



## **Board of Ethics and Professional Standards**

# **PRSA Chapter Ethics Programs 2002 Best Practices**

**2002 PRSA International Conference  
San Francisco, California  
November 17, 2002**

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### **PRSA Chapter Ethics Programs 2002 Best Practices and Samples**

This booklet contains samples of ethics activities carried out by PRSA chapters during 2002. We hope these examples are helpful to you as you plan Ethics Month 2003 and other ethics activities throughout the year. If we did not include your program, please let us know and we will share it with all PRSA Ethics Officers on [prsa.org](http://prsa.org).

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with ideas and encouragement so that the PRSA ethics education program will better serve members and make a positive impact on the development of our Society and profession. One of the key benefits PRSA brings to its members, and to the profession of public relations as a whole, is the emphasis on the ethical performance of public relations – the responsibility for each of us to apply ethics in our daily work lives.

Ethics is not an “I wish we had time for it” topic. It’s an area that is vital to our Society’s ability to demonstrate the value of ethical public relations to the business community, government, education, nonprofits, news media and the general public. The PRSA Member Code of Ethics 2000 provides guideposts for each of us to use daily in our work.

If you’d like to chat with a member of the Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS), on ways you can get involved without having to spend large amounts of your own time, please get in touch with you district BEPS liaison or the College of Fellows ethics liaison. A complete roster is on [prsa.org](http://prsa.org).

We are encouraged by the number and variety of chapter ethics programs. They are interesting, challenging and even fun – programs that are both educational and entertaining. During 2002, many chapters created an interesting program for their regular monthly meeting and promoted them heavily, resulting in some of the heaviest turnouts they’ve ever had. **YOU CAN DO IT TOO.** BEPS would like to help.

Please let your district BEPS liaison know your plans, successes and challenges. Plan on participating in the quarterly Ethics Officers teleconference conducted by BEPS. Also, let us know what you need to do the job better.

Charles A. Wood, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Chairman, BEPS

David H. Simon, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Member, BEPS

## **Alaska**

### **Alaska Chapter**

To mark National Ethics Month in February, the Alaska Chapter presented a panel of public relations and media professionals who dissected an ethical case study (#3), and shared their thoughts on what is often an ethical challenge for PR practitioners: disclosure of information. Discussion centered around how much PR practitioners are obligated to reveal and how quickly we must share information with other parties and the media. Another issue discussed was whether providing information compromises security measures taken by a company, or if the company is publicly traded and subject to SEC disclosure regulations. Using a moderator, the media and PR professionals provided their perspective on the search for, versus release of, information. The discussion successfully created greater understanding between the media and PR practitioners because they shared their respective challenges and the audience could see the perspective of both parties.

Natalie M. Knox, APR  
nmknox@ppco.com  
(907) 263-4153

## **California**

### **Silicon Valley Chapter**

A dinner meeting featured the topic: Business Ethics: Needed more than ever in today's business world. Speakers included Kirk Hanson, executive director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University and Susan Kohl, APR, vice president of Sierra Communications. The moderator was the chapter Ethics Officer who is also the CEO of her own communications company.

The results were enlightening presentations and a lively Q&A session between the panel speakers and the audience. The meeting could have gone on for quite awhile.

A handout packet included the Code of Ethics 2000 card, Member Code of Ethics 2000 pamphlet, an article by Susan Kohl from the Summer 2000 Strategist, The Nasty Truth about High Tech Public Relations, an article by Kirk Hanson from the book "Practical Public Affairs in an Era of Change" entitled Ethics and Public Affairs: An Uneasy Relationship. An easel sign was also created with the Code of Ethics Values and Code Provisions so the speakers could reference the key principles during their talks.

Karen Rohack McLaughlin, APR  
karen@qbcomm.com  
(510) 252-9525

## **Colorado**

### **Colorado Chapter**

PR Smarts Column was published in the Denver Business Journal by Chapter President Sydney Ayers, APR. A copy is available from the chapter.

