

GWA Code of Conduct

1. Preamble

The German Association of Communications Agencies GWA represents Germany's leading communications agencies. These agencies contribute significantly to national economic development and have an active and responsible involvement in opinion making.

GWA member agencies make a commitment to products and conduct in line with legal regulations as well as with social, economic and environmental principles of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Code of Conduct issued by the German Advertising Council shall apply.

The member agencies work against all forms of discrimination and they comply with ethical management principles. This shall apply both among themselves and towards all relevant partners and stakeholders.

GWA member agencies want to implement sustainable business processes, use resources sparingly and minimize environmental pollution. This also applies to partners and service providers of GWA agencies.

2. Competition Guidelines

Pluralistic competition is the basis for growth and innovation in a social market economy. Competition among GWA member agencies shall take place in an honest and fair manner. Moral business standards shall be observed at all times.

GWA member agencies may make no untrue, dismissive or discrediting statements about other market participants. They commit to avoiding any actions that may cause damage to the industry's reputation or prestige.

The agencies always strive to provide their services at adequate rates. Industry standards such as the studies regarding hourly rates prepared by GWA should be drawn upon as a basis for calculating prices.

GWA member agencies shall reject any invitations to tender that obviously do not meet the industry standards in terms of their tasks, time frame and budget. Industry standards include in particular payment of appropriate compensation and the protection of ideas and concepts developed by agencies.

3. Cooperating with Clients

The most important measure of the quality of services provided by the GWA agencies are their effectiveness and efficiency regarding value created for their customers. Any consultation and creative services shall be performed to the agencies' best knowledge and belief.

A significant quality characteristic for cooperation between GWA member agencies and their clients is that the value provided by products and services is subject to critical discussion.

GWA agencies shall not engage in any disparaging or disrespectful activities. Honesty and integrity are the highest values of trustworthy communications work.

During service provision and also in billing, GWA agencies shall strive to provide maximum transparency for their clients.

Member companies are committed to treating sensitive client information confidentially, irrespective of whether any specific confidentiality agreements have been concluded.

4. Staff Members

GWA member agencies shall use only qualified staff members to perform their assignments. They commit to keeping their knowledge and skills up to date and to providing suitable training opportunities.

The GWA supports fair payment. Staff members of GWA member agencies are provided with equal opportunities and are able to work free from any forms of discrimination.

GWA member agencies shall refrain from using any improper means for head-hunting staff members of other agencies. The GWA Code of Conduct must be complied with in the case of any senior level staff changes.

5. Disputes

The first step to be taken in the case of any disputes among GWA member agencies regarding association matters, is to call the administrative office. From here, the president is informed as soon as possible. The managing director of the GWA will propose a solution to the parties involved in the dispute. The Council of Elders (see § 18 of the GWA statutes) may act as a mediation body in the case of ongoing disputes. No public statements shall be issued about any disputes.

6. Violations

Violations of the GWA Code of Conduct can be reported to any member of the GWA management board. This group also decides about any resulting measures and consequences for the member agencies. The Council of Elders is consulted if no majority of two thirds is reached in the vote.

This Code shall become effective at the General Assembly on 2 November 2016, including any supplements agreed upon on this occasion. Changes to this Code of Conduct may only be decided upon by the General Assembly.

Status: November 2020