

## **Guidelines for Advertising and Members Posting while Representing their Company\* on MuscleTalk**



***Increase your sales through one of the World's busiest and most famous bodybuilding & fitness websites!***

**[www.MuscleTalk.co.uk](http://www.MuscleTalk.co.uk)**

***MuscleTalk (MT) is an extremely busy bodybuilding, strength and fitness discussion board with over 53,000 members (rising daily!), serving well in excess of 13,000 unique visitors and 120,000 page views a day!***

*MuscleTalk is part of **Energy Active Ltd***

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## **This document covers the following:**

- 1) Guidelines and rules for both sponsors of MuscleTalk and those 'companies'\* who do not sponsor MuscleTalk and have representatives who post on the public forum.
- 2) Tips and suggestions for sponsors of MuscleTalk to get the most out of their advertising, in order to maximise traffic sent from MuscleTalk and ultimately sales.

For details on the current rates and options for advertising on MuscleTalk, please see the document [Advertising Opportunities on MuscleTalk](#) which details rules regarding each option of sponsorship and should be adhered to alongside this document.

Please [email](#) or telephone us if you wish to discuss anything which is not covered in either document or if you wish to discuss sponsoring MuscleTalk in more detail.

**NB: This is a fluid document which is dynamic in nature, and will be updated as situations and sponsors' needs change. We therefore reserve the right to make changes and/or updates at *any* time. If an issue is not covered in this document then any action undertaken will be at the full discretion of Energy Active Ltd.**

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*\*by 'companies' throughout this document we mean companies that:*

- *sell, manufacture or brand their own nutrition and performance enhancing supplements*
- *sell, manufacture or brand their own nutrition or performance enhancing food products*
- *sell or publish books, ebooks and visual media about nutrition, fitness or health issues*
- *sell, manufacture or brand their own training and fitness equipment and gym, exercise and tanning accessories*
- *sell, manufacture or brand their own sports, fitness or gym clothing*
- *provide nutrition, exercise or performance enhancing information*
- *own or are directly involved (including moderators & administrators) with the running of sports, fitness or bodybuilding discussion forums*

*Please note that companies that manufacture, sell or promote the sale of illicit performance enhancing drugs or research medicines are not included in these guidelines as such postings are prohibited on MuscleTalk.*

## 1. Sponsored Topics

- 1.1 One sponsorship option detailed in the *Advertising Opportunities on MuscleTalk* document is #8 Forum Sticky Topics. Each sticky topic may have up to 25 links to different pages of the sponsor's website. Sponsored topics will appear from '*MuscleTalk Message*' and have '*Sponsor Message*' written at the top of the first post.
- 1.2 Sponsored sticky topics may remain unlocked in order for members as well as the sponsor to reply to, in which case it is important that the sponsor monitors the topic frequently and responds to any questions. Should the sponsor require anything to be edited in the topic, he/she should email a relevant forum moderator who will edit the changes within reasonable time. The sponsor may use their sponsored topic to promote their products as they see fit **for the duration of the sponsorship agreement only**; adding promotions beyond the agreed duration is not allowed, though the sponsor may still reply to any questions asked by members. Sponsored topics should not be used to promote any illicit substances\* nor 'research' medicines.
- 1.3 When a sponsored sticky topic has been unstickied, a sponsor or their representative may only post in it if it is in reply to a specific question by a member. If an unstickied topic continues to have debate beyond one month after it has been unstickied, MuscleTalk reserves the right to lock the topic.
- 1.4 Competitors and other companies are prohibited from promoting their products and services in a sponsored topic; should another member ask a competitor an off topic question it should not be replied to within that topic.
- 1.5 Sponsored topics may be edited/removed/deleted/moderated appropriately by MuscleTalk moderators under the direction of the board owners, according to the rules and welfare of MuscleTalk and guidelines for posting.
- 1.6 We allow a maximum of four sponsored 'sticky' topics in one forum at one time, but there may be up to four other sticky topics displayed in a forum concurrently, as sometimes these are needed for important topics and board announcements. A sponsored 'sticky' may be below other sticky topics if it does not have the most recent post.

