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PUBLIC RELATIONS:
TELLING THE TRUTH OR SERVING THE CLIENT?

BY
ARUN MAHIZHNAN
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW
INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES
SINGAPORE

FOR
AMIC CONFERENCE ON
HIGHWAYS, SKYWAYS & CORRIDORS: ASIA'S COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

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PUBLIC RELATIONS:
TELLING THE TRUTH OR SERVING THE CLIENT?

The way the topic is posed by the organisers of the conference seems to suggest that in Public Relations (PR), telling the truth and serving the clients are mutually exclusive. And it would come as no surprise to those who consider "ethical PR" an oxymoron!

As I have left the practice of Public Relations more than six years ago and have taken refuge in the cooler climes of academia, I could perhaps offer a more detached, and hopefully objective, view of this issue. It also stands to reason that as the only academic on this panel with two eminent practitioners, I should direct myself to some theoretical and conceptual references lest I be considered superfluous to this occasion. I would leave the practical aspects to the practitioners. As with "ethical PR," there are those who hold that an "interestingly academic" talk is also an oxymoron. If you find this presentation rather boring, then you shall have no one but the organisers to blame.

Role of truth in society

The issue of truth-telling is, of course, neither new nor peculiar to PR. Truth-telling lies at the very heart of human existence. All civilised societies, all major cultures, all leading religions seem to have grappled with the idea of truth and have arrived at some or other formulation of what is truth and how it is to be cherished.

In the holy Koran, there is a call to "be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful."\(^1\)

The Bible commands: "Do not lie. Do not deceive one another."\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Chapter IX, 'At-Taubah', Verse 119
\(^2\) Leviticus 19:11
The Thirukkural, the most venerated of the codes of conduct written in Tamil, elevates truthfulness to the highest level of virtues: "Of all that we have considered excellent, there is nothing so good as truthfulness."

Even without religious or moral contexts, there is another simple but compelling reason why societies place a premium on truth-telling: It forms the very foundation of communication between people. If there is not a reasonable degree of trust among people that what we say to one another is normally true, how could the society function at all? If every word and every gesture is suspect and unreliable, who would care to communicate for long? The society actually runs the risk of total collapse if no one can trust anyone to speak the truth. Interestingly, Samuel Johnson makes the observation that even the devils do not lie to one another (though they may induce us to do so to one another!), for the society of Hell could not function without truth any more than ours. While I can produce no empirical evidence to support that statement, it may be fair to conclude that truth-telling is an imperative for the very basic functioning of society, apart from the virtuousness it adds to our character.

The question that vexes us often is not so much whether to tell the truth at all, but whether to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The whole truth

Though we have so far used the word "truth" with no qualification or definition, it is not at all certain what truth really is. Philosophers from time immemorial till now continue to debate what truth really is. But, I do not wish to join that debate. I merely wish to point out that the opposite of telling the truth is not necessarily lying. We may, and often do, say things which we believe to be true but in fact are not. This is an error or a mistake on our part, not a lie. Perhaps we could all agree, for the purposes of this discussion, that we know we are lying when we say something contrary to what we believe to be the truth. This articulation of truth and lying will become handy when we enter the realm of Public Relations shortly.

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3 Kural 300

Then we come to the question of telling “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” The context in which we most often hear this articulation of truth is in the courts of law. Witnesses are usually required to take an oath to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But it is common experience that both prosecution and defence lawyers spend much of their time in court trying to elicit from the witness only such portions of the truth as may help their case. As Mark Twain put it, they economise truth. How often have we heard the deadening demand from counsel to the witness to “just answer the question: yes or no”? Whole truths can rarely be conveyed by a simple "yes" or "no". Thus even where there is a clarion call for speaking the whole truth, experience shows that the whole truth is sometimes neither necessary nor even desirable.

Truth and truthfulness

I would now like to make a brief reference to the difference between truth and truthfulness because that is germane to our discussions here. While there can be much argument about what is the truth and what is the whole truth, there is little disagreement about what is being truthful. It is generally agreed that we are being truthful if we do not intend to deceive.

There are any number of situations when we may not really know the truth, much less the whole truth. But if we speak only of what we know to be true and we do not intend to mislead or deceive our audience, then we could consider ourselves to be truthful.

