The Me2B Alliance Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (CEPC)[i]

1. Introduction

The Me2B Alliance (Me2BA) community is made up of professionals and volunteers from all over the world, working on every aspect of the mission – which includes the creation of an ethical standard of behavior for connected technology. If we are to successfully measure the ethical behavior of connected technology, we must be able to recognize and practice ethical behavior in our community.

The core principles of this CEPC derive directly from the ethical underpinnings used to measure product and business behavior, *The Me2B Rules of Engagement*. That is to say, we embody the self-same principles that we use to assess products and businesses.

The Me2BA Rules of Engagement

Freedom We agree to not coerce or manipulate each other.
Respect of Boundaries We agree to respect each other's personal boundaries.
Respectful Defaults In the absence of stated preferences, we default to the most conservative behavior.
Fairness & Non-exploitation We agree to treat each other fairly and not exploit things that are shared.
Good Communication We agree to be forthright, honest and clear in our communication.
Non-Harming We agree to not willfully harm one another.
Problem Solving & Accountability We agree to respectful, collaborative, and fair problem-solving methods.

As in life, when working in a large and diverse group we can experience misunderstandings and disagreement which in most cases can be resolved informally. To facilitate a healthy environment, we ask that people adhere to the following clarified Rules of Engagement for this community. This code applies equally to founders, advisors, directors, staff, and members. Note that this code complements rather than replaces legal rights and obligations.

Note also that this isn't an exhaustive list. Rather, please take it in the spirit in which it's intended - a guide to make it easier to enrich all of us and our shared work in this community.

Finally, and above all, the Me2B Alliance is a brave space[ii] where we can, as a community, support one another to navigate both the joyous and the difficult situations with respect, compassion, directness and clarity.

2. Scope of Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

The CEPC applies to all spaces managed by the Me2B Alliance. This includes the membership portal, conference calls, mailing lists, events, and any other forums which the community uses for communication. In addition, violations of this code outside these spaces may affect a person's ability to participate within them.

3. Code

- **Freedom:** We agree to not coerce or manipulate each other.

- **Respect of Boundaries:** We agree to recognize and respect each other's personal boundaries, including
  - **Time boundaries:** We start and end meetings on time, unless there are extenuating circumstances. We make sure all voices have an opportunity to be heard.
  - **Physical boundaries:** We respect everyone's personal space and do not tolerate physical harassment of any sort. Accommodate participants' needs for physical distancing and other considerations due to health concerns such as immune deficiency, allergies, or chemical sensitivity
  - **Emotional Boundaries:** We practice tolerance and do not shame, blame or deny the emotions of ourselves or others.
  - **Intellectual boundaries:** This community is focused on fact-based and research-supported foundations.
  - **Information boundaries**: Covered in the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) policy. Given the nature of the Me2B Alliance, sharing (cross-pollination) of Alliance-related information with other organizations is encouraged, as is the sharing of public information with the public. Care should be taken however, with personal sharings that may occur in the context of working groups. Members should treat personally shared information as private, not to be repeated. Similarly, members have access to the member directory, which should be used only for Me2B Alliance activities.
  - **Work boundaries:** We keep our contributions relevant to the work at hand.
  - **Money Boundaries:** The Me2B Alliance isn't a place to advertise or solicit resources. The Me2B Alliance is a place to develop and nurture professional connections.
  - **Political Boundaries:** The Me2B Alliance is a politically neutral environment.
  - **Religious Boundaries:** The Me2B Alliance is an agnostic/neutral entity, but recognizes, given that our work is establishing ethical standards, that the respectful sharing and discussion of religion-based ethics may arise from time to time.

- **Respectful Defaults:** In the absence of stated preferences, we default to the most conservative and respectful behavior.

- Think of others' needs from their point of view. Use preferred names, titles (including pronouns), and the appropriate tone of voice. Therefore, be formal and conservative in what you do and liberal in what you accept from others and acknowledge the contributions of your peers.[iii]

- **Fairness & Non-exploitation:** We agree to treat each other fairly and not exploit things that are shared. (See Information Boundaries, above.)

- **Good Communication:** We agree to be forthright, sincere, honest, clear and kind in our communication.