## 2. Links in Forum Signatures

- 2.1 A signature is what a member opts to have appear beneath posts they make on the forum. Many members choose to add quotes, pictures and links in their signatures. Members who represent a company **must** have their company name in their signature to show that they are affiliated with a company. This is irrespective of whether they sponsor MuscleTalk or not. This is important for moderators and members to identify association with a company.
- 2.2 No company, irrespective of whether they sponsor MuscleTalk or not, may link to any page other than their home page in their auto-signature. This applies to both affiliate and flat rate sponsors. However, as a perk for companies who sponsor MuscleTalk, company logos may be placed in signatures; and there is no additional charge for this method of promotion. Note that dimensions must not exceed 300 pixels wide x 80 pixels high and no more than 10kb. Please note that these images cannot be hosted on MuscleTalk servers. Graphics may be clickable if desired and formatted by the sponsor representative.
- 2.3 Regular members of MuscleTalk who are not representatives of a company may not have graphics which relate to a company in their signatures.

### 3. Graphical Advertising on the Forum

3.1 Images may be included in sponsored sticky topics through liaison with the site owners as part of a sponsorship agreement as detailed under section 1.

3.2 As a perk for companies who sponsor MuscleTalk, company logos or product pictures may be uploaded into membership avatars and/or signatures (see paragraph 2.2) by representatives of companies currently sponsoring MuscleTalk; and there is no additional charge for this method of promotion. However any pictures posted should be suitably professionally restrained. Companies who do not sponsor MuscleTalk are forbidden to have company logos or product pictures as avatar, profile pictures or signatures.

3.3 Regular members of MuscleTalk who are not representatives of a company may not have graphics which relate to a company in their signatures or avatars.

3.4 Graphical advertisements which we deem to be sexually suggestive or explicit are prohibited anywhere on the website.

### 4. Authorised Promotional Topics

4.1 Sponsored sticky topics are authorised posts. Other than these, member representatives of a company are not allowed to start a new topic promoting their products or website. Exceptions to this rule are topics in advertisers' own sub-forums (see paragraph 4.3) or for the promotion of bodybuilding, strength and fitness competitions or events; if in doubt please discuss with the site owners. All sponsored topics are required to have '*Sponsor Message*' at the beginning and either party may request that the topic is posted from '*MuscleTalk Message*' (see section 1). This applies to both affiliate and flat-rate sponsors.

4.2 'Sponsor Announcement' topics are a perk which MuscleTalk offers free of charge to their advertisers. These topics are for announcements concerning the company in respect of a new board representative, change in opening times, moving address, website issues, etc; they are not for product information, special offers nor delivery dates. The company should supply the text by posting it in the Advertisers' Private Forum and these announcements can be for a maximum of seven days in one forum as a level 1 (green) sticky topic. Text must be professionally restrained and minimally promotional. It should only contain the information required. Stickies will be locked.

4.3 Advertisers who have their own sub-forum as detailed in option #14 the *Advertising Opportunities on MuscleTalk* document, may use this section as they please, but have to comply with the same rules as sponsored topics and also heed other relevant rules in the document. However, self promotion within their own sub-forum is allowed.

### 5. Special Offers for MuscleTalk Members

5.1 MuscleTalk encourages its sponsors to run promotional deals solely for our members. If a company chooses to run a promotional deal on its website for MuscleTalk members, or any special offer which uses the MuscleTalk name or website address must be agreed by MuscleTalk owners and negotiated as part of a sponsorship deal. Under **no** circumstances must any company commence a promotion involving MuscleTalk without prior consultation with the owners. Any offence in this respect will mean offending representative(s) will be banned from the MuscleTalk forums and appropriate action will be taken.

5.2 Some companies offer loyalty promotional codes where both the code holder and the new customer will receive discounts on orders. These are not supported on the MuscleTalk forums, and any posting of codes will be deleted. Companies are requested to discourage their customers from posting them on the MuscleTalk forums or emailing them to our members. An exception to this is in the advertisers' own sub-forum where this is at the discretion of the advertiser.

## **6. Discussions of Companies' Products and Services on the Forum**

6.1 This section seeks to clarify what companies (both sponsors and non-sponsors) are allowed to refer to regarding their products and services in forum posts.

