

Session 3C 1:45 – 2:30

PR Ethics for Students and Recent Graduates

Moderator:

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Panel Members:

Deb Silverman, Ph.D., APR, assistant professor, Public Communication, Buffalo State College

Dr. Jonathan Slater, associate professor, Communications, SUNY Plattsburgh

Ethics, credibility, and trust – falling

- How do we apply the code of ethics?

I. Newsmakers – Ethics

- Enron: accounting fraud
- Author Anderson accounting firm, aiding and abetting
- Bernie Ebbers, CEO, World Com – accounting fraud, shares in stock dropped dramatically, changed name to MCI
- John Rigan, CEO, Adelphia Communication – two sons using company as personal piggybank
- Martha Stewart: insider trading violations, 5 months in prison, 5 months of home confinement

II. Morals, Ethics, and Legality

- Morals: personal principles or what is right and wrong
- Ethics: professional/organization principles
- Legality: Civic principles

III. Why is ethics important to the practice of public relations?

- Credibility is on the line
- Building relationships

IV. Code of Ethics

6 Professional Values:

- Advocacy
- Honesty
- Expertise
- Independence
- Loyalty
- Fairness

Code Provisions:

- Free Flow in Information
- Competition

- Disclosure of Information
- Safeguarding Confidences
- Conflicts of Interest
- Enhancing the Profession

V. Situation: Safeguarding Confidences

Your close friend is employed by a prospective client for your PR firm. Over dinner she tells you an idea another firm presented and that her company hated. She advises you to stay away from similar ideas. Your company is pitching their plan next week and there is time to tailor the presentation around this new information. What do you do? You know if you land this account you stand to gain recognition in the office and perhaps a raise.

As young professionals, what would you do in this situation?

VI. Public Relations Ethics Decision-Making Guide:

1. Define the specific ethical issue and/or conflicts.
2. Identify internal and external factors that may influence the decision.
3. Identify key values.
4. Identify the parties who will be affected by the decision and define the public relations professional's obligation to each.
5. Select ethical principles to guide the decision-making process.
6. Make a decision and justify.

Group discussion