



# **ncal** National Center for Assisted Living

Your National Assisted Living Leader for Advocacy,  
Knowledge, Education and Professional Development

## The Power of Ethical Marketing



**BUILDING TRUST:**  
The Key to Growing Your  
Assisted Living Community



# The Power of Ethical Marketing

Built On Trust:



The key to success is to build a cornerstone of trust between the consumer, the community at large and the assisted living residence.

Because of the diversity of assisted living residents, the services offered, and the complexities of the fees charged, it is critical for providers to present their customers with complete, concise, and candid information about their residences.

Effective marketing will directly impact the success of your residence; yet, ethical marketing will surely impact its reputation within the community. Marketing is defined by every interaction a staff person has with a customer. It is a role every staff member shares; it is not just the responsibility of sales and marketing staff. Marketing your community is a team effort with the focus being not only on current residents, potential residents, and family members, but also physicians, pharmacists, discharge planners, vendors delivering services or supplies, and fellow staff. Anyone who is a potential referral source for your community needs to be able to trust that what they have been told is accurate.

Ethical marketing is a win-win situation for all. Undisclosed or exaggerated information damages the relationship between the residence and the customer and diminishes trust. Once trust is lost, it is gone forever and your actions may have impact far beyond customers you may have lost or a referral that will now stop sharing your community's name to potential residents. All communications must be approached with one goal in mind – to provide the consumer with honest, clear, and consistent information. This guide will help assisted living and residential care staff be successful and ethical in their marketing practices.

Consider written material as an opportunity to spotlight your residence as well as an opportunity to educate the consumer about assisted living.

## The Power of the Written Word



Studies have shown that many consumers are unfamiliar with the concept of assisted living. They can be even more confused when we try to explain assisted living using words that are used primarily by assisted living professionals, and not everyday people.

Presenting a residence's services in a specific and uncomplicated manner makes it easier for prospective residents and family members to understand what the criteria and standards are for admission and discharge.

**Example:** Some residences market 24-hour nursing services as an amenity, but may have only one nurse staffing the day shift and use a call system for nursing needs on the night shifts and weekends.

While it certainly can be argued that the residence offers 24-hour nursing services, the potential marketing problem is that consumers

can interpret "24-hour nursing services" in many different ways. To some, the term may mean having licensed registered nurses on site around the clock. To others, it may mean that certified nurse assistants are present 24-hours a day. The lack of precision in defining "24-hour nursing services" has the potential to cause the community to fail to meet customer expectations as well as create an unintentional promise of services.

The language you use should not be confusing to readers. Terms such as "aging in place" have evolved to mean different things to different people. To prevent consumer confusion or misunderstanding, avoid phrases such as "aging in place" unless accompanied by clear, full explanations that include any health-related occupancy restrictions mandated by the residence and/or state regulations. Clean, concise and straightforward language that spells out the services is always effective.



**Example:** Stating that your residence has an on-site nurse each weekday and on-call nursing services at all other times clearly describes in precise terms what nursing services are available.

Keep in mind that prospective residents and families are likely to experience information overload during the selection process. However, providing and being available to explain service agreements, criteria for admission and discharge, fee schedules and associated documents will create an atmosphere of openness in communication. This is the perfect beginning to a long-term relationship built on trust and will help to avoid misunderstandings and dissatisfaction with your residents in the future.

A marketing representative should be available to prospective and current customers for information and to respond to questions as they arise. A residence cannot and should not rely

100 percent on a brochure or website to convey all the information a prospective resident will need to make an informed decision.

**It is imperative that printed marketing materials are consistent with your service and occupancy agreement and state regulatory / licensing guidelines. A periodic review and comparison are recommended to ensure consistency and accuracy.**



# The Power of the Spoken Word

The precision of the spoken word is as important  
as the precision of the written word.

A customer's first impression is reached within moments of entering your residence. While the environment of your residence is a crucial element in the formulation of the customer's decision, they will also pay close attention to the friendliness and professionalism of the staff and the way they are addressed.

