Professional Standards & Marketing Compliance Policy

Business: MarketingSteve
ABN: 52719351544
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Review Frequency: Annually or following material regulatory or operational changes

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the professional, ethical and compliance standards that guide the marketing advisory, leadership and related services provided by MarketingSteve.

It is intended to promote informed professional judgment, responsible commercial decision-making, accurate marketing communications and consistent service quality.

The policy recognises that marketing strategy involves uncertainty, competing priorities and inherent commercial risk, and that professional competence must be distinguished from the eventual commercial success of a recommendation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all professional services provided by the business, including:

- Marketing strategy and advisory services.
- Fractional or outsourced marketing leadership.
- Commercial and marketing planning.
- Research, analysis and performance evaluation.
- Brand, positioning and communication strategy.
- Marketing implementation and campaign execution.
- Coordination of suppliers, contractors and agencies.
- Content development and related professional activities.

Where subcontractors or freelancers contribute to the Services, they must comply with the standards relevant to their work.

3. Professional Care and Competence

The consultant will exercise due care, skill and reasonable professional judgment when providing services.

Recommendations and professional work must be informed by appropriate research, analysis, experience and available evidence, having regard to the nature and scope of the engagement.

The level of investigation undertaken should be proportionate to:

- The significance and complexity of the decision.
- The agreed scope and resources.
- The reliability and availability of relevant information.
- The potential commercial consequences.
- Material risks that are reasonably foreseeable.

The consultant is not expected to undertake exhaustive research for every recommendation, but must exercise reasonable professional care in determining what level of investigation is appropriate.

Where specialist expertise is reasonably required beyond the consultant's competence or agreed scope, the need for appropriate external advice should be communicated.

4. Professional Judgment and Commercial Risk

Marketing advice frequently involves incomplete information, changing circumstances and multiple reasonable courses of action.

A recommendation may be professionally sound while involving commercial uncertainty or an elevated degree of risk.

The consultant may recommend innovative, ambitious or commercially assertive strategies where there is a reasonable professional basis for doing so.

The assessment of a recommendation should take account of the information, circumstances, assumptions and reasonably foreseeable risks existing at the time it was made.

Subsequent underperformance or an unfavourable commercial outcome does not, of itself, establish that the recommendation was inappropriate or professionally deficient.

However, the consultant must not disregard material evidence, knowingly misrepresent risks or recommend a course of action without reasonable professional consideration.

5. Research and Evidence

Research and analysis used to inform recommendations should be appropriate to the nature of the decision and drawn from sources reasonably considered reliable.

Where relevant, the consultant should:

- Distinguish verified information from estimates, assumptions and opinions.
- Consider the quality, relevance and currency of available evidence.
- Identify material limitations in research or datasets.
- Exercise reasonable care when interpreting performance metrics.
- Avoid presenting uncertain projections as established facts.
- Correct material errors identified in professional work.

Research findings should not be selectively represented in a way that materially misleads the client.

6. Strategic Recommendations and Communication

Recommendations should be communicated in a manner that allows the client to reasonably understand the proposed direction and its commercial implications.

For significant strategic decisions, the consultant should communicate, where appropriate:

- The objective of the recommendation.
- Its principal rationale.
- Material supporting information or assumptions.
- Significant foreseeable risks or limitations.
- Relevant alternatives where meaningful.
- Key dependencies affecting implementation or performance.

The consultant is not expected to identify or predict every potential risk, market change or future outcome.

Recommendations should be sufficiently clear to support informed commercial decision-making without requiring unnecessary documentation or administrative processes.

7. Commercial Decision-Making and Authority

The client remains responsible for determining its commercial objectives, overall risk appetite, budgets and final business decisions, except where specific authority has been expressly delegated to the consultant.

The consultant may exercise professional discretion within the agreed scope and authorised decision-making limits.

Significant commitments, expenditure or changes in strategic direction should be approved by the client where required by the relevant agreement or delegated authority arrangements.

Where approval is required, it should be documented through an appropriate business communication or project management system.

The consultant must not knowingly exceed agreed authority or commit a client to material expenditure without appropriate authorisation.

8. Professional Independence

The consultant will provide recommendations in good faith, with primary regard to the client's agreed objectives, relevant evidence and professional standards.

Recommendations must not be improperly influenced by undisclosed commissions, referral benefits, personal interests or third-party relationships.

Material conflicts of interest that could reasonably affect professional judgment must be disclosed and appropriately managed.

The consultant may work with businesses in similar industries, provided confidentiality obligations are respected and material conflicts are appropriately addressed.

9. Marketing Accuracy and Consumer Protection

Marketing communications must be developed with reasonable regard to applicable Australian consumer protection and advertising laws.

The consultant must not knowingly create, recommend or publish marketing materials containing:

- False or materially misleading claims.
- Unsubstantiated factual representations presented as established facts.
- Misleading pricing, offers or promotional conditions.
- Fabricated testimonials or endorsements.
- Misleading representations of qualifications, approvals or affiliations.
- Material omissions that render the overall communication misleading.

Reasonable steps should be taken to identify claims requiring substantiation and to request supporting information where appropriate.

Clients remain responsible for the accuracy and legality of factual information they provide, but this does not relieve the consultant of responsibility for the consultant's own work or conduct.

10. Regulated Industries

Where services are provided to clients in regulated industries, including financial services, healthcare or other sectors subject to specific marketing requirements, additional care must be exercised.