  - **When we disagree, assume positive intent and try to understand why.** Disagreements, both social and technical, happen all the time and the Me2B Alliance is no exception. It is important that we resolve disagreements and differing views constructively. Remember that we are different. The strength of the Me2B Alliance comes from its varied community, people from a wide range of backgrounds. Different people have different perspectives on issues. Being unable to understand why someone holds a viewpoint doesn't mean that they're wrong. Don't forget that it is human to err and blaming each other doesn't get us anywhere. Instead, focus on helping to resolve issues and learning from mistakes

  - **Be careful in the words that you choose.** We conduct ourselves professionally. Be kind to others. Do not insult or put down other participants. Harassment and other exclusionary behavior aren't acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to:

    - Violent threats or language directed against another person.

    - Discriminatory jokes and language.
    - Offensive comments related to gender, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, disability (both visible and invisible), mental health, neurotype, physical appearance, body, age, race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, caste, nationality, language, or religion

    - Unwelcome comments regarding a person's lifestyle choices and practices, including those related to food, health, parenting, drugs, and employment

    - Misgendering someone by deliberately referring to a person using the wrong pronouns or by using someone's proper names or other terms that person has asked not to be used, also known as deadnaming.

    - Incitement of violence towards any individual, including encouraging a person to commit suicide or to engage in self-harm.

    - Deliberate intimidation.

- Stalking or physically following or invading someone's personal space after a request to stop.

- Exposing others to contagious disease.

- Harassing photography or recording, including logging online activity for harassment purposes.

- Sustained disruption of discussion.

- Continued one-on-one communication after requests to cease.

- Deliberate outing of any aspect of a person's gender identity without their consent.

- Publication of non-harassing private communication without consent by the involved parties.

- Use of coded language (also known as "dog whistles") used to rally support for hate groups or to intimidate vulnerable groups.

- Microaggressions (microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations), either intentional or unintentional, that harm people by communicating hostile, derogatory, or negative beliefs. Examples include:

  - Patronizing language or behavior.

  - Repeatedly interrupting or talking over someone else.

  - The use of racially charged language to describe an individual or thing (such as "thug" or "ghetto").

  - Referring to an individual in a way that demeans or challenges the validity of their racial identity.

  - Mocking someone's real or perceived accent or first language.

- Posting sexually explicit or violent material.

- Posting (or threatening to post) other people's personally identifying information ("doxing").

- Personal insults, especially those using racist or sexist terms.

- Unwelcome sexual attention.

- Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behavior.

- Repeated harassment of others. In general, if someone asks you to stop, then stop.

- Retaliating, or taking adverse action, against anyone who files a complaint that someone has violated this code of conduct.

- **Listening:** Our work relies on the expertise and wisdom of our community and others' work before (or in parallel with) us. Full attention and deep listening are crucial to the success of our work.

- o **Fault-Finding:** Many of us in technology have keen analytical skills and are exceptional fault-finders. We practice self-reflection to understand when fault-finding is hampering progress and consensus. The perfect is the enemy of the good.

- **Non-Harming:** We agree to not willfully harm one another.
  - o We recognize, however, that we are capable of unintentional harm.
  - o When we recognize a harm happening, we will respectfully acknowledge the harm immediately and take appropriate action (see section 4.1 and 4.2 below for additional guidance).
  - o We recognize that we are each of us capable of unintentional harms. We approach the identification and acknowledgement of harms with curiosity, openness, non-judgment and compassion.
  - o We will not shy away from uncomfortable discussions, and will call harms in our community by their true names.

- **Problem Solving:** We agree to respectful, collaborative and fair problem-solving methods.
  - o Treat everyone with respect. We are a community of people who are passionate about our work, sometimes holding strong opinions and beliefs. We are committed to dealing with each other with courtesy, respect, and dignity at all times. Misunderstandings and disagreements do happen. When conflicts arise, we endeavor to resolve them while maintaining that courtesy, respect, and dignity, even when emotions are heightened.

In addition to the expanded Rules of Engagement above, the Me2B Alliance embraces the "four Be-s":

- **Be friendly and patient.**

- **Be welcoming.** We strive to be a community that welcomes and supports people of all backgrounds and identities. This includes, but is not limited to members of any race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, color, immigration status, social and economic class, educational level, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, size, family status, political belief, religion, and mental and physical ability. Work to eliminate your own biases, prejudices, and discriminatory practices.