Role of lies in society

So far we have examined why telling the truth is such an imperative to the functioning of society. If so, it begs the question "why then are we surrounded by so much lies?" This is a good question. Indeed it is so profound that moral philosophers dealing with truth and falsehood have no simple answers.

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5 There are exceptions to this rule in some US and European jurisdictions. For details, see Freedman, M H (1975), Lawyers' Ethics in an Adversary System, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill
Except for the saints amongst us, few could claim never to have lied. Even those who claim never to have lied would probably agree that they have at least been lied to. Lying is a part of society as telling the truth is, though its pervasiveness is, presumably, not as great. Otherwise, as we noted earlier, society would have collapsed.

Is there a social role for lying? In this regard, I would prefer not to deal with all kind of lies as that would take too much time but to focus on certain kinds of lies that may be permitted, pardoned or rationalised in one way or another. I am referring to such "lies" as what doctors employ in not telling the truth to the patient in order to alleviate or delay anxieties and fears; what lawyers do to elicit the truth from an uncooperative witness; what journalists tell their interviewees in order to expose their corruption; and of course the classic situation where you would lie to the murderer in order to save his potential victim. In other words, are there lies in the service of public good?

St Augustine, who analysed lies at great length, was uncompromising about their unacceptability: "It is not true that sometimes we ought to lie. And what is not true we should never try to persuade anyone to believe." 6

Immanuel Kant, in the late 18th century, also tried to come to grips with the need for lies in our life but after much deliberation, he too concluded that "To be truthful in all declarations ... is a sacred and absolutely commanding decree of reason, limited by no expediency." 7 Our modern day communicator would have put it more succinctly: Truth rules, Okay!

Such absolutist declarations against lying, of course, were not shared by other eminent thinkers and philosophers. Thomas Aquinas graded lies according to their gravity and argued that "the greater the good intended, the more is the sin of lying diminished in gravity."

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6 Augustine, "Against Lying" in Treatises on Various Subjects
7 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy
According to him, if people lie in certain matters, "their lie will be a mortal sin: but it does not follow that they sin mortally when they lie in other matters."

Hugo Grotius, a 17th century lawyer, brought his forensic skills to the dissection of lies and argued that there are permissible circumstance for speaking lies. For example, it is permissible to say what is false to infants and insane persons; to those for who the information is not intended but to a third party; and "when the speaker makes use of a superior right over one subject to himself." The last mentioned case would certainly be familiar to all those who have been told lies by their own governments in the name of public good. Grotius also cites other philosophers who had said, "A physician deceives a sick man, a general his army, and a pilot the sailors; and in such deception there is no wrong," and "that which is good is better than the truth."

In today's world there are many forms of deception that is commonly practised and socially accepted. The most commonly practised form of social deception perhaps is what we call a 'white lie.' When we say how delighted we are to see an unexpected and unwelcome guest at home; when we say how delicious was the unpalatable dish our host foisted on us; when the bureaucrat signs "your obedient servant," while he is neither obedient nor servile; or when the teacher offers a testimonial that his student is one of the very best he has ever encountered which indeed the student is not -- in all these cases of white lies, there is a common intention to please and no intention to harm anyone.

There is another form of deception called placebos which are fake medicines such as sugar pills or distilled water that are given to unsuspecting patients to relieve their anxieties. 'Placebo' is said to derive from the Latin for "I shall please," and basically is intended to do good to someone without harming that person.

\[^8\] Aquinas, Summa Theologica
\[^9\] Grotius, On the Law of War and Peace
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There is also the variety, which Carl Klockars calls the "blue lies," that the police use to dupe their suspects. Blue lies are told by the police in order to extract truths and therefore are justified in their minds. Lawyers engage in this form of deception too, which justifies a foul means to a fair end.

Thus, we have numerous situations in our daily life where saying something other than the truth is practised, justified, and accepted by society at large. The question that flows from this position is whether the PR profession is also justified in indulging in certain kinds of deceptions in the name of public good or for the benefit of its clients as long as it does not harm anyone unduly.

Truthfulness and Public Relations

I have spent some time exploring the contours of the ideas of truth and lying because in the context of Public Relations they have very special significance.

As with society at large, the PR profession too places a high premium on truth-telling. There is ample evidence of its intentions and aspirations in this regard because whether it is the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) of United Kingdom or the Institute of Public Relations of Singapore (IPRS), every PR professional society's code of conduct incorporates a clear and unequivocal statement on the imperative of truth and honesty in professional conduct.

