutions that meet the specific challenges of our clients (for example, communicating rich and complex ideas and values simply), allowing our clients to compete effectively in an information culture which is overcrowded and built for low-attention span audiences.**

**Build tools and processes that make these new solutions more cost-effective and applicable, allowing more organisations working for positive change to communicate as effectively as possible.**

**Look outside the immediate problem/solution to generate tools and processes that address the more systemic weaknesses of communication in the areas in which we work.**

**Treat procurement as an aspect of the design process, using it to generate positive effects on society and the environment and develop better ways to demonstrate the business benefits of these initiatives.**

We have produced our own recycled paper stock out of the office waste paper collected over a couple of months. We have used this paper to develop promotional materials – boosting our reputation as a socially and environmentally progressive business among potential clients, while helping them to think about the changes that they could make.

We are currently developing live data-modelling applications on our website to demonstrate how much energy we are using, help us to improve our practice, and encourage others to think about their consumption.

**Be a creative learning organisation.**

We balance support with challenge and try to make staff feel confident about taking responsibility for their own actions. Engaging staff in work that they have an authentic personal interest in promotes creativity (see 'Authentic').

**Undertake research and development to produce tools and processes allowing social and environmental messages to compete with convenience and (conventional) lifestyle messages.**

**Assess the efficacy of our communications to allow us to evolve our working practices to achieve more positive impact using minimum resource.**

### 3 PROFITABLE

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Making a profit gives us independence and the freedom to invest in ways that we know will take the business further.

By being profit making we show that it is possible to be rewarded financially as well as make a positive contribution to society and the environment. We want communications agencies to see that they can be sustainable and accountable whilst continuing to make a profit.

As our market share grows competitors will start to recognise the value clients place in authentic sustainable and accountable practices. They will have to change to compete - positive change through competitive pressure.

### POLICY 2003/2004

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**Assess the impact of our media communications to improve our competitiveness.**

After each project we try to use feedback from clients to assess how practices and service can be improved.

**Monitor the costs of initiatives designed to limit negative impacts on society and the environment.**

By re-utilising and re-purposing materials, for example by re-using envelopes and making notebooks out of scrap paper, we can actually reduce costs.

**Develop ways to ensure productivity is maximised, for example, by keeping staff motivated.**

Ensuring that where possible staff work on projects they are personally interested in makes for a more motivated work force - that is more productive. After each project we use client feedback to demonstrate to staff how their work is positively effecting society and the environment – to sustain motivation both within Ethical Media and the client organisation.

**Develop ways to promote an associative economy where organisations which contribute positively to society and the environment can work for mutual financial benefit.**

Through networking we develop stronger linkages between organisations and individuals which can work with each other. We are partnering with Authentic Business, The Social Venture Network and The Findhorn Foundation to set up a socially responsible business community called 'Walk Your Talk'

**Build longer-term partnerships with clients to ensure that we secure regular work and the client receives the best value for money.**

Because we share the same values as our clients we can develop trusting relationships which put their communications requirements in the context of longer term organisational objectives. This ensures their budgets are spent wisely – on products and services that will provide the most value for money in terms of meeting these objectives.

## 4 SUSTAINABLE

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**"For the business enterprise, sustainable development means adopting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future."**

*International Institute for Sustainable Development, [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org)*

**"The twelve features (or identifiers) of sustainability are as follows:**

Use of renewable resources

Control of wastes, emissions and persistent chemicals

Good health throughout life

Social skills, participation and lifelong learning

Work, creativity and education

Trusted and accessible governance and justice

Mutual respect and understanding

Institutional promotion and support for sustainable development

Safe and supportive living and working environments

Resource and process efficiency

Finance, accounting and sustainable development"

*As defined by Forum for the Future, [www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)*

Ethical Media is committed to operating using sustainable business practice and promoting sustainability. Communicating sustainability is part of our reason for being.

## POLICY 2003/2004

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**Ensure our communications solutions have a positive effect on society and the environment.**

We only work for organisations that aim to be socially and environmentally responsible and in sectors where our expertise can add value to the communications solution.

