<h1>Ethical Standards

<h2>Public Relations Society of America (PRSA.org)

<h3>Member Code of Ethics

Approved by the PRSA Assembly (October, 2000)

<h4>Preamble

* Professional Values
* Principles of Conduct
* Commitment and Compliance

This Code applies to Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) members. The Code is designed to be a useful guide for PRSA members as they carry out their ethical responsibilities. This document is designed to anticipate and accommodate, by precedent, ethical challenges that may arise. The scenarios outlined in the Code provision are actual examples of misconduct. More will be added as experience with the Code occurs.

The Public Relations Society of America is committed to ethical practices. The level of public trust PRSA members seek, as we serve the public good, means we have taken on a special obligation to operate ethically.

The value of member reputation depends upon the ethical conduct of everyone affiliated with the Public Relations Society of America. Each of us sets an example for each other—as well as other professionals—by our pursuit of excellence with powerful standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.

Emphasis on enforcement of the Code has been eliminated. But, the PRSA Board of Directors retains the right to bar from membership or expel from the Society any individual who has been or is sanctioned by a government agency or convicted in a court of law of an action that is in violation of this Code.

Ethical practice is the most important obligation of a PRSA member. We view the Member Code of Ethics as a model for other professions, organizations, and professionals.

<h3>PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values

This statement presents the core values of PRSA members and, more broadly, of the public relations profession. These values provide the foundation for the Member Code of Ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole.

<h4>Advocacy

* We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent.
* We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

<h4>Honesty

* We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

<h4>Expertise

* We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience.
* We advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education.
* We build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

<h4>Independence

* We provide objective counsel to those we represent.
* We are accountable for our actions.

<h4>Loyalty

We are faithful to those we represent, while honoring our obligation to serve the public interest.

<h4>Fairness

* We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media, and the general public.
* We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression.

<h3>PRSA Code Provisions

<h4>Free Flow of Information

*Core Principle*: Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society.

Intent:

* To maintain the integrity of relationships with the media, government officials, and the public
* To aid informed decision making

Guidelines: A member shall:

* Preserve the integrity of the process of communication
* Be honest and accurate in all communications
* Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible
* Preserve the free flow of unprejudiced information when giving or receiving gifts by ensuring that gifts are nominal, legal, and infrequent

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

* A member representing a ski manufacturer gives a pair of expensive racing skis to a sports magazine columnist, to influence the columnist to write favorable articles about the product.
* A member entertains a government official beyond legal limits and/or in violation of government reporting requirements.

<h4>Competition

*Core Principle*: Promoting healthy and fair competition among professionals preserves an ethical climate while fostering a robust business environment.

Intent:

* To promote respect and fair competition among public relations professionals
* To serve the public interest by providing the widest choice of practitioner options

Guidelines: A member shall:

* Follow ethical hiring practices designed to respect free and open competition without deliberately undermining a competitor
* Preserve intellectual property rights in the marketplace

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

* A member employed by a “client organization” shares helpful information with a counseling firm that is competing with others for the organization’s business.
* A member spreads malicious and unfounded rumors about a competitor in order to alienate the competitor’s clients and employees in a ploy to recruit people and business.

<h4>Disclosure of Information

*Core Principle*: Open communication fosters informed decision making in a democratic society.

Intent:

* To build trust with the public by revealing all information needed for responsible decision making

Guidelines: A member shall:

* Be honest and accurate in all communications
* Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the member is responsible
* Investigate the truthfulness and accuracy of information released on behalf of those represented
* Reveal the sponsors for causes and interests represented
* Disclose financial interest (such as stock ownership) in a client’s organization
* Avoid deceptive practices

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

* Front groups: A member implements “grass roots” campaigns or letter-writing campaigns to legislators on behalf of undisclosed interest groups.
* Lying by omission: A practitioner for a corporation knowingly fails to release financial information, giving a misleading impression of the corporation’s performance.
* A member discovers inaccurate information disseminated via a website or media kit and does not correct the information.
* A member deceives the public by employing people to pose as volunteers to speak at public hearings and participate in “grass roots” campaigns.

<h4>Safeguarding Confidences

*Core Principle*: Client trust requires appropriate protection of confidential and private information.

