

## **Public Relations Society of America**

*Board of Ethics and Professional Standards*

**Ethics and Standards Case Study Series**

### **Public Relations Ethics Case Study #7**

#### **Expropriation of Intellectual Property of Others**

You've recently left a job as an account supervisor at a public relations agency that specializes in social media and technology clients to go to work in the public relations division of a leading smart phone manufacturer. You learned of the career opportunity a few months after the agency you worked for had failed to win the smart phone company as a client. You were a member of the team that developed and pitched the business and happen to have the agency's entire presentation on a personal flash drive. Your new boss asks you to propose strategies and tactics to support launch of a ground-breaking application. The fastest and easiest thing for you to do is to copy relevant portions of your previous employer's proposal, including key messages for targeted markets, and present it to your new boss. What do you do?

1. Identify the ethical issues and/or conflicts.
2. Determine internal/external factors likely to influence your decision.
3. Choose key values that apply.
4. Consider parties who will be affected by your decision and evaluate the public relations professional's obligation to each one.
5. Select ethical principles to guide your decision making.
6. Make a decision and offer a brief rationale.

## **Guidance for Case Study #7**

### **Professional Standards Advisory #14: Expropriation of Intellectual Property of Others**

All too frequently, a prospective client takes ideas from a new business presentation, but fails to hire, compensate or get permission from the proposing consultant or organization. This practice is unethical and can trigger serious legal and reputational consequences. The situation is exacerbated by the increasing use of blanket confidentiality agreements, which state that all ideas shared, shown or suggested become the property of the soliciting party by simply responding to a Request for Proposal (RFP).