

IABC ACCREDITATION ETHICS QUIZ

As a candidate for accreditation, please complete the following quiz and refer to the answer key upon completion. The quiz contains eight multiple-choice questions and three yes or no questions. The quiz will help you begin thinking about the [IABC Code of Ethics](#) in preparation for your examinations.

Question #1

You are the communication director for a medium-sized industrial company that is listed on a major stock exchange, and you are asked to prepare internal and external communication strategies to announce the layoff of 25 percent of its head office staff. This reduction is to occur within the next two months. You are instructed to keep this information quiet until the actual announcement. At a neighborhood social gathering one weekend about 10 days after you begin working on the project, a close friend—who works at your company and may be affected by the layoff—looks you straight in the eye and asks if it's true that "half the head office, including me, will be gone by this time next week."

You:

- A. Claim that you have no idea what your friend is talking about.
- B. Assure your friend that the layoffs will be only about one-fourth of the workforce, not one-half, and that they couldn't possibly happen as soon as next week.
- C. Tell your friend about all the other rumors you've heard regarding this situation.
- D. Tell your friend that even if there were going to be layoffs, it would never happen in a week because you think the company is required to provide 60 days notice to workers.
- E. Say, "If I did have such knowledge, I wouldn't be able to discuss it."

Question #2

Your company is three days away from announcing the name of its new president and CEO. Your company is publicly traded, and the board of directors is absolutely delighted with the selection of the new CEO. They believe this individual will lead the corporation into the next phase of its development. You have developed a communication plan for the announcement, and your board of directors has approved all activities. You expect the announcement to go well. You arrive at the office first thing in the morning and receive a phone message from a local newspaper reporter. In the message, the reporter reveals she has received a strong rumor from credible sources that identifies the new CEO. She names the person and her rumor is correct. She is writing the story for tomorrow's publication and wants to know if there is any quote that the company would like to add, or if the new CEO is available for an interview.

In handling this situation, you:

- A. Ignore the reporter's request for information and an interview and continue as planned.
- B. Call the reporter back and stall for time by saying, "I'm not really sure what you're talking about?"
- C. Call the reporter and convince her to hold onto the story for three days until the announcement is actually made.
- D. Arrange an emergency conference call with the search committee, the chair of the board of directors and the new CEO to develop a plan of action to announce the CEO's appointment that same day.

Question #3

Your small PR agency, which has a strong relationship with an advertising agency, is called in by a major client to help re-launch a product that has steadily been losing market share. The client has asked the advertising agency and, by extension, your PR agency, to employ a message of "new and improved" in the re-launch. As you work toward an extensive (and extremely expensive) marketing communications re-launch, you learn that the product has only gone through a name change and an extremely expensive packaging design. No existing product features, attributes or benefits have been improved in any way.

You:

- A. Recommend that some sort of research and/or testing be conducted to substantiate the "new and improved" message.
- B. Satisfy your client's needs by creating the most innovative, yet cost effective, communication program because you cannot afford to lose this client or damage your relationship with the advertising agency, which is your primary source of new clients and income.
- C. Discuss your concern with the client, the account director and the head of the advertising agency about the fact that the only thing "new and improved" about the product is its package. In this meeting, you request that a different approach be taken and inform them that you are prepared to resign the account, if necessary.
- D. Since this situation is covered by the caveat emptor (let the buyer beware) rule, no ethical dilemma exists.

Question #4

Your corporate PR department has recently handled a media relations and promotion campaign for the introduction of a new business-to-business product line by one of your company's divisions. In meeting with the division manager in a post-campaign sales review, you display an impressive package of news clippings from a variety of trade journals, claiming awareness-raising success as measured by the US\$500,000 value of the advertising cost equivalent of the editorial space devoted to this product, versus your PR expenditures of only US\$8,000. The division manager says, "So what? First quarter orders are less than half of our projections, and you guaranteed that your PR campaign would generate sales at least in line with our projections."

Have you committed a communication ethics infraction in this situation?

- A. No, because promotion is only one element of the marketing mix, and some other factor, such as high pricing or lack of sales force aggressiveness, may be causing the low sales figures.
- B. No, because PR is only indirectly related to actual sales, and you cannot be held accountable for actualities outside of your direct control. Besides, it's still much too early in the promotion cycle for all potential buyers to have seen the trade journal articles.
- C. Yes, if you guaranteed that the promotional campaign would generate sales in line with the client's original projections, as this promise is technically beyond your capability to deliver.
- D. Yes, because you mislead the division manager by applying an ad equivalency measurement, even though it clearly indicated you were saving the firm money and potentially enhancing its advertising objectives.

Question #5

You hear rumors that a co-worker in your communication department continually exhibits behavior that is less than honorable in his professional dealings on the local IABC chapter board. Some of the stories of underhanded politics and manipulation would be entertaining if you weren't concerned about the potential negative impact on the reputation of the communication department in which you work and the organization that employs you. While the person in question hasn't committed any actual crime or broken any law to your knowledge, you believe that he is in violation of Article 1 of the IABC Code of Ethics, "Professional communicators uphold the credibility and dignity of their profession by practicing honest, candid and timely communication...", and you report your colleague to your immediate supervisor, citing the probability of ethical violations.

Has your co-worker committed a communication ethics violation in this situation?

- A. Yes, because the perception of unethical behavior is the same as the actual commission of unethical behavior.
- B. Yes, because communicators must abide by the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law.
- C. No, because only hearsay evidence of unethical behavior exists.
- D. It doesn't matter, because you quietly brought it to your supervisor's attention.