6.2 If a member/members asks a company representative a direct question on the forum (either through a new topic or within a topic), the representative member is allowed to answer that question fully, even if he/she has to make reference to statements which are promoting their company's products and/or services (an exception to this is within another sponsor's sponsored sticky topic (see paragraph 1.4)). This also applies if a topic/post/comment is made by a member/members regarding a company's products or service, even if not directed at a representative, in which case the representative may comment appropriately. However, he/she should not divert from the question(s) asked in order to promote other aspects of their company, and he/she should encourage further questions to be taken to email whenever possible. The representative must also not link to any page on their website which sells a product unless the posting member/members specifically request for a link to that page or the link is crucial to answer the question for information purposes only.

6.3 In the case of sponsors who are a store selling a number of different brands, the same rules apply. They should not mention any of the products they sell unless specifically asked by a member(s) and they should not link to a product page unless this is crucial to answer the question for information purposes only.

6.4 Companies and their representatives may not discuss or respond to questions asked about *any* company's products or services, even if they are a completely unrelated company, unless they are directly asked and then must follow the rules outlined in paragraph 6.2.

6.5 All representative sponsors should answer in a professionally restrained manner, and not elaborate on any replies, sticking only to answering the question that has been asked. Ideally sponsors should wait for other members to answer any non-specific questions about a products before replying, though, if a member posts something which is incorrect, then the representative may reply promptly with a correction.

6.6 In some cases negative comments may be made about a company's products and/or services, in which case none of Energy Active Ltd, MuscleTalk, the site owners, nor the moderators are responsible for the discussion. However, if required, the representative may email relevant moderators should the topic require specific editing/moderating in any way. Within reasonable time the moderator will use their discretion which may involve removing the topic temporarily for discussion with the site owners. If it is deemed in the best interest for the members and any potential harm to the company is outweighed by this, then the topic will remain / be moved back into public, providing there is no potential legal issue.

6.7 If there is a topic where a member is having difficulty finding a company which can supply a particular product, and there is no suitable help from other members, then the representative may supply details to his/her or any other company and the product in order to help the member in a professionally restrained manor. However, no further promotion is allowed.

6.8 Any claim regarding a product's effectiveness or a company's service which cannot be easily substantiated is not allowed in any advertisement. If this is part of a submitted advertisement, Energy Active Ltd will reject it; if a claim is made by an advertiser in a sticky, their own sub-forum or in response to a member, then Energy Active Ltd reserve the right to moderate the topic appropriately and at their discretion.

6.9 Exceptions to the above are detailed in Appendix 1.

## **7. Multiple memberships / aliases and multiple representatives**

7.1 We enforce a strict policy against company representatives who sign up with multiple accounts, and use these aliases to unfairly promote their products; for example by posing as a member of the general public and pretending they are not associated with the company in any way. We now monitor accounts and their usage very closely following a number of complaints from both regular members and legitimate sponsors. We are not willing to tolerate something that, we are sure all legitimate sponsors will agree, is

unscrupulous and underhand activity. **For members who breach this rule see section 13 and offending accounts will be removed.**

7.2 We welcome multiple company representative memberships, i.e. different representatives of the same company, as long as this fact is disclosed (for example by way of a simple link in the members' signature (see paragraph 2.1)). Up to four representatives are allowed per company. If a member is a representative of a company they must not hide this fact. It is the responsibility of the company to inform Energy Active Ltd of proposed representatives for approval. Failure to do this may result in the representative membership being temporarily suspended. See also paragraph 11.3.

7.3 Companies who have more than one product brand name or website must disclose all brands their company produces (they can link to multiple home pages in their signature (see section 2)). However, only a maximum of four representatives is allowed despite more than one brand or website.

7.4 An exception is where a brand relies on a single UK distributor to sell and promote their products in the UK. In this case then up to five representatives will be allowed per brand even if the advertising agreement is with one distributor.

