



**Global Principles  
of Ethical  
Practice in  
Public Relations  
and  
Communications**

## **Global principles and code of ethics for professional public relations and communications practitioners (GA code 2018)**

### **Declaration**

As professional communicators and public relations professionals, we have the potential to influence economies and individuals. This carries obligations and responsibilities to society and to clients. We understand that there is a direct relationship between ethical conduct and trust which is critical to our reputation.

### **Guiding principles:**

- 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 organisations/employers. We accept that the balance should tip in favor of the broader public interest.
- Objectivity
- High standards of conduct and performance

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

In serving our organisations and employers, we dedicate ourselves to building and sustaining essential relationships among those who grant our licence to operate, improving communication, understanding, and cooperation among diverse individuals, groups, and institutions of society. We also subscribe to and support equal opportunity of employment in the communication and public relations profession, and lifelong professional development.

We undertake:

To conduct ourselves professionally, with integrity, objectivity, truth, evidence-based communication, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to our clients, our organisations, our organisations' stakeholders and to a wider society

To improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing education and research and, where available, through the pursuit of professional credentials or accreditation

To give consideration to the protection of privacy of individuals and respect for the spirit as well as the letter of applicable laws

To adhere to the principles of the Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations and communication

## 1. PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

We are committed to ethical practices, preservation of public trust, and the pursuit of communication excellence with high standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.

**Advocacy.** We will serve our organisations and employer and client interests by acting as responsible advocates and by providing a voice in the market place of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

**Disclosure.** We will disclose any conflict of interest and offer transparency. We will be forthcoming about sponsors of causes and interests and never engage in misleading practices.

**Honesty.** We will adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of clients and employers.

**Integrity.** We will conduct our business with integrity and observe the principles and spirit of the Code in such a way that our own personal reputation and that of our employer/clients, and the public relations/communication profession in general is protected.

**Expertise.** We will encourage members to acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience to build understanding and client/employer credibility. We will not promise what we cannot deliver. Furthermore, we will actively promote and advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education.

Loyalty. We urge members to demonstrate commitment to those they represent, while honoring their obligations to serve the interests of society and support the right of free expression.

## 2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

We believe it is the duty of every association and every member within that association that is party to the Code of Professional Standards to:

- Acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession.
- Remain informed and educated about practices in the profession that ensure ethical conduct.
- Actively pursue personal professional development.
- Accurately define what public relations activities can and cannot accomplish and manage expectations, targets, and contracts accordingly.
- Counsel its individual members in proper ethical decision-making generally and on a case specific basis.
- Require that individual members observe the ethical recommendations and behavioral requirements of the Code.

### **Framework for implementation and best practices**

The task force recommends that all associations who are members of this task force, or of the GA, examine the revised Global Code and make necessary adjustments within 6 months of adoption. A new Global Brand will be developed which will help associations proclaim their compliance with the revised Global Principles.

We also encourage associations to implement an annual pledge to their code of ethics. See sample which can serve as a best practice at Annex 2.

We encourage professional bodies to offer ethical decision-making guides, such as this one, for example (courtesy of PRSA):

1. Define the specific ethical issue/conflict.
2. Identify internal/external factors (e.g. legal, political, social, economic) that may influence the decision.
3. Identify key values that are in question

4. Identify the parties who will be affected by the decision and define the public relations professional's obligation to each.

5. Select the ethical principles to guide the decision-making process.

6. Decide and justify it to all parties affected by the decision and to the public if necessary.