Intent:

* To protect the privacy rights of clients, organizations, and individuals by safeguarding confidential information

Guidelines: A member shall:

* Safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients and employees
* Protect privileged, confidential, or insider information gained from a client or organization
* Immediately advise an appropriate authority if a member discovers that confidential information is being divulged by an employee of a client company or organization

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

* A member changes jobs, takes confidential information, and uses that information in the new position to the detriment of the former employer.
* A member intentionally leaks proprietary information to the detriment of some other party.

<h4>Conflicts of Interest

*Core Principle*: Avoiding real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest builds the trust of clients, employers, and the publics.

Intent:

* To earn trust and mutual respect with clients or employers
* To build trust with the public by avoiding or ending situations that put one’s personal or professional interests in conflict with society’s interests

Guidelines: A member shall:

* Act in the best interests of the client or employer, even subordinating the member’s personal interests
* Avoid actions and circumstances that may appear to compromise good business judgment or create a conflict between personal and professional interests
* Disclose promptly any existing or potential conflict of interest to affected clients or organizations
* Encourage clients and customers to determine if a conflict exists after notifying all affected parties

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

* The member fails to disclose that he or she has a strong financial interest in a client’s chief competitor.
* The member represents a “competitor company” or a “conflicting interest” without informing a prospective client.

<h4>Enhancing the Profession

*Core Principle*: Public relations professionals work constantly to strengthen the public’s trust in the profession.

Intent:

* To build respect and credibility with the public for the profession of public relations
* To improve, adapt and expand professional practices

Guidelines: A member shall:

* Acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession
* Keep informed and educated about practices in the profession to ensure ethical conduct
* Actively pursue personal professional development
* Decline representation of clients or organizations that urge or require actions contrary to this Code
* Accurately define what public relations activities can accomplish
* Counsel subordinates in proper ethical decision making
* Require that subordinates adhere to the ethical requirements of the Code
* Report ethical violations, whether committed by PRSA members or not, to the appropriate authority

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

* A PRSA member declares publicly that a product the client sells is safe, without disclosing evidence to the contrary.
* A member initially assigns some questionable client work to a non-member practitioner to avoid the ethical obligation of PRSA membership.

<h3>PRSA Member Code of Ethics Pledge

I pledge:

* To conduct myself professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public;
* To improve my individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing research and education;
* And to adhere to the articles of the Member Code of Ethics 2000 for the practice of public relations as adopted by the governing Assembly of the Public Relations Society of America.

I understand and accept that there is a consequence for misconduct, up to and including membership revocation.

And, I understand that those who have been or are sanctioned by a government agency or convicted in a court of law of an action that is in violation of this Code may be barred from membership or expelled from the Society.

<h2>Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS.ca)

<h3>Declaration of Principles

Members of the Canadian Public Relations Society are pledged to maintain the spirit and ideals of the following stated principles of conduct, and to consider these essential to the practice of public relations.

1. **A member shall practice public relations according to the highest professional standards**. Members shall conduct their professional lives in a manner that does not conflict with the public interest and the dignity of the individual, with respect for the rights of the public as contained in the Constitution of Canada and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
2. **A member shall deal fairly and honestly with the communications media and the public**. Members shall neither propose nor act to improperly influence the communications media, government bodies or the legislative process. Improper influence may include conferring gifts, privileges or benefits to influence decisions.
3. **A member shall practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth, and shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information**. Members shall not make extravagant claims or unfair comparisons, nor assume credit for ideas and words not their own. Members shall not engage in professional or personal conduct that will bring discredit to themselves, the Society or the practice of public relations.
4. **A member shall deal fairly with past or present employers/clients**, **fellow practitioners and members of other professions**. Members shall not intentionally damage another practitioner’s practice or professional reputation. Members shall understand, respect and abide by the ethical codes of other professions with whose members they may work from time to time.
5. **Members shall be prepared to disclose the names of their employers or clients for whom public communications are made and refrain from associating themselves with anyone who would not respect such policy**. Members shall be prepared to disclose publicly the names of their employers or clients on whose behalf public communications are made. Members shall not associate themselves with anyone claiming to represent one interest, or professing to be independent or unbiased, but who actually serves another or an undisclosed interest.
6. **A member shall protect the confidences of present**, **former and prospective employers/clients**. Members shall not use or disclose confidential information obtained from past or present employers/clients without the expressed permission of the employers/clients or an order of a court of law.
7. **A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the expressed consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts**. Members shall not permit personal or other professional interests to conflict with those of an employer/client without fully disclosing such interests to everyone involved.
8. **A member shall not guarantee specified results beyond the member’s capacity to achieve.**
9. **Members shall personally accept no fees, commissions, gifts or any other considerations for professional services from anyone except employers or clients for whom the services were specifically performed.**

