

# **Public Relations Society of America**

*Board of Ethics and Professional Standards*

## **Code of Ethics Case Study Series**

### **Public Relations Ethics Case Study #1**

Assume that you are the director of public relations for Megabucks Energy Company, a Houston-based Fortune 500 oil and gas exploration and production company. Megabucks has been experiencing declining profits due to drops in oil and gas prices. Recent drilling on one of the company's properties in the Java Sea has produced promising results of a significant new oil and gas reservoir. Although geological testing is incomplete, rumors are flying in the marketplace about the potential of this new well to significantly increase Megabucks' profits. Senior management asks you to prepare a news release that responds to these rumors and downplays the significance of the find. As part of your research, you discover internal reports that show that this new well is, indeed, a major discovery and that further testing is planned simply to determine the size of the reservoir. What do you do?

1. Define the specific ethical issue and/or conflict.
  
2. Identify internal/external factors that may influence the decision.
  
3. Identify key values.

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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.