As an example, let us take the PRSA's Code of Professional Standards which was first published in 1950. In its declaration of principles, members are required to pledge "to conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public." Among the Articles that follow, the very first Article decrees that "A member shall conduct his or her professional life in accord with the public interest" (emphasis supplied). Article 4 stresses that a member shall "adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth."

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while Article 5 implores the member to "not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information." Article 6 forbids the member from engaging in "any practice which has the purpose of corrupting the integrity of channels of communications or the processes of government." (See Appendix 1 for full details.)

It would be hard to find a more compelling or comprehensive articulation of the need for honesty than that found in the PRSA code. Which is perhaps why it has spawned many other similar codes around the world. Most of them enshrine the same spirit if not the same words. The British code demands that the member conduct his/her professional activities "with proper regard to the public interest" but adds the caveat that the public interest is not easy to define. It also declares that the member shall have "a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly. The operative words here are "knowingly or recklessly." (See Appendix 2 for full details.)

Closer to this region, the Code of Ethics of the Institute of Public Relations of Singapore begins its list of governing principles with the exhortation that the member “shall conduct his professional activities with respect for the public interest and the interest of the profession.” It also declares that the member has “a positive professional duty to maintain high standards of truth, accuracy and good taste.” (See Appendix 3 for full details.)

It is interesting to note that nowhere in these three codes can we find a single statement that encourages or even suggests that PR professionals should lie in the interests of their clients. Where the interests of the client comes into conflict with truth, professional integrity or public interest, it seems implicit that the latter must prevail. In short, there is no need for the PR professional to lie.

**Falsehood and Public Relations**

Despite all the codification of honesty and integrity, the PR profession everywhere suffers from the persistent image of puffery and falsehood. Part of this shadow could be traced back to the earlier era of PR when puffery was indeed the essence of what has come to be known
as the press agentry model of PR. The profession has been unable to shake off of that shadow even though it has progressed far into more substantive and honourable practices. On the other hand, there is evidence that PR codes of conduct have generally been inadequate and even ineffective in bringing about the desired change in the profession. There are many reasons for this state of affairs but perhaps the chief among them are a) the codes have a lot of bark but little bite and b) the codes are framed so broadly and sweepingly as to be neither practical nor enforceable.

It should be noted here that the PRSA code does have more bite than most codes in that it has the backing of the law as well as precedents that demonstrate the willingness, albeit sporadic, of the Association to act against errant members.

However, apart from the above reasons, there is yet another, perhaps a more surprising, reason why the PR profession does not practice what it preaches: many members do not even know of the existence of the code. I have no documentary evidence of the extent of the ignorance of their respective codes among PR professionals in US or UK. But I do have some interesting information on the situation in Singapore which I would like to share with you.

Singapore survey on code of ethics

Earlier this year, two of my students in the Master’s class in the School of Communication Studies at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore conducted a survey relating to the IPRS Code of Ethics. Ms Pua Shee Ling and Julia Khong surveyed the senior practitioners in the country and received 65 responses from a total of about 185, a 35 per cent return rate which is quite respectable for a survey of this kind.

13 Pua Shee Ling & Julia Khong (1997), Making Public Relations Codes of Ethics ‘Real’, Nanyang Technological University (Unpublished)
Pua and Khong found that a majority of the respondents (54 per cent) did not think the PR practitioners in Singapore were aware of the code, which has been in existence for more than 25 years. Only a small minority (23 per cent) thought there was awareness of the code among practitioners. As for the understanding of the practical applications of the code, and its effectiveness as a guide in ethical decision-making, only about 46 per cent in each case had positive responses.

When asked why the code was not effective, nearly 95 per cent attributed it to the low awareness of the code, 68 per cent thought it was because of the lack of commitment to the code, 72 per cent felt it was because the code was not enforceable, but only a tiny 3 per cent thought it was because the code was not practical. In the last case, 45 per cent were neutral. The discrepancy between the 95 per cent who attributed ineffectiveness to lack of awareness and the much lower 54 per cent who earlier said practitioners are not aware of the code is somewhat puzzling. I wonder if PR practitioners are generally too willing to blame the lack of effectiveness on the lack of awareness. As an ex-practitioner, I am also intrigued by the extremely low figure of three per cent who agreed that the code is not practical. I certainly would count myself among them. While I do not find the exhortations on truth and honesty too difficult to grasp, I do find some other provisions of the code impractical. For example, the IPRS code prohibits a member from representing conflicting or competing interests. Yet the IPR code allows representation of competing interests but not conflicting interests, with the express consent of the parties concerned. The PRSA code, on the other hand, sanctions both cases, provided, of course, the clients agree.

