
CONSULTING EXCELLENCE DECLARATION

Annual declaration to the MCA | May 2024



CONSULTING EXCELLENCE DECLARATION

As the global market leader in negotiation, The Gap Partnership provides negotiation consulting to clients around the world. We place the utmost importance on delivering high-value outcomes for our clients while also working transparently and in close partnership with them. As such, we are proud to be members of the MCA and to practise in line with the “Consulting Excellence” framework.

The thirteen principles of the “Consulting Excellence” framework govern our behaviour with clients, suppliers and employees, and resonate throughout our organisation. We believe that it is the gold standard for consulting practice and work hard to ensure we are true to its principles. The ethos that drives our business is the pursuit of excellence in everything we do, so it is a natural fit for us to work with the MCA to ensure that this rigour is consciously applied - and that we have evidence for it.

In making this declaration, we are delighted to have the opportunity to share examples of internal initiatives and policies, working practices, client testimonials and independent research, to evidence how we live up to the “Consulting Excellence” promise.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

1. We are responsible and good citizens, and demonstrate this through our commitments to:

- ☐ Observe all laws and regulations, both in letter and in spirit
- ☐ Respond constructively to legal, professional and related challenges
- ☐ Strive to be free of all discrimination or bias based on gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation or disability
- ☐ Avoid work that is inconsistent with these commitments, or which could damage the consulting industry's reputation

We do not undertake engagements which would present a conflict of interest or dishonour pre-existing client obligations. These mechanisms are directive so that our interactions with clients are always appropriate.

2. We conduct our business ethically and demonstrate this through our commitments to:



- ☐ Be open and honest about professional relationships (in a way that is consistent with other regulatory and commercial confidentiality requirements)
- ☐ Disclose relevant commercial interests or preferences (in a way that is compatible with other regulatory and commercial confidentiality requirements)
- ☐ Strive as far as possible to protect clients' interests and reputations
- ☐ Use confidential client information only for agreed purposes
- ☐ Avoid inappropriate gifts or entertainment
- ☐ Provide the best and most objective advice we can
- ☐ Treat competitors and others with respect
- ☐ Ensure wherever possible that the legal or contractual permissibility of behaviours is not used to mask their unethical nature


We have a strict governance policy and have taken HR, operational and data protection measures to ensure we uphold the highest standards in protecting our clients' businesses.

<https://www.thegappartnership.com/confidentiality>

3. We foster an ethical culture, and demonstrate this through our commitments to:
- ☐ Ask staff in their working lives to test the organisation's and their behaviour against those standards and to provide feedback as appropriate
 - ☐ Promote internal discussions on ethical issues, including their relationships with business practices
 - ☐ Avoid requiring staff, where reasonable to work in conflict with their own ethical beliefs
 - ☐ Encourage and enable staff and others to raise ethical concerns and confidentiality
 - ☐ Investigate and respond to concerns and take appropriate and timely action
 - ☐ Zero tolerance of retaliation against any internal or external colleague who speaks up

We operate a deal support and governance service through which our people can seek guidance to ensure they are always acting in our clients' best interests and in line with The Gap Partnership's governance policy.

Every employee attends several sessions when joining the company as part of our robust induction programme. As part of this, senior leaders from the business will outline our governance process with practical scenarios and highlight complexities to reinforce the understanding of our policies across the business.



As part of our commitment to fostering an ethical culture, we have been conducting engagement surveys to ensure that our staff are able to test our company's and their own behaviour against the standards we have set. We encourage internal discussions on ethical issues, including how they relate to our business practices and strive to avoid placing our staff in positions where their own ethical beliefs may conflict with their work.