Question #6

Same situation as question #5. Have you committed an ethical violation by reporting your co-worker to your supervisor?

- A. No, you are upholding the IABC Code of Ethics by reporting your suspicions to the proper authority.
- B. No, because you have done nothing wrong.
- C. Yes, because by taking the matter to the supervisor without substantive proof, you may have defamed the character of the person in question.

- D. It depends upon whether your supervisor's investigation finds the person to be guilty. If the finding is "guilty," then you have committed no violation; if "not guilty," then you have defamed the character of this person.

Question #7

You are coordinating all arrangements for a three-day corporate executive off-site meeting at a resort-type conference center in another state or province. You want to visit your preferred conference center to evaluate first-hand the accommodations, meeting rooms, food service, recreational activities, etc. The conference center sales manager offers you a complimentary overnight inspection visit that includes your hotel room and use of the facilities cost-free as an inducement to get your business, which she says is standard industry marketing practice. When you momentarily hesitate in accepting her offer, she says that the conference center will also reimburse you directly for your airline ticket, but that you have to keep quiet about the airline tickets because "it's just between you and me."

You:

- A. Accept the complimentary package, including the airfare reimbursement.
- B. Call your second choice conference center to see if they were willing to offer you the same or better complimentary package.
- C. Accept the "standard" complimentary package but decline the airfare reimbursement.
- D. Review your company's internal policies and have an open and frank discussion with your supervisor about the standard complimentary package and airfare reimbursement.

Question #8

You are the director of public relations for your city's daily newspaper, which is one of two newspapers in a highly competitive market. The publisher calls you into a meeting one afternoon with the city editor, a reporter and the newspaper's legal counsel. When you arrive, the publisher informs you that the reporter has been contacted by a serial killer who is wanted by police. The reporter interviewed the killer about the murders he has committed and was able to verify it was the killer by corroborating specific details of certain crimes with homicide detectives, the details of which would only be known to police. The reporter is planning a series of articles entitled "confessions of a killer," starting on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper.

The reporter can identify the killer. In fact, the reporter knows the killer's name, but has every intention of protecting his source and will not identify the killer, even though everyone suspects that the killing spree is not over. During the meeting, legal counsel states that the reporter and newspaper are perfectly within their rights, even if police attempt to apply pressure. Protection of a source is vital to their journalistic ethical standards.

The publisher asks you to develop methods of creating additional publicity for this series of articles. She feels your newspaper is at war with its cross-town rival, and she feels that this series of articles is a journalistic coup that will put the competitor on the run.

You return to your desk in shock. You cannot believe what you just heard. However, you also have a mortgage to pay and a family to feed.

In approaching this issue, you:

- A. Develop methods of additional publicity because legal counsel has said no laws have been broken and it is your job.
- B. Quietly try to convince other journalists (i.e., at radio and TV stations) that they should not publicize this story, even though that is against the wishes of your publisher.
- C. Inform the publisher that you consider these articles unethical and that you cannot do anything to publicize them.
- D. Quit your job.

Question #9

You are a senior vice president at a satellite office of a global PR firm. A large client, a nickel-mining firm with global operations, has an innovative approach to mining in a new area of its U.S. operations that significantly reduces the environmental impact of mining operations. It is an interesting story, and with some help from you, it captures the imagination of the mainstream media. The story is picked up locally, nationally and internationally. A month later, you're in a regular quarterly meeting with the president of the mining company, in which you declare the campaign an unqualified success.

"For an investment of less than US\$65,000 in agency fees, we managed to generate an advertising equivalent of US\$1.5 million," you state.

"Is that your only measurement?" the president asks.

"Yes," you reply. "And, quite frankly, it was even more than US\$1.5 million. You can't buy the type of coverage we got or the awareness it creates."

Have you committed an ethical violation in your assessment of the campaign's success?

- Yes because an advertising equivalency provides no indication of any change in behavior or any indication that the message going out was received, understood and acted upon by the audiences for which it was intended.
- No because advertising equivalencies are a standard form of measurement in the business. By understating the equivalency, you have not misled your client in any way.

Question #10

You are the director of marketing and public relations for a professional sports franchise. You are in the process of developing visual images for an upcoming promotional brochure, an advertising campaign and planned enhancements to your web site. You have a number of interesting crowd shots you would like to use. However, none of them are what would be called "perfect." In some,

fans have their eyes closed and some fans are what might be termed “undesirables” to the type of image you would like to create. But you notice that if you electronically put pieces of each photo together, you have the perfect promotional crowd photograph. You use this photograph in its altered state in your brochure, your advertising campaign and your web site without anywhere indicating that it is an electronically enhanced photograph.

Have you committed an ethical violation?

Yes because you are using electronic enhancements to create a reality that does not exist, so it is important that people understand that some form of electronic enhancement has taken place.

No because this is no different than using an illustration. All you are doing is using to create an impression of perfection, which has been done for more than a century with artistic illustrations.

Question #11

You are a director of public relations at a major university. You are attempting to promote your master’s degree in business administration (MBA) program as a means of increasing women and visible minorities enrolled in your program. In developing materials for your web site and printed promotional pieces, you use a series of photographs depicting campus life and activities within the MBA program. In developing these photographs, you omit all white males from them, even though white males represent 70 percent of your current MBA enrollment.

Have you committed an ethical violation?

Yes because by omitting white males from all photographs, you are creating an inaccurate impression of the campus and the MBA program.

No because you are attempting to recruit to specific groups, so it is important to have those groups represented in the photographs.