Again, the IPRS code forbids members from approaching the clients of other PR professionals without informing them beforehand. It also prohibits fees contingent upon results promised. And, like many other professional codes, it implores the member to tell on others when they are deemed to be unethical. I find all these quite difficult to follow through in practice, much less in enforcement by the governing council.

'pr/truth/ki-conf1
In response to the question of who should be responsible for enforcing the code, there was some ambivalence among the respondents. Almost 39 per cent felt IPRS should shoulder the responsibility while 23 per cent thought the responsibility should lie with in-house management. Close to 14 percent voted for the government and about 11 per cent for an independent group comprising members of the profession and outsiders.

In order to enhance the ethical quality of the profession, the respondents were asked to choose among certain recommendations. An overwhelming majority of 97 per cent chose the introduction of ethics to the curricula of PR courses. About 90 per cent also supported the idea of in-house guidelines on ethics. The least favoured (46 per cent) measure was government regulation.

These results allude to the complexity of the problem of enforcement of ethical behaviour. While like many other professions, the PR profession does not generally wish for government control, it lacks the established infrastructure and the centuries-long traditions of the medical or legal professions. What makes it even more difficult for the PR profession is the lack of even entry qualifications into the profession. In almost all countries, anyone can practice PR without any prior knowledge, training or experience in PR. It is one of the reasons why many simply do not consider PR a profession at all.

To summarise the problems of ethics among PR professionals: Many are not aware of the code of conduct, some provisions of the code are not practical, the code is either unenforceable or not enforced, and in most countries anyone can be PR practitioner.

Clients and PR professionals

Given such uninspiring climate, it is hardly surprising that many clients of PR professionals are even less aware of the demands and standards of the profession. Because of the lack of understanding of the ethical principles on which this profession stands, some clients actually see no harm in asking their PR staff to lie for them. They see it as part of the PR job. But I
must hasten to add that in my own experience as both a consultant and in-house PR manager, I rarely was subject to pressures to lie. I believe this is not a unique experience.

However, I and, I'm sure, numerous others, have been expected not to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in the handling of PR matters. In this regard, it is not just the clients but also many PR professionals who share this same philosophy of truth-telling. Notice how none of the codes of ethics ever mention the "whole truth"! There is also the consideration of specifics such as white lies, placebos, withholding of information which are deemed permissible by many PR professionals themselves.

As the society tolerates, in fact indulges, in many forms of harmless deception, PR practitioners too see no harm in employing selective truth or harmless (in their view, at least) deception. Hence, reporters are told by secretaries that the PR managers are not in when they are right there; PR managers claim they do not know the facts yet when they already do; PR consultants claim their clients are not contactable when they indeed are; or, more seriously, PR staff claim the stocks are out when in fact they have been withdrawn owing to defects. One can go on with this list. While journalists do get agitated with such tactics, there is generally no great sense of ethical violation among PR practitioners. PR professionals also do not consider withholding information as necessarily unethical. Many believe information should be disseminated on a "need to know" basis. There is also the consideration that journalists should work for their pay. It is their job to dig out the information and not expected it to be handed on a silver platter. Barney and Black have drawn parallels between the lawyer and the PR professional and argued that in an adversarial system they have the same role to play: to advocate the client's interests and leave it to the adversary (say, the journalist) to challenge or expose the weaknesses of the PR position.¹⁴ The adversarial system almost demands that they play this cat and mouse game and there is no blatant violation of ethics, so the argument goes.

TRUTH IN PR

There is another domain where it is really difficult to draw the line between truth and untruth: the domain of judgement and subjectivity. For instance, when asked whether the company would recover from the recent mishap, the PR manager is not only expected to provide what Seib and Fitzpatrick call "fact accuracy," but also to make a judgement call. How "true" can a judgement be? How is one to say that that judgement should not lean to favour the employer?

