

4As Revised Code of Ethics

4As Philippines Revised Code of Ethics* (as approved February 2025)

AIMS

The 4A's-P recognizes that, as in any professional undertaking, certain standards of behavior are necessary in the practice of advertising and marketing communications if its practitioners are to fulfill their business and social roles properly and effectively. Member-agencies shall consist of entities legitimately organized to engage in services involving marketing, communications, and/or advertising, whether this be in the area of creative development, media, digital, design, activation, public relations, content production, and publishing, branding, strategic planning or full service.

The member agencies of the 4A's-P, therefore voluntarily adopt this Code of Ethics and commit themselves to abide by it without reservation, with the following specific aims in mind:

1. To upgrade the practice of advertising and marketing communications (e.g., digital, content production, activation, media, CRM, etc.).
2. To promote the welfare of the association as a whole and of its member-agencies.
3. To enhance and make more effective the working relationships between member-agencies and the other sectors of the advertising and marketing communications industry.
4. To foster social responsibility among advertising and marketing communications practitioners and help protect the welfare of the general public.

ARTICLE I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The 4A's-P holds the following general guiding principles:

1. Advertising and marketing communications is a *productive activity* which importantly benefits society as a tool of business and as a persuasive form of communication.
2. It has a *social responsibility* to be truthful and relevant, to foster sound values, and promote the welfare of the public.

3. It thrives best in a climate of *fair competition* under a system of *free enterprise*.

4. Advertising and marketing communications agencies have certain *moral responsibilities to their clients* which arise out of the nature of their relationship.

5. They have certain *moral responsibilities to media, suppliers and other entities* with whom they deal in the course of doing business.

6. They have certain *moral responsibilities to one another and to the advertising and marketing communications industry as a whole*.

The practice of advertising and marketing communications should foster *love of country and things Filipino*, and should be constant with the *aspirations of the people* and observant of the *laws of the land*.

ARTICLE II

RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PUBLIC

Guiding Principles: The social responsibilities of member-agencies are primarily exercised through the communication materials produced for public consumption, and the guiding principles will be those of the truthfulness and honesty, decency, legality, and fair competition as generally accepted in business. Above all these, the fostering of sound personal and social values shall be overriding consideration in the creation of communication materials.

1. Truthful Presentation

Communication materials should not contain any statement or visual presentation which, directly or by implication, omission or ambiguity, can likely mislead the consumer.

No exaggerated claims purporting to be statements of facts should be made if they are likely to mislead.

A misleading material should not be exonerated on the grounds that the advertiser or someone acting on their behalf has subsequently provided the consumer with accurate information.

2. Honesty

Communication materials should be so framed as not to abuse the confidence of the consumer or exploit their lack of experience or knowledge. They should not, without justifiable reason, play on fear.

3. Decency

Communication materials should not contain statements or visual presentations offensive to public decency.

4. Testimonials and References to Third Parties

Testimonials should be genuine and not contain any statement or visual presentation likely to mislead nor should they be used in a manner having that effect.

Communication materials should not contain any references to any person, firm or institution without due written permission, nor should a picture of any identifiable person be used in materials without due written permission.

5. Defamatory References

Communication materials should not contain any references to another firm or product which is likely to bring that firm or product into contempt or ridicule.

6. Exploitation of Trademarks and Symbols

Communication materials should not take unfair advantage of the goodwill attached to the trademarks and symbols of another firm or product, or of the goodwill acquired by an advertising and marketing communications campaign.

7. Plagiarism / Imitation

Any obvious and patent imitation of advertising illustration, layout, copy, slogans, or packaging and labeling of products of an advertiser in any one country and likely either to create confusion in the market or to stop the anticipated use in that country or elsewhere of their communication materials should be avoided.

8. Identification of Advertisement

Advertisements should be clearly distinguishable as such, whatever the medium used; when published in a medium also containing news and editorial opinion, an advertisement should be so presented that the consumer can readily distinguish it from the editorial matter.

9. Safety Precautions

Communication materials should not contain any visual presentation of a situation where normal safety precautions are disregarded and which thus might encourage negligence.

10. Children

Communication materials addressed to children or young people should not contain any statement or visual presentation which might result in harm to them physically, mentally or morally. Such materials should not take advantage of the natural credulity of children or the lack

of experience of young people and should not strain their sense of loyalty.

11. Persons with Disabilities

Communication materials should not take advantage of the hopes of persons suffering from illness or of an impaired ability on the part of such persons to judge critically materials that hold out the promise of a cure or a recovery from illness.

