

CODE OF CONDUCT



# Ground Rules for Paid Crowdsourcing / Crowdworking

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Guideline for a prosperous and fair  
cooperation between crowdsourcing  
companies and crowdworkers

# Preamble

Digitization has had a huge impact on our society as a whole with a particular influence on the working world. New employment models and innovative forms of collaboration have come into being, affecting and changing the working individual as well as employers and social institutions. Crowdsourcing, which means the outsourcing of projects and tasks to an international community of internet users, is a well-established result of the aforementioned developments and has by now become a firm component of working world and society.

## Definition Crowdfunding

In contrast to unpaid crowdsourcing, where a group of volunteers accomplish tasks without payment, this Code of Conduct aims to provide principles for paid crowdsourcing / crowdfunding.

The term crowdfunding encompasses various tasks – ranging from data processing and text creation through software testing, to mobile crowdsourcing at the POS. The execution of said tasks is run via an online platform or mobile apps, which serve as an intermediary. According to Durward, Leimeister and Blohm, crowdfunding can be seen as a form of digital occupation, in which an undefined number of people produce digital goods in response to an open call ([PDF](#)). Crowdfunding usually is subject to the same legal regulation as freelancing or self-employment and does not constitute long-term insurable employment. Whilst in most countries crowdfunding is seen as a part-time or side job, some crowdworkers can use this form of work to generate their main income. Beside financial incentives, other motives for crowdfunding are fun, learning effects, pastimes or altruistic factors. This type of work is characterized by a high level of flexibility and in general takes place on a voluntarily basis. Whether to accept a task or not is always for the crowdworker to decide. In general, they also set their own time schedule. On the other hand, the platform operator gives no guarantee as to incoming tasks, since the supply is regulated by the market.

## Objective and Purpose

The code of conduct at hand is a self-imposed guideline for prominent crowdsourcing companies that has been initiated by the crowdtesting provider Testbirds and will be continuously developed and improved.

Its aim is to create general guidelines about how to act in regards to crowdwork and thereby create a basis for a trusting and fair cooperation between service providers, clients and crowdworkers, supplementary to current legislation. There are still uncertainties concerning the concrete form of cooperation – especially regarding legal aspects as well as the platforms' corporate responsibility towards crowdworkers. This code of conduct serves as an orientation to crowdsourcing in its role as a modern method of working. It also aspires to contribute towards a win-win-situation for all persons involved to better fulfill the full potential of this new form of work.

# Application Area

The undersigned members commit to follow the indicated principles and to promote them within their company as well as with collaborating parties. In case circumstances should change, for example in the event of legal aspects arising, the members will debate whether the rules need to be adapted. The signees regard themselves as the mouthpiece of self-obligating platforms towards and in constant exchange with politics, science and other social groups such as unions or associations. As the crowdsourcing code of conduct is voluntary and self-regulated, it cannot claim validity outside its circle of supporters. However, all interested companies are very welcome to join.

## Undersigned Members

Currently, the following companies and persons have signed the crowdsourcing Code of Conduct:

**Philipp Benkler, Georg Hansbauer**, Managing Directors Testbirds GmbH



**Christian Rozsenich**, Managing Director clickworker GmbH



**Dr. Arne-Christian Sigge**, Board Member content.de AG



**Hans Speidel**, Managing Director Crowd Guru GmbH



**Dorothea Utzt**, Geschäftsführerin Streetspotr GmbH



**Dr. Tobias Klug**, Managing Director wer denkt was GmbH



**Dominic Blank**, Managing Director 24Insights GmbH



**Luke Edwards**, Community Manager BugFinders Limited



Furthermore, this initiative is officially supported by Deutscher Crowdsourcing Verband e.V.



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# PRINCIPLES

## 1. Tasks in conformance with the law

All undersigned members commit not to offer any projects to the crowdworkers, that contain illegal, discriminating, fraudulent, demagogic, violent or anti-constitutional content. Furthermore, regulations regarding age limitations, e.g. when consuming online content, are considered and declared when giving out a task. The platforms are obliged to regularly check all tasks and projects regarding their legal conformity.

## 2. Clarification on legal situations

The members of the Code of Conduct commit to inform the crowdworkers about the legal regulations in general and tax regulations in particular, which are connected to crowdworking. In case a company is not permitted to give legal advice, they inform the crowdworkers that they have to take care of the legal matters themselves according to the worker's own legal and personal circumstances.