However, when there is a raging fire in the oilfield which can be seen for miles and the management expects the PR department to ask the reporter "What fire?," it does get rich. Lest anyone thinks this is just a hypothetical case, let me assure you that this is not so. It is this kind of lying in the teeth that really makes the PR profession very nervous. While it cannot be claimed that no PR professional would be willing to lie with impunity, the practice would, in the long run, incur a cost -- a cost that neither the professional nor the client can really afford. It is the cost of credibility and trust.

As we saw at the outset, no society can function properly if the words and gestures of its members cannot be trusted. The PR society is no different.

ends

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Appendix 1

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
FOR THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations Society of America


Declaration of Principles

Members of the Public Relations Society of America base their professional principles on the fundamental value and dignity of the individual, holding that the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, is essential to the practice of public relations.

In serving the interests of clients and employers, we dedicate ourselves to the goals of better communication, understanding, and cooperation among the diverse individuals, groups, and institutions of society, and of equal opportunity of employment in the public relations professions.

We pledge:

To conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public;

To improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing research and education;

And to adhere to the articles of the Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations as adopted by the governing Assembly of the Society.

Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations

These articles have been adopted by the Public Relations Society of America to promote and maintain high standards of public service and ethical conduct among its members.

1. A member shall conduct his or her professional life in accord with the public interest.

2. A member shall exemplify high standards of honesty and integrity while carrying out dual obligations to a client or employer and to the democratic process.

3. A member shall deal fairly with the public, with past or present clients or employers, and with fellow practitioners, giving due respect to the ideal of free inquiry and to the opinions of others.

4. A member shall adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth avoiding extravagant claims or unfair comparisons and giving credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.

5. A member shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information and shall act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which he or she is responsible.

6. A member shall not engage in any practice which has the purpose of corrupting the integrity of channels of communications or the processes of government.

7. A member shall be prepared to identify publicly the name of the client or employer on whose behalf any public communication is made.

8. A member shall not use any individual or organization professing to serve or represent an announced cause, or professing to be independent or unbiased, but actually serving another or undisclosed interest.

9. A member shall not guarantee the achievement of specified results beyond the member's direct control.
10. A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts.

11. A member shall not place himself or herself in a position where the member's personal interest is or may be in conflict with an obligation to an employer or client, or others, without full disclosure of such interests to all involved.

12. A member shall not accept fees, commissions, gifts or any other consideration from anyone except clients or employers for whom services are performed without their express consent, given after full disclosure of the facts.

13. A member shall scrupulously safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients or employers.

14. A member shall not intentionally damage the professional reputation or practice of another practitioner.

15. If a member has evidence that another member has been guilty of unethical, illegal, or unfair practices, including those in violation of this Code, the member is obligated to present the information promptly to the proper authorities of the Society for action in accordance with the procedure set forth in Article XII of the Bylaws.

16. A member called as a witness in a proceeding for enforcement of this Code is obligated to appear, unless excused for sufficient reason by the judicial panel.

17. A member shall, as soon as possible, sever relations with any organization or individual if such relationship requires conduct contrary to the articles of this Code.
Appendix 2

IPR CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS (REVISED JULY 1993)

The Code of Professional Conduct has been drawn up by the Institute of Public Relations to set down standards which will, it is hoped, make for good relationships and reputable business dealing by public relations practitioners. There are other, internationally adopted, Codes of Conduct which have the support of the Institute.

The Code is binding on members of the Institute and is under constant review. The latest revisions were approved by the Annual General Meeting in 1991. These Guidelines should be used in conjunction with other Guidelines and Recommended Practice Papers issued by the Institute from time to time. They are intended to assist members in interpreting the Code, but it must be emphasised that they cannot be all-embracing. Circumstances vary and it is up to members to measure their conduct against the standards set by the Code.

Complaints about breaches of the Code, which may come from any individual or organization, are investigated by the Institute's Professional Practices Committee which, if considered appropriate, may refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee for action. The Code is in no way a substitute for the law of the land, and anyone seeking redress against a member should do so through the normal legal processes.

Arbitration over a dispute is not part of the function of the Professional Practices Committee, but the Committee can sometimes appoint three senior Fellows of the Institute to act as arbitrators, provided all the parties connected with the dispute agree, in advance, to be bound by the outcome.