At a monthly luncheon, a panel discussion was facilitated by Jeff Julin, APR, a member of the PRSA Board of Directors and former member of BEPS. The panel featured representatives on lobbying, special populations and the Division of Civil Rights. These individuals presented their views on ethical behavior, public relations activities within targeted populations and dealing with economic and social differences. The luncheon was well attended and the discussion lively. Ethics "business cards" were placed at each setting for the monthly luncheon meeting in February. Jeff Julin gave an overview of the new ethics code.

The PRSA Member Code of Ethics is printed in the chapter's annual membership directory.

Jane Dvorak, APR  
Jdkjane@aol.com  
303-238-3011

## **Florida**

### **Gulfstream Chapter**

The Gulfstream chapter celebrated ethics month in February and devoted an entire chapter meeting to the topic. National board member (and chapter ethics officer) Debbie Mason, APR, gathered case studies from senior professionals to share with the group. Debbie presented the PRSA PowerPoint on Ethics and then had the room break into small work groups. Each group received a mini study "short situation" and some responses. The groups worked through the process provided by PRSA, asking what codes were in violation, what audiences were affected and studied the possible answers.

Each group then presented their mini-case results. This provided chapter members and guests the opportunity to hear the presentation and then work through a real life problem using the new case. Feedback from participants was positive.

Debbie Mason, APR  
damson@strategistsinc.com  
(954) 522-3346

### **Miami Chapter**

On February 21, 2002, the Miami Chapter held a panel discussion called "Facing Today's Ethical Challenges" with representatives from media, government and business/education. Panelists shared their views on what they felt were the biggest ethical challenges businesses and government face. The session began with a brief overview of the new PRSA code and a quiz to get the audience thinking about ethical dilemmas. The moderator gave each panelist a short scenario based on a recent news event that involved ethics and asked the panelist to explain his choice for the ethical solution. A key reason for the program's success was the choice of panelists. Panelists included executive editor of the Miami Herald, director of the Center for Ethics at the University of Miami and a Miami-Dade County Commissioner. Attendance was strong, the dialogue intense and everyone enjoyed the exchange of ideas.

Christine Barney, APR  
christine.barney@rbbpr.com  
(305) 448-7456

## **Illinois**

### **Chicago Chapter**

The Chicago Chapter focused on the basics: broadly raising ethics awareness through education and establishing ethics as a key PRSA focus. We updated our chapter website to include a new ethics section, with information about the Code changes, as well as a link to the Member Code of Ethics on the national website. We also published a monthly series of articles in our electronic Chapter newsletter. The articles focused on the different code provisions with a hook to current issues, and always included a link to the Code. We worked with our Accreditation Chair to ensure candidates were properly prepared for the ethics-related information on the exam. The case studies on the national website were a valued resource.

Kelly Womer, APR, ABC  
kwomer@yourthoughpartner.com  
(312) 850-8201

### **Suburban Chicagoland Chapter**

A dinner meeting program was called "Doing the right thing: how to make ethical decisions when it's crunch time." An e-mail survey before the meeting showed that many members encounter ethical situations on the job. At the meeting, the Chapter Ethics Officer briefly introduced the new code and highlighted results of the chapter survey. Breakout groups at each table, moderated by senior practitioners, used the ethical decision-making guide to work through different case studies and shared their recommendations. Our post-meeting feedback survey gave the program high marks.

James A. McClure, APR, Chapter Ethics Officer  
jamclure@mindspring.com  
(708) 354-0160

## **Kansas**

### **Kansas Chapter**

For our first ethics presentation, PRSA Kansas simply took an hour to review the Ethics manual and to talk about its importance to our organization. Next year, we plan to put together a workshop based on ethics issues faced by our local chapter members.

Kristin Peck  
kristin.peck@cox.com  
(316) 262-4270 ext. 343

### **Greater Kansas City Chapter**

Two ethics programs were conducted in 2003. First, Dr. Dean Kruckeberg, APR, Fellow PRSA, addressed "Public Relations Ethics in an Ever-Shrinking World." The luncheon drew strong attendance, but did not garner strong positive reviews from attendees.

The chapter also conducted an ethics-related panel discussion in September, titled "Right, Wrong and the Gray Area in Public Relations: An Ethics Discussion." Moderated by a local television reporter, who often covers ethics in government, the presentation drew on the expertise of three senior-level practitioners who represented agency, corporate and non-profit public relations. Evaluation forms gave the program high marks.

