

The Quakers and Business Group

Statement of Business Principles

1. Truth and Integrity

One name for the *Society of Friends called Quakers* is ‘The Religious Society of Friends of the Truth’.

1.01 Friends might consider whether they should ‘speak truth to power’, meaning that where they find abuse of power in business and the workplace, they should speak the truth about it to those in power.

1.02 Speaking the truth in business includes honesty in all our dealings. We have a long tradition of making every effort to keep the promises we make, including on price, delivery or quality.

1.03 Some of our forebears regarded initially offering a higher price and intending to offer a discount if pressed as a form of deception, and therefore lying, to the customer: they pioneered fixed prices in their shops. Our prices must not be deceptive.

1.04 If we promise to pay at 30 days, intending to pay at 60 days, is this also a form of lying? Is it more friendly to the truth to openly negotiate 60 days and keep to it?

1.05 As Friends of the Truth, we speak plainly, that is, in a business context not using devious language to mislead or confuse about our products, services or in any of our business dealings.

1.06 We are not afraid to affirm the truth that profit is necessary for survival and reinvestment, permits better conditions for workers and suppliers, and provides taxes for the common good.

1.07 Light

As Friends of the Truth we stand in the Light. In our business and workplace, are we afraid to be seen in the Light? Transparency is a modern name for a traditional Quaker characteristic.

1.07.1 Is our product or purpose in business valid if brought to the light?

1.07.2 Should tax planning of our affairs be accompanied by complete transparency to the State, and be modified to what is just and fair to other tax payers?

1.07.3 In today's climate, should we make public what we and our colleagues are paid?

2. Justice, equality and community

We have a long tradition of respect for all those working with us, treating them as equals. In the past, this took the form of providing decent housing, education for workers and their families, anti-slavery campaigns, giving pensions and minimum wages. Friends should reflect on what is the equivalent today for their workplace. Are more 'equal' ownership and pay models appropriate now?

2.01 All of us are disabled in some way and we all need measures to enable us to contribute better to the common cause. Friends should consider how they might liberate those over whom they have power, rather than dominate them. For example, instead of company controlled 'perks' and 'expenses', should we be offering higher salaries to free employees to make their own choices of car, pension, etc.? Such a policy would also avoid criticism about tax avoidance.

2.02 Earlier Quakers in their conviction that all are equal refused to pay outward respect to worldly authority, for example refusing to doff their hat to judges. Today, are we too careful to ingratiate ourselves with powerful people in business? What is the equivalent today - do we rise from our seats for the boss but not their secretary?

3. Simplicity

Are signs of wealth and status appropriate for Quakers? Our tradition is to live simply.

3.01 A simple lifestyle for our organisation as well as ourselves addresses the ethical problem of our time that overuse of the earth's resources is affecting our carbon footprint and world poverty.

4. Peace

Our tradition is non-violence. Friends should seriously consider whether to do business with the arms trade, or any that profit from conflict. But any form of violence or coercion in business is suspect.

4.01 Traditionally, we hesitate to take anyone to court, especially those weaker than us.

4.02 Forcing our wishes on others by strong and angry words can be a form of domination, lacking respect for the other. Our tradition is to speak gently and respect others' views.

4.03 We desire a peaceable relationship with the earth, using resources sustainably.

5. The Light Within

We are responsible to the Light Within, not to the powers of this world. Love is the commandment.

5.01 We have therefore always been courageous in standing up for what we believe to be right. As a result, many of our number have lost their jobs, been passed over for promotion or put out of business. We should not be surprised, but stand firm.

5.02 We have always supported each other in our sufferings, often financially.

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