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A member shall:

1. Have a positive duty to observe the highest standards in the practice of public relations and to deal fairly and honestly with employers and clients (past and present), fellow members and professionals, the public relations profession, other professions, suppliers, intermediaries, the media of communications, employees and the public.

1.1 This clause emphasises the fact that the Code applies to a member's relationships with many different 'publics'. The list may not be comprehensive.

1.2 Be aware of, understand and observe this Code, any amendment to it, and any other codes which shall be incorporated into it; remain up to date with the content and recommendations of any guidance or practice papers issued by IPR and have a duty to conform to good practice as expressed in such guidance or practice papers.

1.3 Uphold this Code and co-operate with fellow members to enforce decisions on any matter arising from its application. A member who knowingly causes or allows his or her staff to act in a manner inconsistent with this Code and who is party to such action and shall be deemed to be in breach of this Code. Staff employed by a member who act in a manner inconsistent with this Code should be disciplined by the member.

1.4 Engage in any practice nor be seen to conduct him or her self in any manner detrimental to the reputation of the Institute or the reputation and interests of the public relations profession.

1.4 This is a 'catch-all' clause. If, for example, a member is seen to be drunk or found to be dishonest, such behaviour may be detrimental to the Institute or the public relations profession. Whether such behaviour is actually in breach of this clause would have to be judged on the particular circumstances of the case.

Clause 2: Conduct concerning the public, the media and other professionals
Appendix 2

A member shall:

2.1 Conduct his or her professional activities with proper regard to the public interest.
   2.1 Emphasises the importance of responsible behaviour by public relations practitioners. The public interest is not easy to define; a product may be in the interests of one section of the public but contrary to the interests of another. The Code calls for a responsible attitude to all sections of the public.

2.2 Have a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly, and take proper care to check all information prior to its dissemination.
   2.2 It is worth emphasising that this clause applies whether the member is an employer or an employee.

2.3 Have a duty to ensure that the actual interest of any organisation with which he or she may be professionally concerned is adequately declared.
   2.3 A member representing a client or employer must make the client’s interest known when making representations and in a manner which is straightforward and does not mislead. The use of a ‘front’ organisation or name suggesting an objective different from that of a member’s client or employer is not permitted. (E.g. a hypothetical ‘Paint Advisory Service’ whose title would suggest the availability of ‘neutral’ advice on any paint problem, but whose ultimate objective is the sale of a particular make of paint.)

2.4 When working in association with other professionals, identify and respect the codes of those professions.
   2.4 Public relations work is not done in isolation as is the case with some professions. A member may be working closely with, for example, a journalist, accountant or lawyer and must take care that they or their profession are in no way compromised.

2.5 Respect any statutory or regulatory codes laid down by any other authorities which are relevant to the actions of his or her employer or client, or taken on behalf of an employer or client.
   2.5 This is a warning about the many regulations or codes, voluntary and statutory, that may be relevant to an intended course of action. Where appropriate members should familiarise themselves with these regulations and not only avoid offending against them, but should warn their employer or client against so doing.

2.6 Ensure that the names of all directors, executives, and retained advisers of his or her employers or company who hold public office, are members of either House of Parliament, Local Authorities or of any statutory organisation or body, are recorded in the IPR Register.
   2.6 Members have a positive duty to declare, in the register, any public office-holder retained by them or their employers. The register is maintained by the Institute and is available to members or non-members on request.

2.7 Honour confidences received or given in the course of professional activity.
   2.7 Members can only work effectively if they have the confidence of their client or employer. This clause emphasises that respecting such confidence is a professional duty and applies even if the connection with that employer or client has ended.

2.8 Neither propose nor undertake, or cause an employer or client to propose or undertake, any action which would be an improper influence on government, legislation, holders of public office or members of any statutory body or organisation, or the media of communication.
   2.8 The purpose of public relations is to promote better mutual understanding and this should be the keynote in trying to impress on the media or on representatives of the government local authorities or other organisations, any need to effect changes in the law or the rules laid down by such organisations.

   It is for individual members to judge whether payments, gifts or other ‘inducements’ given to holders of public office other than those declared under 2.6, are in contravention of this clause. Though, in the event of a complaint, such judgement would fall to the Professional Practices Committee.