The program was extremely successful, for three reasons:

1. Panelists were very knowledgeable about ethics issues and were willing to share information about ethics issues within their own industries and areas of practice.
2. The moderator was skilled at asking relevant questions of both the panelists and the audience.
3. Information discussed was timely, relevant and provocative.

Susan E. Parker, APR, Ethics Chair  
sparker@bladespr.com  
(913) 897-2400

## **Kentucky**

### **Bluegrass Chapter**

Throughout the year, various portions of the Code were featured in the chapter publication, with explanations and an offer of help for ethical issues.

One luncheon meeting was dedicated to the Code with Dr. Shirley A. Serini, Morehead State University, leading the presentation and table discussions of ethical issues facing public relations.

Charlotte S. Tharp, APR  
charlotte.tharp@nortonhealthcare.org  
(502) 629-8026

## **Minnesota**

### **Minnesota Chapter**

The Minnesota chapter is weaving ethics into the fabric of the organization. An explanation of the new code and the position of the ethics officer were the subjects of several chapter newsletter articles. Ethics-related articles are spaced throughout the year to be an on-going reminder to members that ethics is a critical component in our practice of public relations.

Our February meeting focused on ethics, giving members hands-on experience as they looked at situations/ethical dilemmas and discussed how and why the code of ethics applied. In our on-going effort to involve our chapter's senior practitioners, they generated the ethical dilemmas we examined and led the table discussion. Meeting attendees discussed the situations in small groups, later sharing their insights with the entire group. A discussion of other ethical issues followed. Copies of the code and the pocket cards were also provided to attendees.

Each fall, the chapter sponsors a skills seminar. Application of the code was the topic of one session. Following a presentation of the elements of the code – particularly the values and provisions – the group discussed the importance of a code of ethics in the current business climate. Included in the discussion were examples of national companies and personalities. The group then applied the code to actual situations from their experiences, focusing on how and why each situation was handled. Copies of the code and the pocket cards were also provided to attendees.

Part of the responsibility of the Minnesota PRSA ethics officer role is to present the code of ethics to APR candidates. A two and a half hour session, prior to each test, is devoted to the role of ethics in PR. The candidates read the code and seek solutions to scenarios as well as discussion situations from their experience. The rest of the group engages in offering suggestions and linking the actions to the values and provisions of the code. Copies of the pocket cards were provided.

Margaret Hennen, APR  
mah@cpinternet.com  
(612) 672-6878

## **Nebraska**

### **Nebraska Chapter**

An "ethics minute" launched chapter meetings – a brief description of a recent incident or news story that bring up ethical issues and a reference to how the code could be of help in dealing with those issues.

Speakers at monthly chapter meetings were asked to include references to ethical issues that they must deal with in their work or on a given project. Keynote speakers at the chapter's annual Professional Development Conference also were asked to include ethical concerns in his or her address.

A study session devoted to ethics is a vital element in our preparation of candidates for accreditation.

Joseph P. Rowson, APR, Fellow PRSA  
jrowson@nebraska.edu  
(402) 472-7133

## **New York**

### **Capital Region Chapter**

The Capital Region chapter included a PowerPoint presentation on the new Code of Ethics at its annual half-day seminar for local practitioners on October 23, 2002. The 15-minute session included background on ethical issues in the profession, as well as history, development and details of the latest code. The 40+ participants at the event also discussed one of the PRSA case studies. We distributed booklets with the code and the slide show outline. Evaluations of the ethics session were favorable.

Richard Chady, APR  
RChady@stpetershealthcare.org  
(518) 525-1335

## **Central New York Chapter**

### **Central New York Chapter developed “four-pack” ethics-oriented series for ’02-’03.**

These “destination” programs were supplemented monthly as every speaker addressed at least one ethical situation as part of his or her topical presentation to Chapter members and guests.