CLIENT SERVICE AND VALUE

4. We provide excellent consulting services which deliver the outcomes clients seek and need, and demonstrate this through our commitments to:
- ☐ Discuss and agree on the outcomes clients seek, where possible before work begins or as part of a mutually understood transparent process thereafter
 - ☐ Listen carefully to clients to understand fully their needs and ways of working, and determine how the organisation can maximise value for them
 - ☐ Deliver the consulting services that they commit to and aim to meet or exceed their clients' expectations
 - ☐ Advise clients when the organisation believes their requirements are not in the clients' interests
 - ☐ Suggest alternative approaches and solutions, where appropriate, including, where the organisation intends to stand down, other providers
 - ☐ Challenge clients, where necessary, and deliver difficult messages, backed up by evidence
 - ☐ Continue to work on projects only where – 1) we are confident of achieving successful outcomes and generating real value for our clients through our outcome-focused approach; 2) we have the right skills and competencies to always deliver on our client expectations; and 3) we believe we can provide objective and impartial advice
 - ☐ Transfer knowledge, skills and experience to clients by leaving behind a best-practice approach
 - ☐ Ask clients to identify and promote cases where the organisation has delivered excellence

Independent research conducted by management consultants CIL rated us as the market leader in negotiation on a variety of measures, including the quality of our consulting and the value we deliver to clients.

[Watch CIL film.](#)






We are proud to have many client testimonials, which we believe are one of the strongest proof points of the high quality of our client service and value. Mark Hughes, the Group Procurement Director at Premier Foods, said:

“We are introducing Gap Champions within the procurement team. They will be responsible for re-energising the function and encouraging greater use of The Gap Partnership’s online planning tools. We’ve also started running a monthly ‘surgery day’ with The Gap Partnership’s consultants, to deal specifically with big, complex negotiations. So far, we’ve held two surgeries and believe the payback on these alone has been one hundred-fold.”

[Read testimonial in full.](#)

Whilst the skills used in negotiation are applicable to different industries, we are always happy to have conversations about the unique challenges that any company will face. This allows us to bring to life some of the ways we may approach a client’s challenge to maximise effectiveness for them. We have several case studies and testimonials from work we have done with clients, however, our strict adherence to our governance process means that much of the work we carry out cannot be discussed openly.

[Case Study](#)

5. We are transparent with clients and respond to their concerns, and demonstrate this through our commitments to:
- ☐ Give clients full access to relevant information about their organisation and how it is organised. Through our engagements, we uncover valuable insights into our clients’ businesses which we share at the end of each engagement
 - ☐ Clarify who is accountable to clients for each consulting assignment
 - ☐ Respond positively to client demands for information
 - ☐ Be open about the capabilities and competence of the organisation, consultants and teams
 - ☐ Ensure clients are served by skilled and expert consultants, always explaining who will be working with them and why
 - ☐ Consult clients and agree next steps when the team composition needs to change
 - ☐ Ensure contract terms are designed with client input, access, and promote high-value outcomes
 - ☐ Avoid changing project scope or length without clients’ explicit understanding and agreement
 - ☐ Protect client confidentiality, data and IP
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- ☐ Make it easy for clients to raise concerns and maintain a clear and accessible system for investigating and resolving complaints

As a part of our 5-step methodology, the review stage is vital to solicit and understand both positive and developmental feedback. This is a good opportunity for clients to directly impact our areas of focus, be it proposition, people or process. We also solicit in a more informal manner such as feedback during an engagement, to better service the client's needs should there be any scope for improvement.

6. We always strive to improve the value we can deliver to our clients and demonstrate this through our commitments to:

- ☐ Being a learning organisation, capturing the lessons from assignments as a basis for future improvements
- ☐ Welcome feedback, negative and positive and structure working relationships to ensure clients have opportunities to provide it
- ☐ Invest in research into our clients to maximise the value we deliver to them, as well as provide insights into their organisations which they may not already be aware of
- ☐ Identify and implement good practice from within the organisation (and where appropriate from beyond)
- ☐ Participate in professional networks and industry bodies, to improve continuously the organisation's understanding of the consulting industry, as well as the sectors and clients the organisation serves

The company aims to embed a negotiation culture to ensure that the teams have the necessary people, processes and organization to succeed in serving clients. We identified in many businesses the concept of negotiation is something that happens at the end of a process, this does not marry up with our approach to negotiations and so we have pioneered the concept of negotiation frameworks. These Frameworks are tailored specifically for each client and set out a pathway for client organisations to embed negotiation strategy as a core business competency which ensures proper consideration of strategy and planning when approaching negotiations.