## 3. Fair payment

All subscribers commit to pay a fair and appropriate wage or to advise the contracting authorities accordingly. Generally, the wage is project-based. The calculation is done by the crowdsourcing provider to the best of their knowledge and includes factors such as task complexity, necessary qualifications, local dependence and wage standards as well as predicted expenditure of time.

It has to be communicated clearly and in advance, how much wage can be earned when fulfilling the task with a satisfactory result.

The payment conditions, especially time limits and payout cycles, need to be transparent and the payment has to take place fast and without delays. The platform providers need to ensure the payout at least once a month. In case a project is done pro bono to support community causes this is to be clearly communicated to the crowdworkers in advance.

Crowdworkers are never asked to make payments in order to be given a project.

## 4. Motivating and good work

The majority of factors, which constitute good work in the analog working world, can also be transferred to a digital environment. Valuation and pleasure are, for example, just as important as a friendly working environment and access to appropriate resources, which help to make tasks easier. The undersigned members of the Code of Conduct take account of that by providing a user-friendly and intuitive platform to navigate, as well as direct possibilities to request support. Furthermore, other measures shall be taken to meet the expectations of crowdworkers regarding motivating and fulfilling work. Those are for example:

- > Experience points, badges
- > Prizes and awards
- > FAQs, How-to's and forums
- > Training possibilities (e-Learning, leadership boards)

## 5. Respectful interaction

The relation between the platforms, their clients and the crowdworkers is based on reliability, trust, honesty, openness and mutual respect. As an intermediary between client and crowdworker, the crowdsourcing providers are aware of their responsibility, to respect and consider the interests of both parties.

The crowdsourcing providers commit to perform their mediation role in a diligent manner and to hold said values in respect.

## 6. Clear tasks and reasonable timing

The tasks for crowdworkers should be defined clearly. The workers should receive a detailed description of all the criteria regarding timing and content that need to be met in order to participate in and successfully complete a crowdsourcing project. The project description is the base for accepting completed tasks and the following payout. As intermediaries, crowdsourcing companies need to regard the timing demands of their customer, but should also plan with realistic estimations as well as give the crowdworkers enough time to fulfill their tasks.

In the event that tasks are offered directly through the client rather than the crowdsourcing provider, the latter will give advice regarding clear task definitions and reasonable time planning.

## 7. Freedom and Flexibility

Crowdworking takes place on a voluntary basis and one main characteristic is the high degree of flexibility. Often, tasks can be performed independent of location and time and there is no long-term commitment of the crowdworker to a platform. Based on the project description, the crowdworker retains the freedom to choose which tasks to accept and which not. The refusal of offered tasks by crowdworkers should not lead to negative consequences and no pressure should be applied by the platform providers.

## 8. Constructive feedback and open communication

As crowdworkers tend to work remotely, it is extremely important that the crowdsourcing company is available for questions that may arise. Undersigned members of this Code of Conduct are responsible for providing their crowdworkers with the best possible assistance and technical support, to give prompt feedback on how the tasks have been carried out and to offer suggestions for improvement. Open and honest communication between all parties is therefore fundamental. The communication between crowdworkers should be encouraged by the platform and supported by the implementation of technical features, provided it is helping the execution of the project and is technically possible.

## 9. Regulated approval process and rework

The approval process for completed tasks needs to be settled in written form and be transparent to the crowdworker. Approval periods have to be communicated by the platform. The denial of projects must be justified and based on the project description. Excluded are severe negligence or conscious deception by the crowdworker. In general, the possibility of reworking must be given unless the project specifications do not allow for it, e.g. because special campaigns are over or the project is already completed. These cases have to be stated in written form and in advance. Moreover every platform commits to set a fair and neutral complaint process for crowdworkers. If the crowdworker and the platform could not come to an agreement, the ombuds office which has been established for this purpose, can be called upon. Link to the form: <https://ombudsstelle.crowdwork-igmetall.de/en.html>

## 10. Data protection and privacy

Respect for and protection of the crowdworkers' privacy is paramount. This includes private information such as personal data or contact information. This also translates to all information that clients provide to members who have signed the Code of Conduct. Crowdsourcing providers commit to not revealing the personal data of the crowdworkers to third parties without written consent. Only the information that is strictly necessary for a clear understanding of the project is given to the clients in an anonymous fashion. Regarding relationships with customers, the providers are obligated to act under confidentiality. They can be relieved from this responsibility by the client only.

## Contact

Would you also like to sign the Code of Conduct? Or do you have questions, requests or remarks of any kind? Please do not hesitate to contact us.

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