#### **February ’02**

As part of Ethics Awareness Month, BEPS member Kathy Fitzpatrick, JD, APR, keynoted a luncheon presentation focusing on the role of public relations professionals and ethics officers in development and practice of ethics and codes in their organizations. She then moderated a panel of corporate human resources pros explaining how ethics codes and training worked in their publicly and privately owned companies; a not-for-profit speaker and business ethics adjunct professor described ethics “rules of the road” for any organization. Q&A followed and attendees picked up several handouts, including a list of ethics resources. Sixty members and guests of the CNY chapters of PRSA and Assn. for Women in Communications (AWC) participated, including several faculty and students from local colleges and PRSSA. The event was publicized several times in business community calendars, as well as a Syracuse Post-Standard op-ed piece by PRSA-CNY’s EO promoting public participation in the forum. Program evaluations were mostly “good” or “great” and several indicated interest in a program on training/coaching ethics.

#### **October ’02**

A panel discussion on the theme of “Trust and Accountability” featured a Syracuse University professor and veteran of corporate and government affairs as moderator of a panel consisting of representatives of an accounting firm, public and private companies, and a not-for-profit organization. They addressed the roles of management, PR, employees, boards of directors, auditors and other stakeholders in ethical practices. They gave examples of ethical challenges and opportunities with each of their industries and organizations. About 40 attended the joint program of CNY PRSA and AWC. Again, program evaluations were mostly “good” or “great” and some volunteered for future ethics-oriented programs. Publicity included another promotional op-ed piece by the EO.

#### **April ’03**

A presentation on “Social Responsibility” is planned, featuring Diana Jacobs, a PR counselor from New York City who adjunct teaches a course on the same subject at Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Diana, an officer of the Women Executives in Public Relations ([www.wepr.org](http://www.wepr.org)) will present case study highlights of award-winning social responsibility and strategic philanthropy as part of ethical business and not-for-profit practices benefiting clients and communities.

#### **September ’03**

The capstone of PRSA-CNY’s “four pack” will be a seminar of “Crisis and Ethical Decision-making.” It features a Socratic dialog with Jim Lukaszewski, APR, Fellow PRSA, moderating a role-playing scenario local and out-of-town representatives of management, media and various publics, consultants and influencers, complemented by ethics officers and academic respondents.

Breakout sessions include ethics officers, management and PR pros showing-telling war stories, how they coach ethics and how attendees can help make ethics work back in their own organizations. NY Times and NPR Ethicist Randy Cohen has been invited to keynote a lunch. In addition to conference co-sponsorship by the Newhouse School and prospects, funding is being sought from PRSA PD, BEPS and the Northeast District to share this program with other chapters and members nationally, especially as a model program, teleWebinar and via a videotaped archive.

Richard J. Toth, APR, ABC, Fellow PRSA, CNY Ethics Officer  
rjtoth@syr.edu  
315-449-4864

## **North Carolina**

### **Charlotte Chapter**

The Charlotte Chapter dedicated its February 2002 program to the ethical practice of public relations. Ethics Chair Chris Jensen, APR, provided an overview of the PRSA Code of Ethics and shared the results of a brief online ethics survey of chapter members and visitors (56 respondents). Board member Adam Bernstein, APR, moderated a panel discussion of senior, accredited members.

Presenters made use of an abbreviated and modified version of the PowerPoint presentation provided by BEPS. Everyone present was given a PRSA Code of Ethics booklet and a business card outlining the ethics decision-making guide materials that were ordered in advance from the national PRSA office. Attendance at the February meeting was higher than average (77 members and guests), and the ethics officer responded to several requests for information that came in after the meeting from those who had been unable to attend.

Chris Jensen, APR, MBA  
chrisjensen@carolina.rr.com  
(704) 861-0686

## **Ohio**

### **Akron Area Chapter**

Held October 10, 2002, the program consisted of a presentation by Mark Meister, who serves as Vice President of Human Resources and Chief Ethics Officer for The Lubrizol Corp. of Wickliffe, Ohio. Mark's compelling and candid presentation discusses Lubrizol's cutting edge ethics program and the communication challenges associated with it. To this company, fostering ethical conduct is so important that a global program to promote it is viewed as a daily management responsibility. With 4,500 employees in 25 countries, Lubrizol "walks the talk" by making its ethics program organic to all operations; in turn, bad news about unethical conduct can be heard and acted upon before it's too late. Mark's belief that every company is a microcosm of society at large, and that unethical conduct can occur despite all best attempts to prevent it, is an eye-opening and vital perspective for communicators to hear. The luncheon meeting of 40 attendees found Mark's description of how Lubrizol has grappled with an issue since 1987 that has become an unfortunate headline-grabber today relevant and thought provoking.