- **Be considerate.** Your work will be used by other people, and you in turn will depend on the work of others. Any decision you take will affect others, and you should take those consequences into account when making decisions. Remember that we're a world-wide community, so you might not be communicating in someone else's primary language.

- **Be respectful.** Not all of us will agree all the time, but disagreement is no excuse for poor behavior and poor manners. We might all experience some frustration now and then, but we cannot allow that frustration to turn into a personal attack.

It's important to remember that a community where people feel uncomfortable or threatened is not a productive one. Members of the Me2B Alliance community should be respectful when dealing with other members as well as with people outside the Me2B Alliance community.

4. Reporting Violations and Supporting the Code

If you are concerned about your immediate safety, contact local emergency services. For a face to face event you may need to contact venue staff for assistance contacting emergency services.

In most cases, issues are best resolved at the source. Accordingly, raising the issue with the working group chair of the relevant group is usually the best first place to raise an issue. Working group chairs also have more of the context which helps them address the issue.

You are welcome to raise issues directly with the Leadership Committee as a group or individually. All complaints will be taken seriously and will receive a response.

If you are responsible for a community within the Me2B Alliance such as in the role of a chair of a working group and you witness harassment or any other behavior which goes against this code you are encouraged to address the issue directly. If you need assistance, you can get assistance from the Board of Directors.

Chairs and Event Organizers should take such immediate action as they deem necessary in order to stop unacceptable behavior. This action may take many forms, but examples may include:

4.1 Immediately

- Pointing out if someone is violating the CEPC to give them the chance to withdraw or edit their statement
- Reminding participants that meetings and work operate under the CEPC
- Asking someone to leave a meeting or a conversation thread

4.2 After the Meeting

- Following up with affected participants, possibly in separate meetings
- Reaching out to a working group chair for assistance
- See also the partner Code of Conduct

Note that the action must be directly related to stopping harm, and must be proportionate.

5. If You've Done Something Improper

As we engage in diverse communities we may accidentally cause offense, whether through using unknowingly offensive terminology or through missing social cues.

If you realize (or are told) that you have offended someone then take the appropriate steps:

- Acknowledge that you've done something improper
- Briefly apologize. Don't try to explain yourself or minimize the issue
- If possible, edit your message, restate your communication in a better way or withdraw your statement. Publicly revising your statement helps define the culture for others

Alice: "Yeah I used X and it was really crazy!" Eve: "Hey, could you not use that word? What about 'ridiculous' instead?" Alice: "oh sorry, sure." -> edits old message to say "Yeah I used X and it was really confusing!"

This will allow conversation to quickly continue without any need of further action or escalating the situation.

If you don't understand what you did wrong, assume that the hurt party has good cause and accept it. We cannot know everyone's background and should do our best to avoid harm. You are welcome to discuss it with the Leadership Committee later.

6. Glossary[ii]

Acceptable Behavior

Within the Me2BA, this is behavior which abides by this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Cisgender/cis person

A person whose gender identity matches the one they were assigned at birth.

Cissexism

The belief or assumption that cis people's gender identities, expressions, and embodiments are more natural and legitimate than those of trans people. The term is related to transphobia.

Consent

Consent occurs when one person voluntarily agrees to the proposal or desires of another. It is a term of common speech, with specific definitions as used in such fields as the law, medicine, research, and sexual relationships. *Wikipedia*

Deadnaming

is using someone's name after they have changed it. Often a person's name is not their "legal" name, whatever that may mean.

If someone asks you to use a name for them you should use it. This includes:

> A trans person, who has changed their name when transitioning

> Someone who has changed their name through marriage

> Someone who has changed their name for any other reason

Demeaning behavior

Acting in a way that reduces another person's dignity, sense of self-worth, or respect within the community.

Discrimination

The prejudicial treatment of an individual based on criteria such as: physical appearance, race, ethnic origin, genetic differences, national or social origin, name, religion, gender, sexual orientation, family or health situation, pregnancy, disability, age, education, wealth, domicile, political view, morals, employment, or union activity.