Prospective residents or family members will quickly sense whether they have come to a place with warm and caring people who value honesty and ethical marketing practices. Therefore, it is critical for spoken words to be consistent with written material.

## **Tours**

All staff members who give tours of the residence should be familiar with the basics: fee schedule, services and amenities and facility policies. This type of training should be included in the new employee orientation or when a staff member assumes this responsibility. Staff should be encouraged to say, "I don't know, but I will have someone follow up who can provide you with an answer." It is vital that if staff indicates that they will get the answer for the resident or prospect, they get the answer quickly and accurately. Guessing or "winging it" should be discouraged. Providing inaccurate or embellished answers to prospective residents and family members may eventually damage the trust that is essential to a positive relationship.

Nonmarketing staff members may be needed to give tours when prospective customers want to tour the residence unannounced. It is important that staff assure the prospective customer that a marketing representative from the residence will follow up and answer their questions.

Using a form, such as the one found on page 15 of this guide, to gather simple information when the marketing team is not available will ensure that consumer inquiries don't get lost in the shuffle of day-to-day events. The form on page 16 is good for resident and family inquiries.

Always be prompt for appointments and greet prospective customers with sincerity, genuineness and respect. Ask about their individual stories and be a good listener. Effective listening skills are a key element to building a relationship with future customers. Sales presentations that focus too heavily on the real estate aspects of assisted living or amenities ignore the customer's individual situation.

Remember that tours that enable prospective residents to meet current residents provide the customer with a very personal experience. Provide them with the opportunity to ask "real-life" residents about the community, services, food, etc. without getting a polished sales pitch.

**The main reason people move into an assisted living or residential care residence is that they need the services that you offer. A crystal chandelier is a great touch and would be enjoyed, but it is not the reason for their move.**

This technique provides more control for the prospective resident and decisions can be made on a more personal level with unique information provided by a peer.

## The Power of the Internet and Your Website

Where will a family member and/or resident likely go first for information about your community?

Your website. Having an updated, accurate, user-friendly site will showcase your community as a professional, well-established residence. It is the first step for many before scheduling a tour or stopping in for literature. Including a virtual tour on your site is a good way to introduce your residence without making the consumer feel pressured.

An important safeguard for online marketing is the assurance of privacy to those who visit

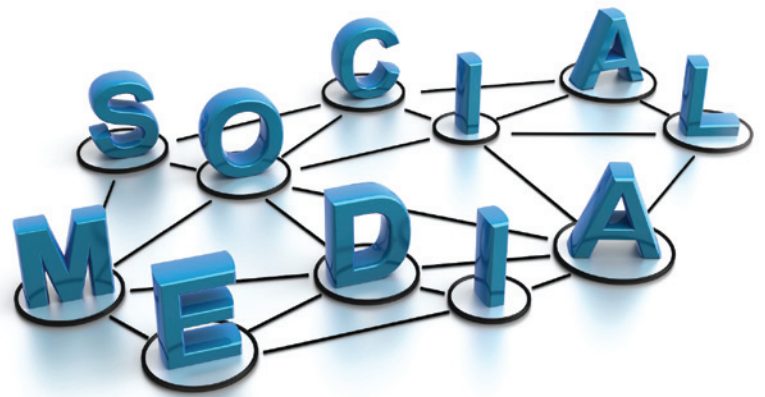
your site. Information collected from prospective residents and families should remain confidential and be used only for expressed purposes and with consent. A policy reiterating this pledge is important and should be included on your website.

Keeping website information current and consistent with printed marketing materials is an extremely important marketing practice and method for ensuring customer satisfaction. A rule of thumb is that the virtual shopping experience offered through the Internet should be the same as the actual shopping experience when the prospective customer comes to the residence.

**With ever-increasing demands on families, electronic marketing has become the first step in the decision-making process.**

A copy of the full text of the American Marketing Association's *Code of Ethics for Marketing on the Internet* can be found on page 20 of this brochure. This *Code of Ethics* can help assisted living and residential care providers ensure the integrity of their marketing efforts via the Internet.