We invite all our clients to join our curated online media, The Negotiation Society; an online community which provides members with the latest negotiation thinking, news, debate and opinion and embeds learning and skills from our negotiation consulting. We publish new content on it two to three times a week, including items such as comments on topical negotiation news and negotiation thought pieces.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT


7. We undertake training and professional development planning each year, and demonstrate this through our commitments to:
- ☐ Prepare an annual professional development plan that focuses on the appropriate training of individual consultants and other roles supporting consulting projects.
 - ☐ Provide a thorough and comprehensive induction programme for new hires
 - ☐ Assess periodically the performance of all employees assigned to consulting projects and provide constructive feedback
 - ☐ Encourage employees to provide feedback on the organisation's culture and performance, and commit to responding openly to suggestions for improvement


As a growing business, we recognise it's important for new hires to have a smooth transition into our business starting with a comprehensive "Induction Programme". The purpose of the week is for them to understand our culture, strategy and values, as well as what our central functional priorities are. Through bringing new hires together we aim to create a sense of cohort whereby individuals form strong relationships with others from around the world. This encourages new hires to share best practices throughout the business.

Feedback from a recent new joiner was:

"Incredibly proud to be a part of a company that cares so much about their staff. Thank you so much for putting this week on. It worked best through the different activities, with lots of variation. Great to meet other people from different regions".

We take professional development seriously and are committed to supporting our consultants through various initiatives. Our annual training catalogue is a resource that outlines learning and development activities offered by the people team. The content aims to provide solutions to common skills development needs across the organisation. Additionally, our annual training calendar is an open calendar in Outlook that provides all employees with visibility of all training, educational and informational events taking place across the organisation. We also embed Insights Discovery, a tool that supports the development of employees and teams in three key areas: onboarding, individual development (including leadership development) and team effectiveness.





We assess the performance of all consultants against our competency framework and provide constructive feedback periodically. It encourages consultants to provide feedback on the organization's culture and performance and we are committed to responding openly to suggestions for improvement.

8. We promote strong core consulting capabilities and specialisms in our consultants and teams and demonstrate this through our commitments to:

- ☐ Ensure consultants are qualified to work at the level of seniority to which the organisation appoints them and have the skills to be successful in their role
- ☐ Foster a culture that emphasises teamwork and have a remote network of consultants on hand to access should another consultant require support or specific expertise
- ☐ Equip consultants with the skills to work in high-performing teams


It's imperative we attract and hire the right people into our business. We invest significant time in assessing and measuring the quality of candidates during our recruitment process. The induction of a consultant into our business is extensive, they each will spend several weeks understanding our developmental products before running their client sessions.

We have a central team who support consultants working in the field. When a consultant requires assistance, the team will draw upon the relevant knowledge and expertise from across our global talent pool and bring this to the consultant in a rapid and efficient manner.

9. We support our employees' career progression, professional development and wellbeing and demonstrate this through our commitments to:

- ☐ Treat individual consultants fairly and without bias with open communication
- ☐ Encourage staff to participate in relevant professional networks
- ☐ Conduct internal events to share outputs within the consulting committee

As part of our commitment to supporting our employees' career progression, professional development and wellbeing, we demonstrate our dedication to treating individual consultants fairly and without bias and encourage staff to participate in relevant professional networks. To accelerate consulting knowledge and build capabilities to deliver against our goals, we created and hosted our





"Consulting Hot House", a pilot accelerated programme for consulting delivery knowledge.

Additionally, we launched the Global Consulting Forum week, where key members of our global consulting community came together and focused on gaining alignment and consistency in our approach to consulting across the globe. This is fundamental to our global strategy and essential to opening new ways to support our key clients.

We encourage our consultants to actively participate in MCA activity and network. For example, the MCA came into our head office to talk to our consultants about Consulting Excellence and the latest trends in the consulting industry. We have also participated in several Young MCA Events, including hosting interactive introductory sessions to negotiation. We host weekly focus sessions internally where consultants are encouraged to discuss a relevant topic, from these discussions we have made improvements to several areas, including product design, training, visibility of career pathways, health, work-life balance and many more.


COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION


10. We respect and embrace diversity and inclusion and understand the importance and positive benefit of people from different backgrounds working for our companies and our clients through our commitments to:

- ☐ **Constitute a diversity and inclusion task force**
- ☐ **Formulate a diversity and inclusion strategy that specifies distinct aims and objectives regarding the recruitment, retention and advancement of individuals from diverse backgrounds.**

The Gap Partnership is dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion throughout our organisation. We recognise the importance and positive impact of having people from diverse backgrounds working for us and our clients. To this end, we have established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Committee, responsible for devising a plan of action to create an inclusive workplace environment. Our committee will develop a diversity and inclusion strategy that sets out specific objectives and targets for attracting, retaining, and promoting individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, we have carried out a DE&I survey to collect information about our current state of diversity and inclusion. This data will guide our strategy and serve as a benchmark for measuring our advancement toward our objectives in the future. By having a dedicated committee and collecting data, we aim to make significant and measurable progress toward promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels of our organisation.





11. We recruit and retain people from a diverse talent pool and strive to build a working culture where difference is valued, respected, and celebrated at all levels. Furthermore, we are committed to developing diverse future leaders and ensuring their progression in the industry through our commitments to:


- ☐ Provide opportunities for career development and progression for all employees, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- ☐ Commit to promoting diversity at all levels of the organisation, including in leadership roles.

We promote diversity and inclusivity at all levels of our organisation, including in leadership roles. The Learning Hub serves as an example of our commitment to recruiting and retaining individuals from diverse backgrounds, while also developing diverse future leaders. This online platform acts as a central hub for our employees to manage their careers, providing access to job descriptions, career pathways and global and technical competencies. Additionally, it offers resources to better support team members, including onboarding toolkits and performance review guidebooks. Our Learning Hub also houses information about our people policies and programs, including those related to DE&I, wellbeing and referrals. By providing these resources and opportunities for growth and development, we are creating a culture where difference is valued, respected and celebrated at all levels, promoting diversity and inclusivity within our organisation.

12. We support industry efforts to improve progress on diversity and inclusion, implementing best practice and monitoring the diversity of the consultancy sector workforce over time through our commitment to:

- ☐ Develop a robust diversity and inclusion policy that will provide clear guidance on how to achieve our objectives and implement best practices in the consultancy sector.
- ☐ Participate in the MCA annual report, to share knowledge, exchange best practices and collaborate on initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion in the consultancy sector.

We are committed to supporting industry efforts to improve progress on diversity and inclusion, implementing best practice and monitoring the diversity of the consultancy sector workforce over time. By creating a dedicated Inclusion DE&I Committee and collecting data, we can ensure that we are making measurable progress towards our goals of promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels of the organisation, as well as contributing to the wider industry efforts. Additionally, we will participate in the MCA annual report to track and monitor our progress over time.





COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

13. We commit to ensuring that our organisation operates in an increasingly sustainable way and strive to ensure that sustainability is considered by our clients in our work with them.
- ☐ Develop and implement a sustainability strategy that reduces our environmental impact and promotes sustainable practices with clients.
 - ☐ Assess sustainability for client engagements, including supply chain sustainability, energy efficiency, waste reduction and sustainable business practices.
 - ☐ Engage with industry initiatives that promote sustainability and sustainable business practices, including collaboration with industry organisations, participation in sustainability-focused events and contributing to sustainability best practices and standards.

The Gap Partnership's partnership with Planet Mark is an example of our commitment to ensuring our organisation operates in a sustainable way. Planet Mark is an internationally recognised certification programme that helps organisations reduce their carbon emissions, improve their sustainability practices and engage their employees and stakeholders in sustainability initiatives. The Gap Partnership has been awarded the Planet Mark sustainability certification, which means we have demonstrated a commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and making positive contributions to the environment. In addition, The Gap Partnership has recently implemented a paperless version of our flagship workshop, The Complete Skill Negotiator. By going paperless, we are not only reducing the waste footprint of the workshop but also ensuring that the workshop stays modern, relevant and competitive in all markets.





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