Wendy J. Schweiger, APR, Chapter Ethics Officer  
wschweiger@edwardhoward.com  
(216) 781-2400

### **Greater Cleveland Chapter**

Our activity in Greater Cleveland PRSA in 2002 consisted of an outstanding luncheon program in February that featured Mark Meister, Vice President Human Resources/Chief Ethics Officer for Lubrizol Corp. His presentation was titled: "Shared Accountability - Ethical and Legal Conduct in Today's Business: Important Lessons for All Types and Sizes of Organizations and Public Affairs Practitioners."

Mr. Meister shared his corporation's approach to communicating Lubrizol's Global Ethics Program, which has been recognized as an industry best practice by the American Chemistry Council. His presentation included why it is essential to have an ethics program, communication techniques used to bring the ethics message to a global audience, and anecdotes based on real people and real issues. All attendees received Lubrizol's special 20-page Corporate Ethics Brochure. This program was done in the spirit that no company can guarantee it will be immune to ethics problems, but those companies that take time to communicate their ethical imperatives take a big step forward on behalf of their customers, employees and shareholders.

Davis Young  
dyoung@edwardhoward.com  
(216) 781-2400

## **Northwest Ohio Chapter**

The chapter Ethics Officer conducted a web-based survey of members regarding the ethical challenges they've faced in their careers, how confident they felt in responding, and their sources of information and support when confronted with ethical challenges. These findings were presented to the chapter along with information about the new Member Code of Ethics.

An expanded version was presented to a section meeting of the Counselors to Higher Education in April. The PowerPoint presentation is available online at the CHE section part of the PRSA web site ([www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)) or directly from the author, Joe Brennan, who is also willing to present it to other PRSA chapters.

Joe Brennan, Ph.D., APR  
joe.brennan@utoledo.edu  
419.530.2676 - direct  
419.530.2002 - assistant

## **Oregon**

### **Greater Oregon Chapter**

A February conference, "The Case for Ethical Public Relations," featured Bob Frause, APR, Fellow PRSA, former BEPS chairman. Pre-registrants were divided into six teams, one for each of the study questions. Each registrant received the situation paper for his/her team to study/research the topic in advance.

After an overview by Frause, each team went to work with the questions paper for their team. We broke for lunch, then took turns sharing each team's situation and analysis of it. The 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. session was fast-paced and, for most attendees, made it possible to still return to their offices later in the afternoon.

Each month, table tent cards on ethics-related topics are placed at our meetings. One side of the card ties into the speaker's topic ñ crisis communications, sports marketing, etc., developed from research or current events ñ and the other side features an excerpt from the PRSA Member Code of Ethics. The table tent cards are conversation starters and good reminders about the role of ethics in all we do.

Marilyn Milne  
mm@prpr.com  
(541) 344-7989, ext. 201, or 1-888-644-7989

### **Puget Sound Chapter**

Ethics case-study scenarios developed by BEPS were tweaked by chapter board members for use in a panel ethics presentation in which the various roles were played out by a panel of experts. The first program was presented in a monthly luncheon-meeting program, and proved so successful that we adapted it as a breakout session during our chapter's recent annual daylong professional development seminar.

By developing and utilizing a script for panelists to recite scenario dialogue, we believe it helped to better advance the story (than simply by reading it aloud and asking attendees to answer questions in a classroom-like setting) and made for a much more entertaining and enjoyable program. The audience was given handouts with the introduction of each scenario (but not the panelist scripts) so they could refer back to the scenario during the discussion following the role-play.

The scenario scripts used in one or both of our two programs this year are available, along with the agenda and moderator's script used during the first presentation of the program at our monthly luncheon meeting.

Randy T. Hurlow, APR.  
randyhurlow@rei.com  
(253) 395-5877

## **Tennessee**

### **Nashville Chapter**

A panel discussion of four PR ethics dilemmas at a chapter meeting called "Got Ethics?" was preceded by a brief review the tenets of the code of professional conduct.