## The Power of Social Media



Whether you love it or hate it, social media is here to stay.

Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and others are different from the static Web pages relied on by consumers. They are interactive. Not only is the information that you post on a social media site visible to all who visit it, but, in many cases, the responses and posts of your residents, family members, and competition can also be seen. To avoid this, many use a blog, which can be better controlled by the organizer.

Social media can provide an opportunity for family members to communicate and provide ideas to the residence. It is a great way for directors to quickly keep family members and residents up to date on what is happening at the community, including celebrations and news.

If you are going to feature your residence in a social media outlet, make sure that the information you post is accurate. Where social media can be a bit more work is when a user posts something that is not accurate about your community. You must have the time and resources to quickly correct information and educate the audience that is utilizing the resource.

It is absolutely vital that resident and family information be kept private. Posting the health conditions, ages, or any personal information is illegal without express consent.

As an employer, it is also important to have policies and guidelines regarding your staff's use of social media.



### Example Policies

1. Only staff authorized to do so may speak on behalf of the community.
2. Only approved staff may set up official presences on behalf of the community on social networks (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter).
3. All policies set forth in the employee handbook, privacy policy, and terms and conditions apply. Third-party sites may have their own terms and policies with which participants should familiarize themselves.
4. You may not share information that is confidential and proprietary about the community.

### Example Guidelines for Participating in Social Media

**BE RESPECTFUL.** Communicate clearly and courteously. Before hitting “send” or “submit”, take a moment to reflect on how what you have written will be perceived by your audience. If someone posts something with which you disagree, do not escalate the conversation to an argument. Hard as it may be to believe, others might not always share your point of view. Accept and respect.

**BE HONEST.** Respect the intellectual property of others; post only what you have the right to post. When in doubt, ask permission.

**BE DISCRETE.** Social media is not the place for posting confidential, proprietary, or any information that you would not be comfortable seeing on the front page of the *New York Times*. Online postings can have a lengthy half-life – assume that what you post will be around for a long time. Be careful to protect your privacy. Personal and professional lives often become blurred on social media – be thoughtful about how you present yourself online.

**BE AUTHENTIC.** Don't try to hide your affiliation with the residence, especially if you are addressing a topic related to long term care. On the flip side, don't represent yourself as an official spokesperson for the residence or your company if you are not.

**BE HELPFUL.** Make your posts meaningful – think of how they could benefit others. Add value whenever possible. If someone has a question you can answer, by all means do so. Conversely, don't try to respond if you do not know the answer. If you see misrepresentations made about the residence, you should inform an authorized staff person so he/she can decide what, if any, response or action should occur.

**BE ENGAGING.** Effective use of social media tools requires listening and responding. If you're not willing to engage in the conversation, reconsider whether you should delve into social media.

**RESPECT YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE RESIDENCE.** Unless specifically assigned, social media activities should not interfere with regular work commitments.



# The Power of Community

Building and maintaining relationships within the community in which you live is an effective and often undervalued marketing tool.

Although participating in community events may not bring immediate results, it can build an important image of your residence as a valuable member of the community and a trusted neighbor. Create an environment where your residence is viewed as a contributing member with deep roots in the community. This will enhance the public image of your residence and the assisted living profession.

## Examples:

- Offering your residence as a meeting site for community groups (e.g., support groups, church groups, scout troops, etc.) will provide a lot of exposure and possible referral sources for your residence.
- Annual events and sponsorships will provide you with access to local businesses and networking relationships.
- Hosting educational forums, especially those related to the concerns of the elderly and their children, is a good way to introduce members of your community to assisted living.
- Volunteering at organizations that serve seniors (e.g., Meals on Wheels, etc.)

Goodwill and genuine interest in making a positive impact in your local community show your commitment and sincerity to referral sources and prospective customers.

# The Power of the Teamwork

From the customer's standpoint,  
all staff members count.

