



Word of mouth ethics checklist

From **Word of Mouth Marketing: How Smart Companies Get People Talking**
by **Andy Sernovitz** | www.wordofmouthbook.com | www.wordofmouth.org

When you're planning a word of mouth campaign, remember that ethics come first. Without the trust of your talkers, they're not going to tell their friends about you. If you get even the slightest feeling that something isn't 100 percent ethical – don't do it! **There's no gray area with ethics.**

Follow the Honesty ROI to stay out of trouble

Honesty of Relationship:

You say who you're representing.

Honesty of Opinion:

You only say what you really believe.

Honesty of Identity:

You never lie about who you are.

The 4 rules of honest word of mouth marketing

1. Word of mouth isn't stealth. It's open, honest communications with customers and the community.
2. Fake work of mouth doesn't work. You will get busted. The backlash will destroy your reputation.
3. Oppose all deception. Protect the trust in genuine word of mouth—for yourself as a marketer and for your family as consumers.
4. Follow the Honesty ROI.

Resources

SocialMedia.org's Disclosure Best Practices

socialmedia.org/disclosure

WOMMA Ethics Code

womma.org/ethics

FTC Disclosure Rules

damniwish.com/ethics

Word of Mouth Ethics Checklist

- No Stealth:** We forbid all forms of skill, stealth, and undercover marketing.
- No Deception:** We forbid the use of deceptive practices intended to mislead the public about the source of a marketing message or to disguise marketing as consumer opinion or editorial.
- True Identity:** Everyone working on our behalf uses their true identity or a clearly identifiable corporate identity. We forbid blurring or obscuring of identity in any way.
- Full Disclosure:** We insist that our advocates, employees, and affiliates always disclose their relationship with us, including all forms of compensation, incentives, or samples.
- Authenticity:** We insist that all consumers and advocates are free to express their honest and authentic opinion, including negative feedback, without manipulation or falsification.
- True Reviews:** We do not request or accept untrue positive reviews or reviews by people who have not used the product.
- Honesty:** All information provided to advocates is accurate and honest. We insist that our advocates are truthful with their followers.
- No Paid Word of Mouth:** We do not use any form of cash compensation for social media or word of mouth exposure.
- No Spam:** We will not insert our marketing messages without permission through off-topic comments, seeding, spamming, bulk posting, or other invasive techniques.
- No Cheating:** We never act contrary to the specific rules, terms and conditions, or community guidelines set by each website or venue.
- Legal:** We comply with all laws and regulations related to disclosure, advertising, social media, and word of mouth marketing. We do not engage in any practices that violate the letter or spirit of the FTC regulations on disclosure, the WOMMA Ethics Code, or SocialMedia.org's Disclosure Best Practices.
- Follow-up:** We monitor word of mouth generated by our campaigns and proactively attempt to correct misstatements, deception, or missing disclosures.
- Training:** We actively instruct our advocates and employees on these ethical practices. We require our vendors and subcontractors to meet or exceed these standards.



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