Clause 3: Conduct concerning employers and clients

A member shall:

3.1 Safeguard the confidences of both present and former employers or clients: shall not disclose or use these confidences to the disadvantage or prejudice of such employers or clients, or to the financial advantage of the
Appendix 2

A member (unless the employer or client has released such information for public use, or has given specific permission for disclosure), except upon the order of a court of law.

3.1 This is an extension to clause 2.7, applying specifically to confidential information gained from past or present clients or employers. For example: a member may not give confidential information about one client to a competitor of the client, or provide information about a client to a third party in return for some sort of reward. There are various other ways in which this clause could be contravened, but the clause could be overruled by a Court of Law.

3.2 Inform an employer or client of any shareholding or financial interest held by that member or any staff employed by that member in any company or person whose services he or she recommends.

3.2 This safeguards employers or clients from possible undisclosed interests a member may have when recommending the use of a third party.

3.3 Be free to accept fees, commissions or other valuable considerations from persons other than an employer or client, if such considerations are disclosed to the employer or client.

3.3 This permits, for example, a percentage of printing costs being taken by a member, but only if this is disclosed to the client or employer. Although not specifically stated, it is implied in the Code that this disclosure should be at the time fees are agreed.

3.4 Be free to negotiate, or renegotiate, with an employer or client terms that are a fair reflection of demands of the work involved and take into account factors other than hours worked and the experience involved. These special factors, which are also applied by other professional advisers, shall have regard to all the circumstances of the specific situation and in particular to:

a) The complexity of the issue, case, problem or assignment, and the difficulties associated with its completion.

b) The professional or specialised skills required and the degree of responsibility involved.

c) The amount of documentation necessary to be perused or prepared, and its importance.

d) The place and circumstances where the work is carried out, in whole or in part.

e) The scope, scale and value of the task and its importance as an activity, issue or project to the employer or client.

3.4 Public relations work varies greatly in complexity and this clause sets out five factors to be taken into account in negotiating fee or salary. There may well be others. If, during the course of an assignment circumstances change a re-negotiation could be in order.

A member shall not...

3.5 Misuse information regarding his or her employer's or client's business for financial or other gain.

3.5 This clause refers to the misuse of any information about an employer's or client's business, to a member's advantage whether or not the information is confidential.

3.6 Use inside information for gain. Nor may a member of staff managed or employed by a member directly trade in his or her employer's or client's securities without the prior written permission of the employer or client and of the member's chief executive or chief financial officer or compliance officer.

3.6 Inside information is information about an employer or client obtained during the course of a member's employment which would not be fully available to outsiders. The clause applies particularly to information concerning the financial status of the company concerned. Statutory and regulatory provisions place strict conditions on the conduct of financial communications and on trading in the company's shares or other securities as required by the Stock Exchange's listing requirements.

3.7 Serve an employer or client under terms or conditions which might impair his or her independence, objectivity or integrity.

3.7 This clause is designed to protect members from unfair conditions being imposed that might impair their judgement or compromise their integrity. For example, members should not accept a condition seeking to cause them to publish false information, thus breaching clause 2.2.

3.8 Represent conflicting interests but may represent competing interests with the express consent of the parties concerned.

3.8 Example: It would be a breach to represent both Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola, but provided both parties agreed, a member might represent one of them and also a brewer or a retailer. If a member is in doubt about the possibility of two clients being in conflict, the clients' views should be sought before agreeing to represent them.
3.9 Guarantee the achievement of results which are beyond the member’s direct capacity to achieve or prevent.

3.9 In most of the campaigns which a public relations practitioner undertakes, the outcome is influenced by a number of factors only partially or not at all under the control of the practitioner:

For example, a member acting for a company making a hostile bid for another would be quite wrong to guarantee success. Similarly it would be wrong to guarantee a specific amount of favourable press coverage.

Clause 4: Conduct concerning colleagues

A member shall:

4.1 Adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth, avoiding extravagant claims or unfair comparisons and giving credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.

4.1 All public relations work is concerned with ideas, which may come from various sources. Practitioners naturally want to lay claim to their successes, but must stick to the truth in doing so, give credit where it is due and not plagiarise other people’s ideas.

4.2 Be free to represent his or her capabilities and service to any potential employer or client either on his or her own initiative or at the behest of any client, provided in so doing he or she does not seek to break any existing contract or detract from the reputation or capabilities of any member already serving that employer or client.