Assuming that only marketing staff sell a residence is a mistake. A strong customer focus must be accepted and practiced by every staff member of the residence. Responsibility for ethical marketing practices is not limited to marketing and sales staff. Every interaction of every staff member plays an important role in successful marketing, including:

- The manner used to answer the telephone;
- How quickly the telephone is answered or a prospect is greeted at the door;
- The inflection in your voice;
- The expression on your face; and,
- Your body language.

These actions all play a role in the impressions left with the customer.

Keep in mind that customers consider each and every communication with any staff member a reflection of the residence's integrity and ability. Research and experience show that residents value staff members who are professional and knowledgeable about the elderly. Appropriate staff training is a crucial element in the overall success of a residence, and a critical component of an overall marketing strategy. General marketing techniques and program specifics (e.g., telephone etiquette, admission process, etc.) should be incorporated into general orientation programs given to new staff members. Refresher courses about customer satisfaction are recommended for the entire staff to ensure effective team marketing. Through staff empowerment and education, your residence can be immersed in consistent and quality marketing practices.



**Reminder:** Commission and other financial incentive programs are effective motivational tools for sales staff; however, it is important to ensure that these programs do not incentivize the move-in of people whose needs cannot adequately be met by the assisted living community.



# Fair Housing Act & Americans with Disabilities Act

In addition to state and local laws, two federal laws play an important part in assisted living and residential care marketing.

## Fair Housing Act

In an NCAL legal issue brief created by Lane Powell Attorneys and Counselors of Seattle, Washington for NCAL titled, *Marketing Your Assisted Living Community: Avoiding Risky Pitfalls*, Lane Powell explores the impact of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) on assisted living. The brief explains that the FHA, amended in 1988, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin. Section 3604 of the Act makes it unlawful to make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed or published, any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling, that “indicates” any preference, limitation, or discrimination violating the provisions of the Act. This Act applies to all assisted living residences, senior care facilities, group homes and apartments. The FHA requires owners of housing properties to make reasonable accommodations in operating policies and procedures to accommodate disabled individuals’ equal housing opportunities. The Act addresses three particular areas of concern with respect to advertising content that may violate the provision of the Act:

## Problematic Language

The use of certain terms or phrases that convey a discriminatory preference may be considered unlawful under the Act. However, it is acceptable for communities to describe themselves and their activities rather than the prospective or “hoped for” resident.

Guidelines published by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) lists numerous words and phrases that could be interpreted as conveying illegal discrimination under 3604(c) of the Act. These words and phrases include terms related to designation of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, and disability.

## Use of Human Models

HUD advertising guidelines cite the “selective use of human models” as a potential violation of 3604(c). The use of human models raises the issue of whether the community is communicating a preference for one group of persons over another. Models should portray a mix of racial groups as well as sexes. The community should also include models with disabilities in order to avoid allegations that the community is attempting to communicate a preference for non-disabled residents. All models should be of equal social setting. Communities must avoid portraying minorities or women in subservient positions.

## Other Questionable Practices

The advertising media selected by a community can also be scrutinized. One marketing technique that can potentially violate the Act is distribution of the ad within a limited geographic area, if the area is not ethnically or racially diverse. A conclusion could be drawn that the advertiser is indicating a preference. Limiting advertising to media that uses or focuses on one particular language or ethnic preference can also be considered a violation of the Act.

Flowery language can be dangerous as it can often exaggerate or mislead. Regulations under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act also impose restrictions on using a resident’s name, image, or other identifying information in marketing materials without the resident’s prior authorization. NCAL urges you to review the full *Marketing Your Assisted Living Community: Avoiding Risky Pitfalls* issue brief, available for download at [www.ncal.org](http://www.ncal.org) and view more information from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development at [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).

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## Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1990 with one of its express purposes being to prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical or mental handicap in public accommodations operated by private entities.

Long term care facilities are expressly covered by the ADA regulatory guidelines. Public and common areas must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Doors and hallways must be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs. Bathrooms and kitchens must be designed for use by disabled individuals. For more information on the ADA, go to the federal Department of Justice’s website at [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov).

