

PUBLIC RELATIONS INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

For members of PRISA - The Institute for Public Relations & Communication Management and its chapters – Public Relations Consultants' Chapter of PRISA (PRCC)

Whenever reference is made to an individual, member or colleague, it applies to both the individual and an entity (consultancy).

PREAMBLE

A profession is distinguished by certain characteristics or attributes, including:

- Mastery of a particular intellectual skill through education and training
- Acceptance of duties to a broader society than merely one's clients/employers
- Objectivity
- High standards of conduct and performance

INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Public Relations and Communication Management Southern African (PRISA) is committed to ethical practices. The level of public support our 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 PRISA. We set an example for each other – as well as other professionals – by our pursuit of excellence with exemplary standards of performance, professionalism and ethical conduct.

Emphasis on enforcement of our Code has been eliminated. However, the PRISA Board of Directors retains the right to bar from membership or expel from the Institute, any individual who has been or is sanctioned by the PRISA Disciplinary Committee or government agency or convicted in a Court of Law of an action that is in violation of the Code.

We believe ethical practice is the most important obligation of PRISA members and we will strive at all times to enhance and protect the dignity of the profession.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

We base our professional principles on the fundamental value and dignity of the individual. We believe in and support the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the media, which are essential to the practice of good public relations.

In serving the interests of clients and employers, we dedicate ourselves to the goals of better communication, mutual understanding and co-operation among diverse individuals, groups and institutions of society. We also subscribe to and support equal opportunity of employment in the public relations and communication profession and lifelong professional development.

We pledge:

- *to conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness and responsibility to the public and towards our colleagues and to an informed society;*
- *to improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the*

profession through continuing education and research;

- *to adhere to the articles of the Code of Ethics and Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations and Communication Management in Southern Africa and to adhere to the principles of the Global protocol on Ethics in Public Relations and Communication Management.*

CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

1 DEFINITION

Public relations is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders.

2 PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- 2.1 We shall acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession.
- 2.2 We shall keep informed and educated about practices in the profession that ensures ethical conduct.
- 2.3 We shall actively pursue personal professional development.
- 2.4 We are committed to ethical practices, preservation of public trust, and the pursuit of communication excellence with powerful standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.
- 2.5 We shall accurately define what public relations activities can and cannot accomplish. In the conduct of our professional activities, we shall respect the public interest and the dignity of the individual. It is our responsibility at all times to

- deal fairly and honestly with our clients or employers, past or present, with our colleagues, media communication and with the public.
- 2.6 We shall conduct our professional lives in accordance with the public interest. We shall not conduct ourselves in any manner detrimental to the profession of public relations.
- 2.7 We have a positive duty to maintain integrity and accuracy, as well as generally accepted standards of good taste.
- 2.8 We shall not knowingly, intentionally or recklessly communicate false or misleading information. It is our obligation to use proper care to avoid doing so inadvertently.
- 2.9 We shall not guarantee the achievement of specified results beyond our direct control. We shall not negotiate nor agree terms with a prospective employer or client on the basis of payment only contingent upon specific future public relations achievements.
- 2.10 We shall, when acting for a client or employer, who belongs to a profession, respect the code of ethics of that other profession and shall not knowingly be party to any breach of such a code.
- 2.11 We shall obey laws and public policies governing our professional activities and will be sensitive to the spirit of all laws and regulations and, should any law or public policy be violated, for whatever reason, act promptly to correct the situation.
- 2.12 We shall give credit for unique expressions borrowed from others and identify the sources and purposes of all information disseminated to the public.

3 CONDUCT TOWARDS CLIENTS/EMPLOYERS

- 3.1 We shall safeguard the confidences of both present and former clients and employers. We shall not disclose or make use of information given or obtained in confidence from an employer or client, past or present, for personal gain or otherwise, or to the disadvantage or prejudice of such client or employer.
- 3.2 We shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those involved, given after full disclosure of the facts. We shall not place ourselves in a position where our interests are or may be in conflict with a duty to a client, without full disclosure of such interests to all involved.
- 3.3 We shall not be party to any activity which seeks to dissemble or mislead by promoting one disguised or undisclosed interest whilst appearing to further another. It is our duty to ensure that the actual interest of any organisation with which we may be professionally concerned is adequately declared.
- 3.4 In the course of our professional services to the employer or client we shall not accept payment either in cash or in kind in connection with these services from another source without the express consent of our employer or client.

4 CONDUCT TOWARDS COLLEAGUES

- 4.1 We shall not maliciously injure the professional reputation or practice of another individual engaged in the public relations profession.
- 4.2 We shall at all times uphold this Code, co-operate with colleagues in doing so and in enforcing decisions on any

matter arising from this application.

- 4.3 Registered individuals who knowingly cause or permit another person or organisation to act in a manner inconsistent with this Code or are party to such an action shall be deemed to be in breach of it.
- 4.4 If we have reason to believe that another colleague has engaged in practices which may be in breach of this Code, or practices which may be unethical, unfair or illegal, it is our duty to advise the Institute promptly.
- 4.5 We shall not invite any employee of a client to consider alternative employment.

5 CONDUCT TOWARDS THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1 We shall not recommend the use of any organisation in which we have a financial interest, nor make use of its services on behalf of our clients or employers, without declaring our interest.
- 5.2 In performing professional services for a client or employer we shall not accept fees, commissions or any other consideration from anyone other than the client or employer in connection with those services, without the express consent of the client/employer, given after disclosure of the facts.
- 5.3 We shall sever relations, as soon as possible, with any organisation or individual if such a relationship requires conduct contrary to this Code.

6 CONDUCT TOWARDS THE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 We shall not engage in any practice which tends to corrupt the integrity of channels or media of communication.

6.2 We shall identify publicly the name of the client or employer on whose behalf any public communication is made.

7 CONDUCT TOWARDS THE STATE

7.1 We respect the principles contained in the Constitution of the country in which we are resident.

7.2 We shall not offer or give any reward to any person holding public office, with intent to further our interests or those of our employer.

8 CONDUCT TOWARDS PRISA

8.1 We shall at all times respect the dignity and authority of PRISA.

8.2 We are bound to uphold the annual registration fee levied by PRISA, which fee is payable as determined by the PRISA Board.

9. COMMUNICATION

9.1 PRISA encourages the widest possible communication about its Code.

9.2 The PRISA Code of Ethics and Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations and Communication Management is freely available to all. Permission is hereby granted to any individual or organisation wishing to copy and incorporate all or part of the PRISA Code into personal and corporate codes, with the understanding that appropriate credit be given to PRISA in any publication of such codes.

9.3 The Institute's magazine, *Communika* publishes periodic articles dealing with

ethical issues. At least one session at the annual conference is devoted to ethics. The national office of PRISA through its professional development activities encourages and supports efforts by PRISA student chapter, professional chapters and region to conduct meetings and workshops devoted to the topic of ethics and the PRISA Code. New and renewing members of PRISA sign the following statement as part of their application: "I have read, understand and subscribe to the PRISA Code of Ethics and Professional Standards for Public Relations and Communication Management."

10. ENFORCEMENT

PRISA fosters compliance with its Code by engaging in global communication campaigns rather than through negative sanctions. However, in keeping with the 2.11 article of the PRISA Code, members of PRISA who are found guilty by the PRISA Disciplinary committee or an appropriate governmental or judicial body of violating laws and public policies governing their professional activities may have their membership terminated by the PRISA board following procedures set forth in the Institute's bylaws.

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