<h2>International Public Relations Association (ipra.org)

<h3>IPRA Code of Conduct

Adopted in 2011, the IPRA Code of Conduct is an affirmation of professional and ethical conduct by members of the International Public Relations Association and recommended to public relations practitioners worldwide. The Code consolidates the 1961 Code of Venice, the 1965 Code of Athens and the 2007 Code of Brussels.

1. RECALLING the Charter of the United Nations which determines “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, and in the dignity and worth of the human person”;
2. RECALLING the 1948 “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and especially recalling Article 19;
3. RECALLING that public relations, by fostering the free flow of information, contributes to the interests of all stakeholders;
4. RECALLING that the conduct of public relations and public affairs provides essential democratic representation to public authorities;
5. RECALLING that public relations practitioners through their wide-reaching communication skills possess a means of influence that should be restrained by the observance of a code of professional and ethical conduct;
6. RECALLING that channels of communication, such as the Internet and other digital media, are channels where erroneous or misleading information may be widely disseminated and remain unchallenged, and therefore demand special attention from public relations practitioners to maintain trust and credibility;
7. Recalling that the Internet and other digital media demand special care with respect to the personal privacy of individuals, clients, employers and colleagues;

In the conduct of public affairs, practitioners shall:

1. *Observance*. Observe the principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
2. *Integrity.* Act with honesty and integrity at all times so as to secure the confidence of those with whom the practitioner comes into contact;
3. *Dialogue*. Seek to establish the moral, cultural and intellectual conditions for dialogue, and recognise the rights of all parties involved to state their case and express their views;
4. *Transparency*. Be open and transparent in declaring their name, organisation and the interest they represent;
5. *Conflict*. Avoid any professional conflicts of interest and to disclose such conflicts to affected parties when they occur;
6. *Confidentiality*. Honour confidential information provided to them;
7. *Accuracy*. Take all reasonable steps to ensure the truth and accuracy of all information provided to public authorities;
8. *Falsehood*. Not intentionally disseminate false or misleading information, and shall exercise proper care to avoid doing so unintentionally and correct any such act promptly;
9. *Deception*. Not obtain information from public authorities by deceptive or dishonest means;
10. *Disclosure*. Not create or use any organization to serve an announced cause but which actually serves an undisclosed interest;
11. *Profit*. Not sell for profit to third parties copies of documents obtained from public authorities;
12. *Remuneration*. Whilst providing professional services, not accept any form of payment in connection with those services from anyone other than the principal;
13. *Inducement*. Neither directly nor indirectly offer nor give any financial or other inducement to members of public authorities or public representatives;
14. *Influence*. Neither propose nor undertake any action which would constitute an improper influence on public authorities;
15. *Competitors*. Not intentionally injure the professional reputation of another practitioner;
16. *Poaching*. Not seek to secure another practitioner’s client by deceptive means;
17. *Employment*. Only employ personnel from public authorities subject to the rules and confidentiality requirements of those authorities.
18. *Colleagues*. Observe this Code with respect to fellow IPRA members and public relations practitioners worldwide.

IPRA members shall, in upholding this Code, and agree to abide by and help enforce the disciplinary procedures of the International Public Relations Association in regard to any breaching of this Code.