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## Integrating FHA and ADA into Daily Marketing Practices

*Marketing Your Assisted Living Community: Avoiding Risky Pitfalls* explains that marketing and advertising materials are commonly and unknowingly susceptible to projecting certain preferences or limitations, which may be perceived as discriminatory under the FHA and ADA guidelines.

Certain terms used by assisted living marketing professionals may be construed as preferential marketing with the goal of recruiting a preferred population. These phrases can suggest certain populations are unwelcome. An example might be a residence describing the community as one where seniors are independent and have an active lifestyle. Some may perceive that those prospective residents who are semi-independent and non-active are not welcomed to apply for residency. This can be construed as discriminatory. Often, marketing materials include photographs of the community and residents. When using models or actual residents and staff from the residence (with written permission), assisted living providers need to ensure that the people pictured are representative of the outside community in terms of race, gender, etc.

The challenge facing the assisted living profession is in limiting the risks associated with discriminatory marketing efforts. One way to reduce risk is to always include the Equal Housing Opportunity logo or slogan in all printed advertisements and literature. Another opportunity to minimize risk is to create and post a fair housing policy statement outlining your commitment to fair housing and equal service. It is important to orient staff and offer periodic updates about fair housing laws and regulations and to document initial training and retraining.



# The Power of Information

Marketing professionals need to know and understand their industry.

Without information, a marketer does not know who to target, what the target market's needs are, and how the services offered by the community can meet those needs. It all starts with research.

**Your Residents:** Start by taking a look at the residents who currently live in the community. Read resident and family survey results, talk with the residents, and understand the statistics generated by the community? What is the turnover rate? Why do residents leave? What services do the residents utilize: medication management, bathing, toileting, mobility assistance, dementia care, etc.?

**Your Community Services:** How does your community meet residents' needs? Is there a nurse on staff? Does the community provide transportation to physician visits and shopping? Is there a fall reduction program? Is hospice available? Does the community accept Medicaid? Why would a resident be asked to move out? Are there resident and family councils? How are medications managed? What are the meal times and are meal times and menu selections flexible? There is so much to know about what is and what is not offered. It is imperative, however, that wrong information is never given out to a prospect or resident.

**The Industry:** What will the assisted living industry look like in 5 years, 10 years, and beyond? Are residents getting older...sicker...richer? What innovations and business models are likely to evolve? Who are your competitors and what services do they offer? How do the baby boomers affect customer decision-making? What are their demographics? What are they looking for when evaluating a residence? How do state regulations affect your assisted living community?

Spend some time on the Internet. NCAL's website has some great information as do NCAL state affiliates. Google "baby boomers + assisted living", to find articles on long term care in publications such as *NCAL FOCUS* or *Provider* magazine, and take advantage of educational and networking opportunities in your state. Talk with other marketing professionals in the long term care profession and utilize the expertise of your administrator and peers.

The more you know, the more confident and effective you will be in your marketing role.



# The Power of You

Successful marketing is key to the success of a residential care or assisted living community.

Successful marketing is open, honest, and complete communication in any format. While this guide was developed with marketing and sales professionals in mind, it is important to recognize that a truly effective and complete assisted living marketing program transcends a single person or department. The responsibility of successful marketing rests with all staff. Remember that everyone who enters an assisted living residence and interacts with a staff member is having a marketing experience. These daily interactions have a dramatic impact on existing customers.