12. Gender Sensitivity

Communication materials should not include gender stereotypes that are likely to cause harm or serious widespread offense. They should take care to avoid suggesting that roles or characteristics are always uniquely associated with one gender, the only options available to one gender, and never carried out or displayed by another gender.

13. Body Positivity

Communication materials should take care to avoid suggesting that an individual's happiness or emotional wellbeing should depend on conforming to an idealized stereotypical body shape or physical features.

14. Environmental Awareness

Communication materials should not promote practices that contribute significantly to environmental degradation. They should also take care to avoid greenwashing and other forms of misleading and socially irresponsible environmental claims.

15. Upgrading of Personal and Social Values

Advertising and marketing communications agencies, in creating materials to promote products and services, should always be aware of the potentially strong influence and persuasive power of this form of communication on the public, and should therefore exercise utmost care to foster edifying and wholesome personal and social values, consistent with the standards and aspirations of the particular society.

ARTICLE III

RESPONSIBILITIES TO ADVERTISERS

Guiding Principles: In their relationship with their clients and with advertisers in general, member-agencies will be guided by the principles of service based on best-effort, trustworthiness, and protection of clients' interest.

1. Commitment to Provide the Best Service

Member agencies shall exert their best effort in all aspects of rendering professional service to their clients, specifically:

a. They shall make it their duty to secure and learn fully all pertinent information regarding the accounts assigned to them and to help promote these in the marketplace to the best of their ability and within bounds of generally accepted business practice.

b. They shall exercise utmost objectivity and astuteness in the choice of, and in securing services from, media and suppliers, with the best interest of their clients as the primary and overriding consideration.

c. They shall endeavor to secure the best items, rates and concessions for their clients when transacting on their behalf with third parties.

2. Trustworthiness

a. Agencies shall exercise utmost honesty, propriety and prudence in handling their clients' funds and other property entrusted to them.

Most importantly, they shall observe strictly their contractual obligations with all parties concerned regarding the handling of funds and proper budget management.

b. All confidential information regarding their clients and their clients' businesses, which member agencies gain during the course of servicing their accounts, shall be kept confidential at all times, even when they no longer handle the accounts of said clients, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act.

3. Protection of Clients' Interest

In the course of producing and placing advertising and marketing communications for, and helping promote the products and services of their clients, member-agencies shall take all necessary steps and exercise utmost care in

- a. ensuring their clients' observance of pertinent laws;
- b. maintaining their clients' good reputation with the public;
- c. assuring the observance by third parties of their contractual obligations with their (the member agencies) clients;
- d. safeguarding their clients' welfare against the actions of their (agencies) competitors;
- e. respecting intellectual property rights; and
- f. securing the best rates possible for the cost-efficient fund management of their clients.

ARTICLE IV
RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHER ADVERTISING AND MARKETING
COMMUNICATIONS AGENCIES

Guiding Principles: The relationship among member-agencies in the conduct of their business will be guided by the principles of fair competition, promotion of common interests, and a spirit of mutual respect and unity.

1. Fair Competition

In the course of soliciting business and in servicing their respective accounts, member-agencies shall observe all legal requirements and other generally accepted rules of fair competition, specifically:

- a. they shall, at all times, give honest and accurate information regarding their respective credentials, resources and the services they offer;
- b. they shall not disparage fellow member-agencies in any way to advance their own interest at the expense of their competitors;
- c. they shall protect their respective interests and rights to fair compensation.

2. Promotion of Common Interest

Member agencies shall undertake to promote their common interest by adhering to and supporting all pertinent agreements and decisions reached in the 4A's-P which benefit the advertising and marketing communications agency sector of the industry. Whenever called for, they shall take a common stand on issues which involve the group's interest and distinct from the interests of other sectors of the industry, specifically:

- a. Member agencies shall not make any public statement of any kind which shall undermine the interest of the association, the agency sector, or the advertising and marketing communications industry as a whole.
- b. Member agencies shall not make any public disclosure of certain types of information which have been unauthorized by the association in the pursuit of the general interest of its members.

3. Mutual Respect and Unity

Member agencies shall treat one another with mutual respect, recognizing their respective duties, rights and privileges, both within and outside the association. They shall endeavor to preserve and promote unity and harmony in the association and avoid all actions

which are divisive, and which tend to undermine the association in any way.