## **8. Affiliate sponsors**

8.1 The same rules apply to affiliate sponsors as to flat-rate sponsors of MuscleTalk. However, taking into account all of the above points, should an affiliate company's representative need to link to their website or a particular product, only the direct MuscleTalk affiliate link should be quoted. Indeed, affiliate sponsors members are encouraged to over-ride topics where other members have posted a non-affiliate link to their site, by posting the correct affiliate link in that topic.

8.2 Affiliate sponsors should note that the more income generated for MuscleTalk from their company, the more likely the board owners are to create more links to their site, i.e. benefit to both parties.

## **9. Submitting articles or interviews**

9.1 Should a company representative have a suggestion for a new article that he/she would like to write on a subject not already covered, they should contact the site owners to discuss. Approved articles will be added to the site and in return a link to the home page will be added both at the beginning and at the end of the article. No deep links are allowed. The fee for this will need to be negotiated with the site owners.

9.2 Please be aware that the standard of article on MuscleTalk is exceptionally high, and many articles are rejected. Factual information should be referenced fully (for details contact the site owners) where possible, and authors are discouraged from using their own anecdotes unless it is pertinent to the article information. All articles will be subject to strict proofing and will be edited appropriately before being uploaded. Please read the PDF document *Article Submissions to MuscleTalk – Terms & Conditions*.

9.3 Under no circumstances should articles be copied or stolen from other websites, magazines, books, ebooks or journals and submitted as this is breach of copyright.

## **10. Use of Private Messages**

10.1 MuscleTalk has a private message (PM) system where members can contact each other. Due to misuse by companies, the MuscleTalk owners reserve the right to monitor PMs to ensure they are not misused.

10.2 Companies must not use the PM system to contact any member to advertise their products or services or to offer free gifts (see also paragraph 11.5). If a member were to contact a representative via PM asking about products or service, then the representative is free to reply fully. If a member were to contact a

representative asking for a free sample, then the company may send the member a free sample but they may not request that the member posts feedback on the MuscleTalk forums.

10.3 If a member posts negative feedback regarding products or services on the public forums, the sponsor may prefer to reply to the member through PM, in which case this is completely acceptable, including the offering of free gifts in order to fulfil good will.

## 11. Promotional Free Gifts & Samples

11.1 MuscleTalk encourages its advertisers to give out promotional free gifts and samples to our members. However, companies must follow our rules in order to prevent misuse, and to distinguish between a member merely posting feedback and a paid representative.

11.2 Promotional samples may only be given out by way of an approved sticky topic. There is no restriction on quantity of item(s) which may be offered in one promotion. However, should a company wish to offer free samples to members in exchange for them either posting their feedback or running a Progress Journal on the forums, the promotion must be approved and **limited to only four items in one promotion / sticky topic**, and members should only give their feedback in one topic. Specific 'Sponsored Journals / Logs / TROGs' or similar are prohibited and the onus is on the company to make the member aware of this. (However, members can include their feedback log as part of their own regular journal or TROG in the relevant forum.)

11.3 Companies may choose to pay their representative(s) by way of free product. This is up to the company and their arrangement with their representative(s); however this is very different to a free sample and the representative must abide by the rules outlined in this document. A company may only give one sample (of any product) to the same member within a 12 month period, otherwise this will be seen as self promotion.

11.4 Free gifts which are given out as 'free gifts' and are not normally sold (such as promotional T-shirts, mouse mats, pedometers, etc) are encouraged and unrestricted as long as they are offered through approved promotional topics (see section 2).

11.5 Under no circumstances should companies or representatives private message members offering them free gifts and samples in return for promotion (see also section 10).

## 12. Price Wars & Other Business Conflicts

12.1 It may be perceived that there are benefits to consumers if companies choose to undercut each other on prices for the same product. However, it is our view that this only harms the sports supplement industry which is already very competitive. Therefore **MuscleTalk does not support price wars**. Obviously, we have no control over how companies set their prices in their own stores, but any advertisements or changes to advertisements on MuscleTalk which are involved in price wars will not be approved. We believe that any professionally run company will support our view on this.

12.2 Like in any industry, some companies may have issues with each others' business activities. For instance, a company may have distribution rights for one brand, but a competitor may be buying it from another foreign supplier. MuscleTalk does not wish to be involved in such conflicts and at no time should the issues be raised on the forum, including in the Advertisers' Private Area.

