

Ethics Officers — Chapter Plan, Resources and Tools

Congratulations on accepting the commitment to help your PRSA Chapter members professionally grow in their confidence to make good ethical decisions.

Ethics officers are most effective when engaging Chapter members in a dialogue about ethical issues. An ongoing conversation about ethics helps PRSA members become more familiar with the PRSA Member Code of Ethics and our organization’s professional values. Through a variety of Chapter activities, members learn how to apply them to their professional lives. An annual renewal of the pledge to uphold the PRSA Member Code of Ethics helps members maintain professional credibility, uphold the integrity of the profession and potentially protect clients against loss of reputation. Presenting various real-life scenarios at Chapter programs or professional development events encourages analysis of potential dilemmas and presents opportunities to articulate how best to leverage the PRSA Member Code of Ethics.

The Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) provides ethics officers resources and tools to support you in working with your Chapter.

These resources increase the understanding of the PRSA Member Code of Ethics and provide practice in applying the Code to real world situations.

All resources and tools are posted on the Ethics section of the national PRSA Web site — www.prsa.org — under Intelligence.

Information about your role as an ethics officer and the PRSA Code of Ethics

Ethics Officers — What’s expected?
At www.prsa.org, under Intelligence, go to Ethics and then Resources.
Resource 6 — Description of Ethics Officer Position
Resource 2 — An explanation of the PRSA Code of Ethics, moving from Enforcement to Inspiration
Resource 17 — Ethics Code Discussion (transcript)
Resource 20 — Ethics Officers Training (transcript)
Additionally, BEPS hosts national conference calls each year to introduce new Professional Standards Advisories and resources, to share Chapter program ideas and to discuss current ethical dilemmas.

Level 1 – Getting Started**Our Chapter does not have an ethics program or provide resources to members.**

Post or link to the PRSA Member Code of Ethics on your Chapter Web site. The PRSA Code of Ethics is on the national Ethics page at <http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/CodeEnglish/>.

Take one Professional Standards Advisory (PSA) each month and post it on your Chapter Web site, publish it in a Chapter e-newsletter, and/or distribute it as a handout at tables during monthly meetings. The PSAs are available from the Ethics page at <http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/ProfessionalStandardsAdvisories/>.

Resource 16 — Ethics and Leadership PowerPoint

Make Chapter members aware of the tools available to them for exploring ethical issues.

- ❖ Take the opportunity as the Chapter ethics officer to present the tools at a Chapter meeting, during APR process and/or during local professional development events.
 - Review the PRSA Code of Ethics.
 - Review the Professional Values.
 - Advocacy
 - Honesty
 - Expertise
 - Independence
 - Loyalty
 - Fairness
 - Review the Code Provisions.
 - Free Flow of Information
 - Competition
 - Disclosure of Information
 - Safeguarding Confidences
 - Conflicts of Interest
 - Enhancing the Profession

- Review Professional Standards Advisories and share relevant topics.

Topics addressed by the advisories include greenwashing, pay to play, deceptive online practices, disclosure of spokesperson’s status and other issues that require clear direction to help avoid potentially unethical behaviors.

<p>Level 2 – Reaching Out Our Chapter offers an annual program or training on ethics.</p>
<p>Case Studies that can be used in APR trainings, monthly meetings as Table Talk Topics, or professional development sessions. Case Studies can be found on the Resources page at http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/Resources/.</p>
<p>Resources 13, 14, 19, 22 — Ideas for Ethics Month Chapter programs.</p>
<p>Resource 16 — Ethics and Leadership PowerPoint.</p>
<p>Resource 18 — Ethics moments to use on Chapter Web site, publish in e-newsletters and/or distribute in Table Talk.</p>

Engage the Chapter in a scheduled activity with ethics as the focus

- ❖ Schedule a Chapter meeting in September to leverage Ethics Month.
 - Introduce yourself as the local ethics officer; as a resource to help when a member is confronted by an ethical dilemma.
 - Choose a current or invented scenario and discuss responses and potential ramifications to clients and employer by mishandling.
 - Seek local issues and review how they were handled.
 - Present a national issue and discuss how the Code applies and the proper response to ethically questionable issues.
- ❖ Promote short discussions at each of your regularly scheduled chapter meetings.
 - Use an Ethics Moment as a Table Talk opportunity to help people get acquainted while discussing the response to an ethical dilemma.
 - Share one of several case studies — which include a discussion key to help direct the conversation — and discuss as a group.
 - An Ethics Quotient (EQ) Test created by BEPS will be available in 2010.

Keeping ethics as a recurring topic in Chapter meetings helps to remind the members of the importance of adhering to ethical standards and protecting against unwarranted aspersions on the integrity of the profession.

- ❖ Offer presentations to other local business or communication organizations.
 - Introduce yourself and your PRSA Chapter to raise awareness in other regional organizations to the PRSA Member Code of Ethics, establishing you and your Chapter as local business leaders who hold ethics in high regard.
 - Use the “Ethics and Leadership: Ingredients of Excellence” PowerPoint, which includes a definition of the Code and talking points embedded in the PowerPoint notes field.

Level 3 – Making decisions Chapter members discuss ethical dilemmas with ethics officers and fellow members.
Resource 1 — Dilemmas and Moral Questions
Resource 3 — A short guide to the process for ethical decision making
Resource 4 — Introduction of the Matrix of Ethical Dilemmas
Resource 5 — Matrix of Ethical Dilemmas
Resource 15 — How to report questionable ethical situations

Encourage your members to use you and each other as safe confidantes when facing ethical dilemmas and working through decisions.

- ❖ Use the above tools to guide decision making.
- ❖ Contact your BEPS liaison as an added resource when needed. (Note: This may change is 2010.)

BEPS Liaison to PRSA Districts

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Responsibility

As your Chapter’s ethics officer, you have the responsibility to remind your peers and the organizations they serve about the critical importance of ethics.

There is a wealth of tools for you to communicate PRSA’s shared commitment to ethics and we welcome your partnership in telling this story. Without a moral compass to direct our professional decision making, we could make a decision that will harm our professional credibility and potentially cause harm to our client or employer.

Awareness of our PRSA Member Code of Ethics helps ground us in ethical behavior, ensures we contribute to the honor of our profession, and protects the interests of the companies and organizations we serve.