**NCAL recommends that marketing and sales professionals share the ideas and concepts contained in this guide with all staff members.**

*Note: This brochure should be used solely as a reference tool. Its contents are not to be construed as legal advice. Any questions concerning the matters set forth herein should be directed to your legal advisor. The National Center for Assisted Living disclaims any and all liability related to or arising from the information contained in this brochure.*

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## Additional Resources & Appendix





# CUSTOMER REFERRAL FORM

Tour Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time of Inquiry: \_\_\_\_\_

Referral Source (*Circle One*):

- |                      |               |               |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Physician            | Family Member | Clergy        |
| Telephone Book       | Website       | Friend        |
| Drive-By             | Newspaper Ad  | Hospital      |
| Area Agency on Aging | Licensing     | Social Worker |
| Other: _____         |               |               |

## Prospective Resident Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Living Situation (*Circle One*):

Lives Alone      Assisted Living Community      Nursing Home      Hospital

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Needs Assistance With:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Needed For:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# RESIDENT/FAMILY MEMBER INQUIRY FORM

Resident       Family Member       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Resident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Inquiry (*Circle One*):

Complaint

Suggestion

Feedback

Other

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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Action Requested:

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Action Taken:

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Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Checklist for Marketing and Sales Staff

- Does your written marketing material fully disclose in plain language your services and amenities?
- Does your marketing material promise or allude to services that your residence is not able to provide?
- Have you reviewed your written marketing material on a yearly basis and any time your state regulations change?
- Have you incorporated customer-based marketing skills into your residence's employee orientation program?
- Have you trained your staff about the marketing materials?
- Is your website current, functioning, accurate, and user-friendly?
- Do your advertisements contain the Equal Housing Opportunity logo?
- Are the photographs in your printed advertisements representative of your community?

# THE AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION'S STATEMENT OF ETHICS

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## Ethical Norms and Values for Marketers

The American Marketing Association commits itself to promoting the highest standard of professional ethical norms and values for all marketing professionals. Norms are established standards of conduct that are expected and maintained by society and/or professional organizations. Values represent the collective conception of what communities find desirable, important and morally proper. Values also serve as the criteria for evaluating our own personal actions and the actions of others. As marketers, we recognize that we not only serve our organizations but also act as stewards of society in creating, facilitating and executing the transactions that are part of the greater economy. In this role, marketers are expected to embrace the highest professional ethical norms and the ethical values implied by our responsibility toward multiple stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, investors, peers, channel members, regulators, and the host community).

### ETHICAL NORMS

As Marketers, we must:

1. **Do no harm.** This means consciously avoiding harmful actions or omissions by embodying high ethical standards and adhering to all applicable laws and regulations in the choices we make.
2. **Foster trust in the marketing system.** This means striving for good faith and fair dealing so as to contribute toward the efficacy of the exchange process as well as avoiding deception in product design, pricing, communication, and delivery of distribution.
3. **Embrace ethical values.** This means building relationships and enhancing consumer confidence in the integrity of marketing by affirming these core values: honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, transparency and citizenship.

### ETHICAL VALUES

**Honesty** – to be forthright in dealings with customers and stakeholders. To this end, we will:

- Strive to be truthful in all situations and at all times.
- Offer products of value that do what we claim in our communications.
- Stand behind our products if they fail to deliver their claimed benefits.
- Honor our explicit and implicit commitments and promises.

**Responsibility** – to accept the consequences of our marketing decisions and strategies. To this end, we will:

- Strive to serve the needs of customers.
- Avoid using coercion with all stakeholders.

- Acknowledge the social obligations to stakeholders that come with increased marketing and economic power.
- Recognize our special commitments to vulnerable market segments such as children, seniors, the economically impoverished, market illiterates and others who may be substantially disadvantaged.
- Consider environmental stewardship in our decision-making.

**Fairness** – to balance justly the needs of the buyer with the interests of the seller. To this end, we will:

- Represent products in a clear way in selling, advertising and other forms of communication; this includes the avoidance of false, misleading and deceptive promotion.
- Reject manipulations and sales tactics that harm customer trust. Refuse to engage in price fixing, predatory pricing, price gouging or “bait-and-switch” tactics.
- Avoid knowing participation in conflicts of interest. Seek to protect the private information of customers, employees and partners.