The panel consisted of a corporate PR executive (VP of Communications for Corrections Corporation of America); a university pr person (Vice Chancellor of Public Affairs for Vanderbilt University) and the head of a local PR firm who has extensive political PR experience (Chairman of McNeely Pigott and Fox PR). The result was a lively, interactive discussion with a great deal of input from the audience. It was an opportunity to focus on ethics in a give-and-take setting, challenging everyone to think through a variety of situations similar to those we all face. A Power Point from the program is available.

Aileen R. Katcher, APR, Fellow PRSA  
akatcher@kvbpr.com  
(615) 248-8202

### **Volunteer Chapter (East Tennessee)**

A multiple-choice ethics quiz was prepared and distributed at the Ethics Month luncheon meeting by Bonnie Riechert, Ph.D., APR, the chapter Ethics Officer. Participants at each roundtable were asked to discuss the choices together and offer their answers. The facilitator discussed the item briefly, then the next table was asked to answer the next question, and so on. Each participant went away with their own copy of the quiz, a four-page handout summarizing the history of the Code of Ethics, the values and code provisions. The session was informative as well as interactive, and participants seemed to enjoy the experience of being quizzed by a university professor. A few University of Tennessee public relations students were there, and seemed to enjoy having their knowledge tested along with the professionals'.

During Ethics Month, the chapter's monthly column in the East Tennessee Business Journal was devoted to the topic of business ethics. The article, "Credibility and Public Consent: Managing for Tomorrow as Well as Today," was written by the chapter's ethics officer and invited area residents to attend the chapter's meeting devoted to ethics (described above).

Bonnie Riechert, Ph.D., APR  
bonnie-riechert@utk.edu  
(865) 974-5108

## **Texas**

### **Austin Chapter**

A comprehensive ethics program started in March 2002 with a baseline survey to assess general knowledge among PR practitioners of PRSA's code of ethics.

An educational program was then conducted. A presentation by guest speaker Dr. Phil Thompson (2002), director of St. Edward's University's Center for Ethics and Leadership, covered the importance of ethics, recent ethical issues, PRSA's code values and provisions, and steps from PRSA's ethics decision-making guide. Attendees had an opportunity to work a case study and share insights. Finally, all had a chance to verbally pledge commitment to PRSA's code.

At the end of the meeting, participants completed a follow-up survey to assess their post-program knowledge of ethics. The results were spectacular: awareness of PRSA's revised code of ethics increased 69 percent; familiarity with the code's values increased 59 percent; awareness of the code's provisions (or ethical principles) increased 54 percent; and knowledge of PRSA's ethical decision-making framework increased 5 percent.

Christina J. Moore, APR  
christina.j.moore@motorola.com.  
(512) 895-7369

## **Virginia**

### **Blue Ridge Chapter**

We launched our ethics program in February 2002, when our speaker/lunch program was replaced with roundtable discussions of six ethics case studies. Each group presented its results, which were then discussed by the entire membership. The new PRSA guidelines were also presented and discussed at that meeting and for accreditation review.

We review a current situation, e.g. Enron or Martha Stewart, in each of our bi-monthly newsletters. Members are invited to comment, and the comments are published in the following issue.

Terri Jones, APR  
tjones@JLApr.com  
(540) 989-5050

### **Hampton Roads Chapter**

The Hampton Roads Virginia Chapter did not schedule a meeting specifically on ethics during 2002 because National Secretary, Judy Phair, visited us at our regular luncheon meeting in November 2001. At that time, she discussed the changes in the Code and presented one of the cases prepared by BEPS. It seemed too soon to offer another ethics focused program in February. However, wallet cards designed by BEPS, were presented to all attendees at the chapter's February luncheon. Judy's presentation did provoke considerable discussion, particularly since the meeting was held on the campus of Hampton University. (The Chapter sponsors two student PRSSA Chapters, each hosting the professional group on their respective campuses once each year.) Student attendance, of course, was high and they are always eager to participate in Socratic dialogues on ethical questions.

Linda H. Scanlan, APR  
linscan@infi.net  
(757) 422-9819