Community Moderation Guidelines for [Organisation]
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to [the community].

We’re excited to have you as a moderator and we can’t wait for you to get started.

We’ve put together this document to help guide your moderation decisions. Our goal is to make the community a safe, respectful, and useful destination for all community members. Your mission as a moderator is to ensure everyone is able to participate without any physical or psychological impediment.

This document is not an exhaustive list of do’s and don’t’s. Much of your work will be making decisions based upon your own judgement and the key principles we outline here. There will be mistakes made along the way, but every mistake is a new learning opportunity.

2.0 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

[Use this section to describe the driving principles, goals, and motivations of your community.]

The community is about [your overlying community principle] and adheres to the following principles:

- [What is the community about?]
- [Who is the community for?]
- [What is the personality of the community?]
- [What is the goal of the community?]

3.0 GOVERNANCE

You will be working in a team that has a tiered structure. Each moderator can flag any key issues to the Community Manager or [organisation staff member].

There are five ultimate levels of hierarchy. They are:

Members → Moderators → Team Leader → Community Manager → Director of Community / Marketing Manager
If you are undecided about what action to take, post in the [staff forum] and other moderators, administrators or staff can help with the decision. In some cases the decision can be made by an administrator or member of [your organisation].

In an instance where urgent discussion or action is required, escalate to the appropriate Team Leader, Community Manager or member of [the organisation] by Skype/IM/Slack/email [outline the escalation and communication processes for your organisation here].

You can find a full list of staff and contact details in the [staff forum].
[Link to your contact details document here.]

4.0 THE MODERATOR ROLE

Moderators are the people that members will go to for help when they are feeling lost, confused, frustrated or mistreated.

This role will include:

1. Enforcing community rules and guidelines
2. Dealing with member questions and complaints
3. Resolving conflicts
4. Structuring the community
5. Stimulating and sustaining discussions

1. Enforcing Rules and Guidelines

The most familiar part of a moderator’s role is enforcing community rules and guidelines. This ensures that discussions stay on topic, members are encouraged and able to participate freely, and the community remains a place where members want to participate.

Use discretion when deciding how and when to deal with a violation. A Moderator’s purpose is to keep the community safe and running smoothly, not simply to wield power. Things to consider might be how new to the community the member is, their past behaviour (do they have a bad track record?), whether the behaviour in question is affecting other community members or your brand, or whether allowing it to continue will set a negative precedent.
If a member violates the rules or guidelines, there are several options at a Moderator’s disposal. It’s important to give a sense of due process by starting with the lightest appropriate sanction, and if necessary, to escalate methodically.

If a sanction is imposed, record it in accordance with the defined community procedures. [Outline the appropriate procedures for your community here. Are warnings and infractions recorded systematically, or is there an external process that needs to be followed? Do you have user-notes or an external spreadsheet that needs to be completed so that future staff have visibility of a member’s history?]

It is the role of the Moderator to ensure that no inappropriate content is posted as per the community guidelines. This may include (but is not limited to) pornography or adult content, pirated or illegal content, and self-promotional or affiliate links. Remove any inappropriate content either by deleting it, or moving it to a purgatory area, in accordance with the processes of [the community]. [Outline your deletion or purgatory process here.]

2. Dealing with Member Complaints

When a member makes a complaint about a member of staff, the community, or the brand, it is a Moderator’s responsibility to handle the complaint in a professional manner. This is for their own protection, as well as to protect the nature of the community.

Complaints may be petty, abusive, exaggerated, or in some cases, completely false. Regardless of these above factors, it is important to resist the temptation to argue, or refute the complaint. If a Moderator doesn’t feel that they can remain neutral, the complaint should be escalated to a Team Leader or the Community Manager.

A Moderator who responds negatively to a complaint may have their privileges removed if [the Organisation] or the Community Manager determine that their comments are libelous, or otherwise detrimental to the situation.

Any complaint process should begin with getting all the facts, and by making it clear that the complaint has been heard. This affords the complainant time to calm down if they are emotional. A realistic (achievable) timeline for following up should be offered, and then the facts investigated. If the complaint is serious or urgent (i.e. if someone’s safety is in question), immediate action should be taken, and external support may be required.

Any staff member who is the subject of a complaint should be informed of it, and any likely investigation, as soon as the complaint is received.

When the evidence has been collected, consider all possible resolutions, as well as any unintended outcomes. Sometimes a resolution may need to be discussed amongst a team.
Make a decision, and acknowledge any errors made, if necessary. Inform the complainant of the outcome. Follow up with any other parties involved.

When dealing with a complaint about your brand, it is important to respond fast. Being unresponsive generally incites (more) anger. A response that illustrates respect and understanding of the concerns will indicate your intention to rectify any problems. It might be appropriate to escalate the complaint to another member of the organisation, in which case it is important to acknowledge receipt and communicate that escalation process.

3. Resolving Conflicts

It is natural for conflicts to occur from time to time, and it is the role of the Moderator to monitor the situation and step in if necessary. Don’t jump in right away the moment a topic gets a little heated, as sensitive topics often engage people, but keep a very close eye on things, because the absence of visual and auditory cues, in combination with invisibility, anonymity, and delayed reactions, can cause online conflict to escalate fast.

A Moderator should intervene if a member resorts to personally insulting another member, using language that breaches the community guidelines, or posts anything that a reasonable person would consider offensive, abusive or hate speech.