## 13. Breach of the Rules

13.1 Any member of MuscleTalk agrees to all our [Terms & Conditions](#) including those outlined in this document.

13.2 **If any company representative breaches any of the above rules they may receive a formal warning, irrespective of whether they are a paid sponsor or not.** On MuscleTalk we operate a three strike rule for minor offences, which includes those outlined in this document, and three formal warnings will mean an immediate ban from the MuscleTalk forum for that member for one to four weeks at the discretion of Energy Active Ltd. After which membership will be re-instated, but should offending persist a long-term/permanent ban will be instigated at the discretion of the board owners.

13.3 This policy applies initially to individual representative members only and not to the company as a whole, though other representatives may be banned at the discretion of the board owners should breaking of the sponsorship rules persist.

13.4 It should be highlighted that any forum posting (outside that of sponsored sticky topics) is completely separate from any formal business agreement between the company and Energy Active Ltd. Should a representative have to be banned for breach of the rules no refund will be given and the sponsorship will continue as per any agreement for the duration of that agreement.

13.5 Energy Active Ltd regrets having to impose such a policy; however abuse of membership by some sponsors has meant that strict rules must be imposed.

## **14. Getting the most out of your sponsorship of MuscleTalk**

14.1 Due to the large numbers of long term sponsors of MuscleTalk it is obvious that advertising on the website is an extremely cost effective method of promotion. Feedback is increasingly positive though direct sales, search engine boosts and the branding effect. Below are a few tips which we have observed and documented in order to further help sponsors, though we welcome further feedback in order to help us help sponsors get the most out of their promotion through MuscleTalk. However, the rules outlined above must still be heeded by representatives.

14.2 Representative members who sponsor MuscleTalk are encouraged to post on the MuscleTalk forums in order to maximise the benefit of their sponsorship deal. Feedback from companies who post regularly has been considerably more positive than those who choose not to post on the site.

14.3 While we appreciate that time constraints and lack of internet access can be restrictive, companies will benefit from their representatives spending as little as 15-20 minutes two or three times a week, providing input and helping other members with their queries. This adds a human element into business which is always appreciated by customers. Regular members will see that the representative member is helpful and knowledgeable which leaves a positive impact in their memory, re-enforcing confidence in the companies' representatives and name.

14.4 Posts need not be confined to issues regarding the area that the company is involved in. For example representatives of supplement retailers may benefit indirectly from helping people with their training queries. Remember a lot more people read topics than actually post in them, and these are also potential customers. Adding their company name and/or a link to their site homepage in their signature is imperative, as it helps members identify who the member represents. Sponsors are also encouraged to use a graphic in their avatar and/or signature. However, all posts must be in a professionally restrained manor and any breach of the rules above will lead to action as outlines in section 13.

## **15. Advertisers' Private Area**

15.1 In order to improve our service to sponsors, we have set up a private area for sponsors, their representatives and relevant MuscleTalk moderators only. This section is not visible to the public and only approved sponsors and their representatives will be allowed access.

## Appendix 1 - Acceptable Generic Terms Used to Describe Supplement Products

There are a number of supplement terms where a generic term is used to describe the compound as opposed to the product brand name. Some of these are not always clear they are a generic term and those in the list below are acceptable to be used by companies in their posts irrespective of whether they sell the product or not if they are offering advice to members. This list is by no means finite as there are a huge number of terms in the ever-growing supplement industry. The list also includes registered trade mark names which are not solely associated with one brand.

The following terms are acceptable, although other terms may also be acceptable (at the discretion of Energy Active Ltd):

- Boldione
- Epistane
- Gakic
- Haladrol / Hdrol
- Palatinose
- Superdrol (SD)
- Tren
- Vitargo
- 19 Nor

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If there are any queries, concerning any of the advertising options available or guidelines / rules, please contact us through [accounts@muscletalk.co.uk](mailto:accounts@muscletalk.co.uk).

If you would like to consider further multiple advertising options, please contact us and we can negotiate a price. We are also open to other suggestions you may have regarding advertising.

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