

Adrian Ashton – Code of Conduct

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INTRODUCTION

In reflecting my values as a freelance enterprise consultant, I have created this Code of Conduct.

Whilst it is usually only larger businesses, or incorporated entities that adopt these, I feel it is important that I also publicly state my intended behaviours. This is so that clients, collaborations, and cheerleaders can better understand what they should be able to expect from me, and in doing so, we can build more productive and impactful relationships together.

It is also a reflection of my business' overarching purpose of trying to make things that seem hard possible, so that more people can create changes in the world in ways that will make it a better place for all of us – because it is currently unjust for far too many.

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COMPLIANCE

As a sole trader, I maintain ongoing reporting and re-validation with several regulatory and statutory bodies to ensure I remain fully compliant with all relevant legislation. This means that I am currently registered with/making ongoing returns to:

- Information Commissioner's Office (as a registered data controller and processor)
- DBS check (enhanced level)
- HMRC
- Hiscox Insurance (for professional and public liability policies)

CONFIDENTIALITY

I am aware that much of the work I do means that I can become privy to sensitive information (both professional and personal). I will not share or disclose any such information shared with me, unless with the person's agreement or required to do so by law.

I will also hold and manage any personal data or information shared with me in my standing as a registered data controller and data processor with the ICO.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

I shall actively seek to avoid becoming involved in works or activities that may create actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Where this is not possible, or I identify I have unavoidably become so positioned, I shall openly disclose this to relevant clients and parties at the earliest opportunity and seek to pro-actively work with them to resolve this.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

As a sole trader, many of the ethical standards available to businesses to help them assure others of their intentions and commitments are not available to me because of the assumptions on which they were designed.

However, I am accredited and certificated against several marks, and awarding bodies. My business' practices in respect of procurement, environmental impact, community support, management of tax payments, behaviours, etc are re-assessed against their standards on a rolling basis. These are listed below, with links to each's respective websites to show not only what I have been able to evidence my business' practices against, but also how to raise concerns to them about any apparent breach I may be committing in respect of them:

- Organisation of Responsible Business / Responsible Business - <https://theresponsiblebusinessdirectory.co.uk/member/adrian-ashton>

- Good Business Charter - <https://www.goodbusinesscharter.com/>
- The Charter for Inclusive Entrepreneurship - <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/business/charter-for-inclusive-entrepreneurship/index.aspx>
- Fair Payment Code - <https://www.smallbusinesscommissioner.gov.uk/fpc/>

FINANCE

I commit to paying my suppliers within 24 working hours of receiving their invoices. Having been able to evidence this is part of the basis on which I am a certificated signatory to the FPC.

I will agree payment schedules with clients in respect of work and projects – this will usually see me invoice on the completion of work, but may from time to time see my invoicing in stages throughout the project depending on the circumstances of the work and by agreement with the client.

I seek to review my charges at the start of each calendar year to allow clients who are considering recommission me in the following financial year time to cost this into any budgets, etc.

INCLUSION AND RESPECT

Through how I structure and design my work, I will always seek to be cognisant of the different circumstances, backgrounds, and experiences that different people have and hold. This may mean that I adapt the materials I use, the way I use language, or the format and structure of activities to seek to ensure that they are as accessible and safe for people to engage with as possible. This is the basis of why I may ask clients from time to time about any disclosed needs or preferences that people they may be asking me to work with on their behalf have shared with them.

I will always strive to show people I meet equal professional respect, on the basis that I consider everyone is an equally important human being.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Much of my work with clients is based on my own existing intellectual property, which I retain the full rights to – both in course of delivering the work, and afterwards.

I recognise that from time to time, new intellectual property may be created in the course of my work on a project. In such circumstances, my usual position is that this new IP is the property of my client but that I can reference it in the future in association with their name and the relevant project. However, I will always seek to clarify this in each instance.

IMPACT AND VALUES

As a sole trader, I commit to openly reporting the impacts of my business and its practices on an annual basis, and in a framework that relates to the United Nation's Global Sustainable Development Goals¹.

Within this framework, I report on the environmental impact that any travel I have undertaken within a client contract has created in respect of increased carbon dioxide emissions. I voluntarily choose to co-offset² the impact of this at my own cost, and not ask my clients for any additional payments or consideration (other than our agreed quotations for the work) for this, or any other, impact practices I have chosen to adopt.

I also report on how my values of accountability; fun; challenging; grace; equity; and solidarity have been manifested in my working practices over the year, and assign metrics to consider how far they have helped to inform different impacts being reported.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I commit to regularly invest in my own ongoing professional development through a mixture of conferences, webinars, research journals, subscriptions, memberships to professional and trade bodies, and similar. I maintain an ongoing CPD log of such activities which is available to review on request, as well as how much of my total revenue as a business has been spent in such development and training activities.

I also encourage and actively seek feedback from multiple perspectives and sources on an ongoing basis. This is used to help benchmark my delivery and performance, and identify opportunities to adapt practices and working models so that they might achieve greater impact in the future.

QUALITY

I will always seek to collaborate with clients in the design and review of specifications of work, to ensure that it can be best informed in ultimately delivering the best outcomes for them.

I will always seek to avoid my professional judgement and conduct being influenced by any personal interests or beliefs I may hold.

If, in the course of my work with any client, I become aware of issues or concerns that may reduce the overall quality of the project, I will bring this to their attention at the earlier opportunity and seek to work with them to manage this (which I recognise and accept may include my being withdrawn from the contract).

¹ <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1o7M70ttK7My-ieTuBRi-gGeR9VOUfYxl?usp=sharing>

² <https://www.coopclimateaction.com/>

REPUTATIONAL RISK

I am always concerned for clients' reputation, and will seek to protect this as far as possible through not only how I deliver and undertake my work with them, but also through my conduct on other projects and work.

This may include my making proactive constructive disclosures where I believe such a risk may arise. For example – if I am threatened with any legal action against myself, I will constructively disclose this to clients while I am resolving it, to help them best manage the reputational risk that this may create for them because of their association with me.

I will not falsify any information or share anything in the course of my work that is not already in the public domain, or I have the originator's permission to share.

RESPONSIVENESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

I will always aim to acknowledge and respond to active client emails within 2-3 working days – others may take up to 7 days (*if not sooner in both instances*).

If my attention and response is needed more quickly, I welcome people phoning or texting me for a response within 24 working hours (*if not sooner*).

As a general approach, I seek to avoid working in the evenings or over weekends – but recognise that for some people this may be problematic for being able to work with them owing to their wider commitments, so am happy to be open to being flexible on this by arrangement. Also, as an unpaid carer, I may on occasional need to arrange my working patterns so I am sharing emails, etc with people outside of these times also. However, just because it may be convenient for me to send emails, etc outside of traditional working hours, does not mean that I would expect anyone else to receive or act on them until a time that is convenient for them to do so.

At the start of any project or schedule of works, I will always seek to agree timelines and dates, and will regularly review these to keep clients and others aware of progress, and better able to manage any activities or other projects associated with it.

SAFETY

As well as taking steps to manage my own safety in different working environments, I will also actively identify any potential risks to the safety of others to clients who I am working with at the time – this is through a process of dynamic risk assessment.

I am also a certificated mental health in the workplace advocate, so will also have a concern for the emotional and mental safety of how I work, and the people I meet in the course of my work with clients.