4.2 A member is, of course, free to seek new clients or a new employer, but in doing so must not in any way denigrate another member, who may be already working for the prospective client or employer. If a member is making a presentation to a prospective client it is usual and courteous to inform any existing member concerned, or at least to ask the ‘prospect’ to ignore the approach where public relations needs are already being satisfactorily met.

A member shall not:

4.3 Injure the professional reputation or practice of another member.

4.3 This clause scarcely calls for further comment. It is not difficult to damage a person’s or a corporation’s professional reputation. To do so where a fellow member is concerned would contravene the Code if not the libel laws.

Clause 5: Interpreting the code

5.1 In the interpretation of this code, the Laws of the Land shall apply.

5.1 Even the IPR Code is not above the law!
Appendix 3

IPRS CODE OF ETHICS

This Code defines and implements paragraph 3(ii) of the Constitution of the Institute of Public Relations of Singapore under the heading "objects" namely "to encourage and foster the observance of high professional standards by its members and to establish and prescribe such standards by a Code of Ethics."

Public relations is concerned with the effect of conduct on reputation. The following principles have been laid down to embody this concept and enhance relations between the Institute's members and the public to whom they are directly or indirectly responsible in the performance of their duties.

(1) A member shall conduct his professional activities with respect for the public interest and the interest of the profession.

(2) A member shall at all times deal fairly and honestly with his client or employers, with his fellow members and with the general public.

(3) A member shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information, and shall use proper care to avoid doing so. He has a positive professional duty to maintain high standards of truth, accuracy and good taste.

(4) A member shall not engage in any practice which tends to corrupt the integrity of channels of public communication.

(5) A member shall not create or make use of any organization purporting to serve some announced cause but actually promoting a special or private interest which is not apparent.

(6) A member shall safeguard the confidence of both present and former clients or employers. He shall not disclose except upon the order of a court of competent jurisdiction any confidential information which he may have obtained in his official capacity without securing and making known to those concerned the consent of the said client or employer.

(7) A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests.

(8) A member in performing services for a client or employer shall not accept fees, commissions or any other valuable consideration in connection with those services from any one other than his client or employer unless such practice is acceptable to the client or employer.

(9) A member shall not cause or allow to be done anything for the purpose of touting or advertising calculated to attract business unfairly.

(10) A member shall not propose to a prospective client or employer that his fee or other compensation be contingent on the achievement of certain results; nor shall he enter into any free agreement to the same effect.

(11) A member shall not intentionally injure the professional reputation or practice of another member, but if such a member has evidence that another member has been guilty of unethical, illegal or unfair practices it shall be his duty to inform the Institute in accordance with the Constitution.

(12) A member shall not engage in or be connected with any occupation or business which, in the opinion of the Council, is not consistent with membership of the Institute.

(13) A member shall not seek to supplant another member with his employer or client, nor shall he encroach upon the professional employment of another member without informing the member beforehand.

(14) A member shall co-operate with fellow member in upholding and enforcing this Code.

A member who violates any section of the IPRS Code of Ethics shall be asked to show cause in writing to the Council why he/she should not be expelled from the Institute before such proceedings are taken against him/her.
COMMUNICATION ACROSS BORDERS

Prof. Ziauddin Sardar
Firdaus Kharas
TOPIC: Communicating Across Borders

* Capital, technology and production needs in cross-border programming

* Concerns on "cultural imperialism"

BIODATAS:

Prof Ziauddin Sardar
Prof Ziauddin Sardar, the Professor of S & T Policy, University of Middlesex, UK. is a well known writer, broadcaster, futurist, and cultural critic. Author of over two dozen books, he is visiting professor of science policy at Middlesex and consulting editor of 'Futures" the monthly journal of planning, forecasting and future studies. His most recent books are 'Barbaric Others: A Manifesto on Western Racism" and Cyberfutures-Culture and Politics on the Information Superhighway.'

Mr. Firdaus Kharas
Mr. Firdaus Kharas, is the Managing Director, UTV International, Singapore, which he cofounded in1994. A frequent speaker at various international conferences, including the historic fortieth General Assembly of the United Nations. He has travelled to over 100 countries with 16 publications to his credit. He has been the recipient of the UN Peace Medal.