As a first course of action, a Moderator should remove the offensive content, either by editing or removing the posts in question. A cautionary post may be necessary to get the thread back on track, and warnings or infractions may be necessary if guidelines were breached.

4. Structuring the Community

It is the role of the Moderator to help structure discussions, and to steer the direction of the community by focusing on specific discussions that add value. Look for discussions that ask narrow, specific questions and encourage participation until an answer or series of resolutions are found.

If a useful discussion gains traction, make it a highlighted/sticky/pinned/featured thread and if appropriate, promote it via available social media channels. [Outline your social media guidelines and/or processes here.]

5. Stimulating Discussion

It is the role of the Moderator to stimulate (or seed) discussions directly into the community by asking members what they think about important topics. Asking a number of closed questions
will generally result in the greatest number of responses. It is important to use an open, personal tone so that the content doesn’t appear staged, but authenticity and transparency are equally important. Questions or discussion starters should be written in the first person and lead with a question, not an explanation. Making the content personal by stating an opinion, sharing a personal story or anecdote, and using emotion when appropriate is generally the most successful approach.

5.0 THE TEAM LEADER ROLE

[Use this section to describe the role, duties and expectations that your organisation has of its Team Leaders]

A Team Leader perform the same role as Moderator, and is also responsible for leading a team consisting of other Moderators. This may include overseeing a weekly team check-in, disseminating information from [the organisation] to that team, reporting progress to the Community Manager or [member of the organisation], leading team projects and initiatives, and taking part in a monthly Team Leader check-in.

6.0 CHANGE OF STATUS

[Use this section to outline notice periods and processes for dealing with resignations or status changes.]

Change of status as a Moderator – either a promotion, demotion or resignation, should be dealt with by the Community Manager. Notice of [2 weeks] is required for a resignation and must be submitted to the Community Manager in the form of an official email. Likewise, a change of staff status will be detailed by the Community Manager to the member of staff via an official email.

7.0 MINIMUM COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

[Use this section to outline the minimum time and effort commitments required of a Moderator]

Moderators are required to fulfill the following duties to retain their position:

- Visit the forums at least [3 days] per week.
● Dedicate at least [3 hours] per week to [the community].
● Participate in their team forum at least [2 times] per week.
● Monitor the [specific forums or designated areas] and the appropriate team forum

Team Leaders are required to fulfill the following duties to retain their position:

● Visit the forums at least [3 days] per week.
● Dedicate at least [3 hours] per week to [the community].
● Participate in their team forum at least [3 times] per week.
● Monitor the [specific forums or designated areas] and the appropriate team forum
● Organise and chair a weekly team check-in
● Take part in a monthly Team Leader check-in

These are the minimums and are not hard to achieve. Moderators are encouraged to show extra initiative and to contribute to the community in additional ways should they see fit.

[The organisation] can ask any member of staff to step down at any time.

8.0 TONE OF VOICE

[Use this section to document the tone, manner, and type of language that fits within your brand guidelines. You may even want to have a list of unacceptable words and terms for moderators.]

If you don’t already have a tone of voice defined, consider some or all of the following points:

● What is the personality of {your Organisation}?
● How do you want to sound to others?
● Do you sound authentic?
● Who are you targeting?
● Should you use jargon?
● Is it appropriate to use humour?
● How informal do you want to be?
● How important is perfect grammar and punctuation?
● Are abbreviations or text speak appropriate?

Some examples of unacceptable words and phrases might be:

Race
Nigger/ coconut/ frog/ gringo/ hillbilly/ honky/ nazi/ redneck
Religion
holy hell/ jesus christ/ goddamn/ bible basher/ jew

Sexual Orientation
How gay/ that’s gay/ don’t be so gay/ homo/ fag/ queer

Gender
Man up/ don’t be such a girl/ don’t be a sissy

Disability
Retard/ cripple/ moron/ mongol/ psycho

Swearing/profanity
asshole/ bastard/ wanker/ bloody/ bugger/ bollocks/ prick/ wtf/

9.0 RECRUITMENT OF NEW MODERATION STAFF

9.1 NECESSARY PERSONAL QUALITIES

[Use this section to specify the qualities that are important to your organisation. Some examples are given below. Add or remove as required.]

In order to become a Moderator, a member must demonstrate the following qualities:

1. The ability to work in a team and show initiative within that team to come up with new ideas for stimulating community engagement.
2. Knowledge or expertise in the subject of [the community].
3. Leadership
4. Empathy
5. Good relationship and communication skills
6. The ability to stimulate activity as needed by instigating current or thought provoking discussion
7. Have dedication to the community through continued participation
8. Demonstrate a superior knowledge of the features and use of the community software
9. Confidence in their abilities
9.2 PREREQUISITES

[Use this section to outline any necessary prerequisites that must be met. If you are recruiting externally, this may not apply.]

The minimum requirement to qualify for a moderation role is to be a member in good standing and have served a minimum of {6 months} and made {500 posts} in this community.

9.3 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

[Use this section to outline the invitation process if it will be carried out by existing staff. Include information around when to recruit, and specify any documentation that is required before promotion into a role.]

If there is a space available on the moderation team/a suitable team, an invitation will be sent out via email and the recipient will be promoted provided they fill out the Moderator Agreement [link to any necessary privacy agreement]

10.0 ACCEPTANCE OF THESE GUIDELINES

[Use this section if you require signed acknowledgement of the guidelines.]

I, __[name]__, acknowledge and agree to comply with the moderation guidelines outlined in this document.

Signed :
Date :