<h2>American Marketing Association (MarketingPower.com)

<h3>Statement of Ethics

(Adopted 2008)

<h4>Preamble

The American Marketing Association commits itself to promoting the highest standard of professional ethical norms and values for its members (practitioners, academics and students). Norms are established standards of conduct that are expected and maintained by society and/or professional organizations. Values represent the collective conception of what communities find desirable, important and morally proper. Values also serve as the criteria for evaluating our own personal actions andthe actions of others. As marketers, we recognize that we not only serve our organizations but also act as stewards of society in creating, facilitating and executing the transactions that are part of the greater economy. In this role, marketers are expected to embrace the highest professional ethical norms and the ethical values implied by our responsibility toward multiple stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, investors,peers,channel members, regulators and the host community).

<h3>Ethical Norms

As Marketers, we must:

1. **Do no harm.** This meansconsciously avoiding harmful actions or omissions by embodying high ethical standards and adhering to all applicable laws and regulations in the choices we make.
2. **Foster trust in the marketing system.** This means striving for good faith and fair dealing so as to contribute toward the efficacy of the exchange process as well as avoiding deception in product design, pricing, communication, and delivery of distribution.

**Embrace ethical values.** This means building relationships and enhancing consumer confidence in the integrity of marketing by affirming these core values: honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, transparency and citizenship.

<h3>Ethical Values

***Honesty***—to be forthright in dealings with customers and stakeholders. To this end, we will:

* Strive to be truthful in all situations and at all times.
* Offer products of value that do what we claim in our communications.
* Stand behind our products if they fail to deliver their claimed benefits.
* Honor our explicit and implicit commitments and promises.

***Responsibility***—to accept the consequences of our marketing decisions and strategies. To this end, we will:

* Strive to serve the needs of customers.
* Avoid using coercion with all stakeholders.
* Acknowledge the social obligations to stakeholders that come with increased marketing and economic power.
* Recognize our special commitments to vulnerable market segments such as children, seniors, the economically impoverished, market illiterates and others who may be substantially disadvantaged.
* Consider environmental stewardship in our decision-making.

***Fairness***—to balance justly the needs of the buyer with the interests of the seller. To this end, we will:

* Represent products in a clear way in selling, advertising and other forms of communication; this includes the avoidance of false, misleading and deceptive promotion.
* Reject manipulations and sales tactics that harm customer trust.
* Refuse to engage in price fixing, predatory pricing, price gouging or “bait-and-switch” tactics.
* Avoid knowing participation in conflicts of interest.
* Seek to protect the private information of customers, employees and partners.

***Respect***—to acknowledge the basic human dignity of all stakeholders. To this end, we will:

* Value individual differences and avoid stereotyping customers or depicting demographic groups (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation) in a negative or dehumanizing way.
* Listen to the needs of customers and make all reasonable efforts to monitor and improve their satisfaction on an ongoing basis.
* Make every effort to understand and respectfully treat buyers, suppliers, intermediaries and distributors from all cultures.
* Acknowledge the contributions of others, such as consultants, employees and coworkers, to marketing endeavors.
* Treat everyone, including our competitors, as we would wish to be treated.

***Transparency***—to create a spirit of openness in marketing operations. To this end, we will:

* Strive to communicate clearly with all constituencies.
* Accept constructive criticism from customers and other stakeholders.
* Explain and take appropriate action regarding significant product or service risks, component substitutions or other foreseeable eventualities that could affect customers or their perception of the purchase decision.
* Disclose list prices and terms of financing as well as available price deals and adjustments.

***Citizenship***—to fulfill the economic, legal, philanthropic and societal responsibilities that serve stakeholders.  To this end, we will:

* Strive to protect the ecological environment in the execution of marketing campaigns.
* Give back to the community through volunteerism and charitable donations.
* Contribute to the overall betterment of marketing and its reputation.
* Urge supply chain members to ensure that trade is fair for all participants, including producers in developing countries.

<h4>Implementation

We expect AMA members to be courageous and proactive in leading and/or aiding their organizations in the fulfillment of the explicit and implicit promises made to those stakeholders. We recognize that every industry sector and marketing sub-discipline (e.g., marketing research, e-commerce, Internet selling, direct marketing, and advertising) has its own specific ethical issues that require policies and commentary. An array of such codes can be accessed through links on the AMA Web site. Consistent with the principle of subsidiarity (solving issues at the level where the expertise resides), we encourage all such groups to develop and/or refine their industry and discipline-specific codes of ethics to supplement these guiding ethical norms and values.