Specifically, all problems which may arise between member-agencies shall first be tackled within the association and all efforts shall be exerted to solve them internally before they are elevated to outside entities.

ARTICLE V

RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE INDUSTRY

Guiding Principles: Member agencies of the 4A's-P recognize their moral duty towards the advertising and marketing communications industry to which they belong, the various sectors that compose it and the people who work in it. In relation to the industry, therefore, their actions will be guided by the principles of uplift and development.

1. Uplift of the Industry

Member agencies have the duty, in their day-to-day- activities, directly or indirectly, to have advertising and marketing communications universally accepted and recognized as a productive activity which is valuable to society, and its practice as meaningful and respectable.

The efforts to uplift the industry must extend to all the various sectors and special interest groups of society.

These efforts must be reflected not only in direct statements, PR and publicity campaigns, but also in the day-to-day actions of advertising and marketing communications agencies and practitioners, their observance of ethical business practice, their ability to self-regulate effectively, and their social contributions as concerned members of the community.

2. Development of the Industry

Member agencies have the duty to help the industry which means contributing to the improvement of various functional sectors that compose it, and the development of the people who work in these sectors. This specifically calls for the active recruitment and development of new personnel resources for the advertising and marketing communications agency sector, as well as looking after the welfare and development of the people already working in agencies.

This also calls for helping to stimulate the improvement of technical resources and expertise of media, production, digital,

research, and other entities involved in advertising and marketing communications.

3. Safeguard the Industry's Interests

Member agencies have the duty to support and protect the interests of the advertising and marketing communications industry as a whole by respecting and promoting the undertakings of the industry's various individual sectors. This means interacting with other sectors in a manner that nurtures creativity and encourages overall industry growth.

ARTICLE VI

ADHERENCE TO INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Guiding Principles: Member agencies of the 4A's-P subscribe to the principle of self-regulation in the practice of advertising and marketing communications. Thus, they fully support the industry's efforts to regulate itself effectively.

1. Support the Ad Standards Council (ASC)

The Advertising Standards Council (Ad Standards Council) is an organization composed of various sectoral associations of the advertising industry, whose purpose is to promote and self-regulate the practice of advertising in the Philippines. As a member-association, the 4A's-P gives full support and adheres to the policies, rules and procedures adopted by the ASC, and agreements reached within the ASC by the member-associations on various aspects of the practice of advertising and marketing communications.

2. Industry Standards

Specifically, the 4A's-P subscribes to and holds itself bound by industry standards-setting documents to which it is a signatory, such as the ASC Code of Ethics and other such rules and regulations governing the conduct and practices of specific sectors of the advertising and marketing communications industry.

ARTICLE VII

RESOLVING ISSUES

Guiding Principles: The guiding principles in resolving issues raised regarding any provisions of this Code of Ethics are as follows:

a. Since the Code cannot and is not intended to cover all possible specific issues or circumstances, the prevailing spirit of the Code and its major guiding principles, which are comprehensive in scope, will be applied to specific cases.

b. Exhaustive efforts must first be taken to resolve issues as between the parties through mediation before allowing the Board of Trustees to finally decide the same based on the parties' respective arguments and evidence.

c. In the event the Association, (1) receives a signed, written complaint, addressed to it or through any of its officers or trustees, and filed by one member-agency or by any person, natural or juridical, against another member-agency, its officers and employees, official representative or alternate, for violation of the Association's By-Laws, or any of the rules and regulations, policies and practices of the Association, including this Code of Ethics, and/or the industry's Code of Ethics, or (2) acts motu proprio or on its own, through an affirmative vote of a majority of the board, and directs a member-agency to show cause and explain its involvement in any issue or controversy which may be regarded as unprofessional conduct inimical to the best interest of the Association or in violation of the By-Laws, the Code of Ethics of the Association or the ASC, or any of the rules and regulations, policies and practices of the Association, the administrative procedure provided under Article VIII, Sections 6 to 9 of the present By-Laws of the Association shall then be adopted and followed to enable the Board to arrive at a final decision on the matter.

d. The said procedures are intended primarily as guides and not as absolute rules. The Board, following the recommendations of the Committee, has the prerogative to amend the process should it deem necessary, provided it is consistent with the Association's By-laws.

The Committee on Professional Practice & Ethics/Inter-Agency Relations and the Board of Trustees will use all reasonable means to ascertain the facts speedily and objectively and arrive at decisions as fairly as possible, and technical considerations should not impede the handling of the issues.

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