**Ensure where possible that we recycle materials used in communications production and the running of the office.**

We use a company called Paperound to help us recycle properly.

We recycle paper, glass, plastics and tin cans.

**Only work with printers who can offer recycled paper products and who use environmentally responsible processes.**

We use a printing co-operative that specialises in using recycled materials and environmentally friendly inks whilst maintaining quality.

**Maximise purchases of recycled goods and the use of environmentally friendly suppliers.**

We have signed up to the London Mayor's Green Procurement code and we already buy the majority of our stationery from a green stationers. (see innovative)

**Where possible ensure production staff and clients share a sense of common purpose in promoting positive social and environmental change.**

We only recruit production staff committed to using communications to benefit society and the environment. This arrangement makes for more satisfied staff and more satisfied clients.

**Ensure we are a learning organisation.**

We have a dedicated budget for each member of staff's training and development.

## 5 ACCOUNTABLE

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**“To account for something is to explain or justify the acts, omissions, risks and dependencies for which one is responsible to people with a legitimate interest.**

**To discharge its accountability, an organisation will account for its acts, omissions, risks and dependencies. However, in addition to this accounting requirement of transparency, accountability also entails a broader obligation of responsiveness and compliance.”**

*As defined by AccountAbility, [www.accountability.org.uk](http://www.accountability.org.uk)*

At Ethical Media it is our view that if a communications firm is to be ethical, it must be accountable:

Investigate the effects of its media communications products on stakeholders;

Determine the efficacy of media communications products in terms of how they fulfil clients aims;

Publish the findings of investigations and explain and justify our actions;

Use accounting practices to improve services.

## POLICY 2003/2004

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**Use information from clients to improve our service and communicate findings to stakeholders.**

We intend to publish an annual report for 2003/2004 detailing the possible effects of our communications on society and the environment.

**Ensure we account for how much we are recycling each year and communicate this to stakeholders.**

Paperround provide us with a certificate detailing our paper recycling achievements

**Ensure we are open about our use of suppliers and intermediaries.**

We intend to publish our supplier list on our website.

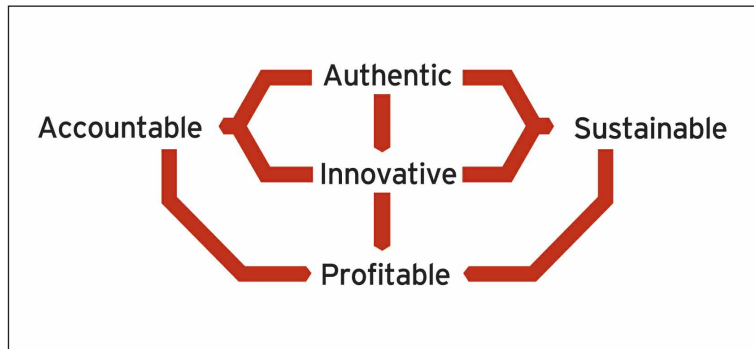
**Encourage a working environment that is transparent.**

Where possible we credit individual staff on client materials, involve all staff in decision-making, and allow access to colleagues' details of pay.

## CORE VALUES WORKING TOGETHER

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The values work together in a self-supporting system:



Because our staff believe strongly in what they are doing this positively affects their commitment and creativity – enabling us to develop high quality and innovative products. Clients value the quality of this service and are often keen to develop long lasting mutually beneficial working relationships. This has a positive bearing on our revenue streams and in turn our profits.

Accountability and sustainability are infused into all aspects of the system. Sustainability ensures we use business approaches which are socially and environmentally responsible. Accountability helps us to monitor our services, making sure that we deliver on our promises. Accountability also helps to keep our staff motivated by demonstrating to them how their creative output effects society and the environment in a way that is consistent with their personal values.

Both sustainability and accountability contribute to the bottom line by helping us to improve the value of our services and by helping us to save resources and so cut costs.

The more profitable we are the more we can invest in developing quality innovative products and services and approaches to accountability and sustainability which demonstrate how to be a successful ethical business.