

**LEADERSHIP TRAINING SESSION:
EXPLORING ETHICS
PRSA ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Note: The following steps for making ethical decisions were taken directly from a PRSA resource that can be found at:

<http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/documents/decisionguide.pdf>

STEPS FOR MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

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
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 it

THE CHALLENGE:

You will be divided into teams. Each team will be given four situations with underlying ethical dilemmas – one Chapter scenario, two internship scenarios and one new employee scenario. Apply the above steps to identify the ethical issues and to determine the best solution for all parties involved. Good luck!

Scenario 1: Chapter

As your Chapter's president, you were recently asked to participate in an event the school's public relations department annually hosts. According to the dean, your PRSSA Chapter has provided funding in the past, but you have no record of this. You recently learned from your Student Government Association that student clubs funded by SGA are not to provide any type of funding to department-sponsored events, as they are strictly to be funded by department budgets. Your adviser encourages your executive board to vote to fund this event, despite being notified of the SGA changes.

Discussion Questions:

What would you do as the Chapter president?

How would you approach this situation without creating tension between the adviser and the executive board?

Scenario 2: Intern

It is your responsibility as the intern to monitor client brands via online blogs and print media. Your supervisor asks you to respond to negative comments and occasionally blog blindly as a consumer, rather than a public relations representative.

Discussion Questions:

If you were the intern, what would you do?

What about this situation is unethical?

Scenario 3: Intern

You intern at a leading public relations firm that is working with a potential client to develop a promotion strategy for a new product launch. Your team is competing against another firm for the account. As with every intern, you were asked to sign a client confidentiality agreement. It is your first week on the job and you were asked to attend the local PRSA holiday party with the team.

You go to the party and meet another intern working on the same project. As the night goes on, you notice the other intern is gradually becoming more intoxicated. A woman you don't recognize starts talking to the intern and you overhear her questioning him about the new client project. The other intern proceeds to disclose information. The next day, your boss announces that the competing firm received word of the work being done at your firm.

Discussion Questions:

If you were the intern witnessing this situation, what would you do?

If you were the supervisor of the internship program, how would you solve this problem and prevent it from happening again?

What ethical code provisions and professional values are violated in this scenario?

Scenario 4: New Employee

Your team was asked to submit a RFP (request for proposal) for a potential client. Following a meeting with the client, upper management feels the client's problem is caused by one factor. After research, however, you learn it is caused by an entirely different factor. Your boss insists you build a plan around the original factor, stating his personal experience (despite the research) indicates his factor is correct. Without this client, potential layoffs could occur.

Discussion Questions:

What ethical dilemmas are present?

How would you handle this situation knowing your job was potentially in jeopardy?

ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS

Define the specific ethical issue.

Identify the internal/external factors that may influence the decision.

Identify key values at stake.

Identify the parties that are affected by the position.

What is the your obligation to each?

Select ethical principles to help guide your decision.

Make a final decision and justify your answer.