**Respect** – to acknowledge the basic human dignity of all stakeholders. To this end, we will:

- Value individual differences and avoid stereotyping customers or depicting demographic groups (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation) in a negative or dehumanizing way.
- Listen to the needs of customers and make all reasonable efforts to monitor and improve their satisfaction on an ongoing basis.
- Make every effort to understand and respectfully treat buyers, suppliers, intermediaries and distributors from all cultures.

- Acknowledge the contributions of others, such as consultants, employees and coworkers, to marketing endeavors.
- Treat everyone, including our competitors, as we would wish to be treated.

**Transparency** – to create a spirit of openness in marketing operations. To this end, we will:

- Strive to communicate clearly with all constituencies.
- Accept constructive criticism from customers and other stakeholders.
- Explain and take appropriate action regarding significant product or service risks, component substitutions or other foreseeable eventualities that could affect customers or their perception of the purchase decision.

- Disclose list prices and terms of financing as well as available price deals and adjustments.

**Citizenship** – to fulfill the economic, legal, philanthropic and societal responsibilities that serve stakeholders. To this end, we will:

- Strive to protect the ecological environment in the execution of marketing campaigns.
- Give back to the community through volunteerism and charitable donations. Contribute to the overall betterment of marketing and its reputation.
- Urge supply chain members to ensure that trade is fair for all participants, including producers in developing countries.

## IMPLEMENTATION

We expect marketers to be courageous and proactive in leading and/or aiding their organizations in the fulfillment of the explicit and implicit promises made to those stakeholders. We recognize that every industry sector and marketing sub-discipline (e.g., marketing research, e-commerce, Internet selling, direct marketing, and advertising) has its own specific ethical issues that require policies and commentary. An array of such codes can be accessed through links on the AMA website. Consistent with the principle of subsidiarity (solving issues at the level where the expertise resides), we encourage all such groups to develop and/or refine their industry and discipline-specific codes of ethics to supplement these guiding ethical norms and values.

# American Marketing Association Code of Ethics for Marketing on the Internet

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## **Preamble**

The Internet, including online computer communication, has become increasingly important to marketer's activities, as they provide exchanges and access to markets worldwide. The ability to interact with stakeholders has created new marketing opportunities and risks that are not currently specifically addressed in the American Marketing Association Code of Ethics. The American Marketing Association Code of Ethics for Internet Marketing provides additional guidance and direction for ethical responsibility in this dynamic area of marketing. The American Marketing Association is committed to ethical professional conduct and has adopted these principles for using the Internet, including online marketing activities utilizing network computers.

## **General Responsibilities**

Internet marketers must assess the risks and take responsibility for the consequences of their activities. Internet marketers' professional conduct must be guided by:

1. Support of professional ethics to avoid harm by protecting the rights of privacy, ownership, and access.
2. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations with no use of internet marketing that would be illegal, if conducted by mail, telephone, fax, or other media.
3. Awareness of changes in regulations related to Internet marketing.
4. Effective communication to organizational members on risks and policies related to Internet marketing when appropriate.
5. Organizational commitment to ethical Internet practices communicated to employees, customers, and relevant stakeholders.

## **Privacy**

Information collected from customers should be confidential and used only for expressed purposes. All data, especially confidential customer data, should be safeguarded against unauthorized access. The expressed wishes of others should be respected with regard to the receipt of unsolicited e-mail messages.

## **Ownership**

Information obtained from Internet sources should be properly authorized and documented. Information ownership should be safeguarded and respected. Marketers should respect the integrity and ownership of computer and network systems.

## **Access**

Marketers should treat access to accounts, passwords and other information as confidential and only examine or disclose content when authorized by a responsible party. The integrity of others' information systems should be respected with regard to placement of information, advertising or messages.



The National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) is dedicated to promoting high quality, principle-driven assisted living care and services with a steadfast commitment to excellence, innovation and the advancement of person-centered care.

**For more information, visit [www.ncal.org](http://www.ncal.org).**



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202.842.4444

To learn more about disclosure of information to consumers, view  
*NCAL's Guiding Principles for Providing Information to Consumers* at [www.ncal.org](http://www.ncal.org).