Diversity

Diversity for the purposes of diversity and inclusion, is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. With a focus on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin.

Gender Expression

Gender expression is a person's behavior, mannerisms, interests, and appearance that are associated with gender in a particular cultural context. *Wikipedia*

Gender Identity

Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with assigned sex at birth or can differ from it. *Wikipedia*

Harassment

Any conduct, verbal or physical, that has the intent or effect of interfering with an individual, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Inclusivity

The practice or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

Insulting behavior

Treating another person with scorn or disrespect.

Marginalized Communities

Communities which are often overlooked, ignored or denigrated to the detriment of the members of that community. People may often be part of multiple communities such as being queer and disabled.

Mental Health

A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.

Microaggression

Microaggression is a term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized group. *Wikipedia*

There are three key types of microaggression (*Medical News Today*):

> **Microassaults:** A microassault is when a person intentionally behaves in a discriminatory way while not intending to be offensive. An example of a microassault is a person telling a racist joke then saying, "I was just joking."

> **Microinsults**: A microinsult is a comment or action that is unintentionally discriminatory. For example, this could be a person saying to an Indian doctor, "Your people must be so proud."

> **Microinvalidations**: A microinvalidation is when a person's comment invalidates or undermines the experiences of a certain group of people. An example of a microinvalidation would be a white person telling a black person that "racism does not exist in today's society."

Misgendering

Misgendering is addressing someone using gendered words to imply or state they are a different gender than the one they have asked to be used.

Examples include refusing to use their correct pronouns such as he/him, she/her, they/them or others.

Neurotype

A type of brain, in terms of how a person interprets and responds to social cues.

Participant

Includes the following persons:

Me2BA Team (employees and contractors)

Me2BA group participants (members, member representatives

Anyone from the Public partaking in the Me2BA work environment (e.g. commenting on our specs, emailing us, attending our conferences or functions, etc.)

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to a set of discriminatory or derogatory attitudes based on assumptions deriving from perceptions about such things as race, culture, religion, skin color, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or gender expression.

Racism

Racism is where racial prejudices work to enhance existing power imbalances within communities to further marginalize groups based upon race.

Sexism

Prejudice or discrimination based on sex or perceived sex. Usually against women or non-binary people.

Sexism is where these prejudices work to enhance existing power imbalances within communities to further marginalize groups.

Workplace Bullying

A tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent aggressive or unreasonable behavior (e.g. verbal or written abuse, offensive conduct or any interference which undermines or impedes work) against a co-worker or any professional relations.

Sexual harassment

Includes requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, where:

submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment

submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the individual

such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating hostile or offensive working environment

Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation relates to the gender(s) a person may be attracted to in relation to their own gender.

Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status is the combined effects relating to someone's wealth, social position/class and property ownership.

Transphobia

Transphobia encompasses a range of negative attitudes, feelings, or actions toward transgender or transsexual people, or toward transsexuality. Transphobia can include fear, aversion, hatred, violence, anger, or discomfort felt or expressed toward people who do not conform to society's gender expectation.

Unwelcome sexual advance

includes visual displays of degrading sexual images, sexually suggestive conduct, offensive remarks of a sexual nature, requests for sexual favors, unwelcome physical contact, and sexual assault.

Portions of the text for this policy were adopted from Django Project Code of Conduct and the W3C Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct[i].

---

[i] This document includes material copied or derived from W3C Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (https://www.w3.org/Consortium/cepc/)
Copyright © 16-Jul-2020 World Wide Web Consortium, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics, Keio University, Beihang). All Rights Reserved.

[ii] The principles of a brave space are:

"Controversy with civility," where varying opinions are accepted

"Owning intentions and impacts," in which individuals acknowledge and discuss instances where a dialogue has affected the emotional well-being of another person

"Challenge by choice," where individuals have an option to step in and out of challenging conversations

"Respect," where individuals show respect for one another's basic personhood

"No attacks," where individuals agree not to intentionally inflict harm on one another

"Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals", Diana Ali, NASPA Policy and Practice Series, Issue 2, 2017.
https://naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Policy_and_Practice_No_2_Safe_Brave_Spaces.pdf