Before undertaking relevant regulated marketing activities, the consultant should identify whether specialist requirements, mandatory disclosures, licensing restrictions or client-specific compliance processes apply.

For financial services marketing, relevant requirements may include applicable financial services legislation and ASIC guidance concerning promotional communications.

Where reasonably necessary, the consultant should obtain written confirmation that relevant content has been reviewed or approved by the client's appropriately authorised compliance or legal personnel before publication.

The consultant must not provide regulated financial, legal or other specialist advice requiring professional authorisation unless appropriately qualified and authorised to do so.

Client approval does not authorise conduct that is otherwise unlawful.

11. Direct Marketing and Personal Information

The consultant will take reasonable steps to ensure that marketing activities involving personal information comply with applicable privacy, spam and direct marketing laws.

Where services involve email marketing, SMS campaigns or similar activities, consideration must be given to:

- The lawful source and permitted use of contact information.
- Applicable consent requirements.
- Accurate identification of the sender.
- Appropriate unsubscribe facilities.
- Timely processing of unsubscribe requests.
- Relevant restrictions on contacting individuals.

Where the client supplies marketing databases or mailing lists, the client remains responsible for the lawful collection and authorised use of that information, subject to applicable law and the service agreement.

The consultant must not knowingly use unlawfully obtained information or proceed with marketing activities that the consultant reasonably believes would breach applicable law.

Where the consultant is responsible for campaign execution, reasonable checks must be completed before distribution.

12. Artificial Intelligence and Technology

Artificial intelligence-assisted technologies may be used to support professional activities, including:

- Research and information gathering.
- Strategic analysis and idea development.
- Copywriting and content preparation.
- Data interpretation and reporting.
- Planning, structuring and administrative work.

AI is a supporting tool and must not replace the consultant's professional responsibility for the work delivered.

The following standards apply:

Human review: AI-assisted material must be meaningfully reviewed, assessed and refined before being incorporated into client deliverables.

No raw deliverables: Unreviewed or unedited AI-generated outputs must never be supplied to clients as completed professional work.

Accuracy: Material factual claims, statistics, quotations and references generated or suggested by AI must be appropriately verified before professional reliance or publication.

Confidentiality: Identifiable personal information, sensitive information and materially confidential client information must not be intentionally submitted to external AI systems without appropriate written authorisation and consideration of applicable legal and security requirements.

Professional accountability: The consultant remains responsible for the quality, accuracy, appropriateness and originality of final work, subject to the applicable professional standard and the limitations of the agreed Services.

AI-assisted content must not be used to fabricate evidence, testimonials, research findings or other representations.

13. Marketing Implementation and Quality Control

Where the consultant undertakes marketing implementation, reasonable quality control measures must be applied according to the activity and its associated risks.

These may include:

- Reviewing content accuracy and presentation.
- Checking links, dates, pricing and key details.
- Confirming relevant approvals and expenditure authority.
- Checking campaign targeting and distribution settings.
- Verifying important technical configurations where within scope.
- Reviewing compliance requirements before publication.

The level of checking should reflect the significance and potential consequences of the activity.

Execution responsibilities must remain within the agreed scope and authorised access arrangements.

14. Performance Measurement and Reporting

Performance reports and evaluations should accurately reflect available data and relevant limitations.

The consultant must not knowingly manipulate, misrepresent or selectively present performance information in a materially misleading way.

Where appropriate, reporting should distinguish:

- Actual performance from forecasts or estimates.
- Observable outcomes from assumed causes.
- Short-term results from longer-term trends.
- Factors within the consultant's influence from external variables.

Results should be considered within their commercial and market context.

No particular commercial outcome is guaranteed unless expressly and lawfully agreed in writing.

15. Changes in Circumstances

Marketing recommendations may become less appropriate as market conditions, competitor activity, customer behaviour or business circumstances change.

Where ongoing strategic oversight is included in the Services, the consultant should exercise reasonable care in identifying and communicating material developments relevant to the agreed scope.

Where ongoing review is not part of the engagement, the consultant is not ordinarily responsible for continually monitoring or updating earlier advice.

The consultant should not knowingly continue to recommend an approach where newly available material evidence makes that recommendation professionally indefensible.

16. Documentation and Recordkeeping

Reasonable records should be maintained to support professional accountability and continuity of service.

For significant recommendations and decisions, records may include:

- Relevant research or supporting evidence.
- Key assumptions and material risks considered.
- The recommendation provided.
- Client feedback, instructions or approval.
- Material changes in direction.
- Relevant implementation decisions.

Documentation should be proportionate to the engagement and should not create unnecessary administrative burdens.

Records must be stored and handled in accordance with the Information Security & Client Data Handling Policy.

17. Errors, Concerns and Corrective Action

Where a material error, compliance concern or significant deficiency in professional work is identified, the consultant will assess the matter promptly.

Where appropriate, reasonable corrective action may include:

- Correcting inaccurate information.
- Notifying the client of a material concern.
- Revising or withdrawing affected recommendations.

- Pausing implementation while risks are assessed.
- Seeking specialist advice.
- Improving relevant quality control practices.

The consultant will address substantiated concerns professionally and in accordance with applicable contractual and legal obligations.

18. Review and Professional Development

The consultant will take reasonable steps to maintain professional knowledge relevant to the Services, including awareness of material developments in marketing practice, technology and applicable regulatory requirements.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and updated where material changes in the business or regulatory environment reasonably require it.