

# Ethics and Professionalism

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**INSTRUCTIONS:** The contestant will be provided 20 minutes to develop the presentation. Only the Ethics and Professionalism Resources Manual and 3 note cards may be used in the prep/presentation rooms. The speech will be 3-7 minutes.

**SUGGESTIONS:** For each case study, SUMMARIZE the facts of the case in your own words, figure out a detailed SOLUTION to the situation, and be ready to PRESENT the solution to the judges. You should use the “Ethics and Professionalism Resources Manual” to research your solution and provide specific justification for your suggestions (“...according to the Ethics and Professionalism Resources Manual, the employee is not allowed to ...”).

## 25 Cases from Previous Years

1. You are a sales manager for Digital Solutions. Historically, you have been a top-performing sales manager meeting all your sales goals but this month you have lost a major customer to a competitor. Today is the last day of the month and you are behind on sales. You are working with a new company on a new contract and the estimated value would be double what was lost with your old customer. Based on your experience as a sales manager and your relationship with this new customer, you are 99% certain that you will close the sale and get the contract, but it has not been signed yet. Do you include the potential contract in this month’s sales numbers?
2. You are a sales representative at Digital Solutions. You have four co-workers on your sales team that you work well with and enjoy hanging out with outside of working hours. One evening you overhear Rachel, who is on your sales team, talking badly about Digital Solutions and members of the management team while socializing after work at a local restaurant that you frequently go to. You think maybe she’s just having a bad day and you decide to ignore her comments. The next time you are all socializing after work at the same restaurant, you hear Rachel again disparaging Digital Solutions and the management teams. The next day at work you approach Rachel to offer advice about not talking negatively in public about Digital Solutions or co-workers. She explains that what she does off the clock is her business and that you should stop eavesdropping on her conversations then asks, “Are you going to rat me out now?” How would you respond? What are the desired behaviors in this scenario?
3. Lynn works weekends and evenings at the counter of a large cell phone repair store. The job fits with her interests, allows her plenty of time for schoolwork, and gives her spending money. One evening, one of her friends stopped by her counter, so she showed her some new cell phone cases and let her try one on her current phone. While Lynn stepped away to wait on another customer, she noticed her friend quickly left the store. As Lynn inventoried items at the end of her shift, she realized the cell phone case her friend had tried was missing. The store’s policy is to prosecute shoplifters. She decided to talk to her friend about the policy instead of reporting her to the store manager. What other courses of action could Lynn consider? How will Lynn’s actions affect her career options moving forward? Will her decision affect the company and/or other employees?
4. Sean, a new intern at Digital Solutions, loves to play games online almost every night, starting shortly after he gets home from work. He has made friends in many different states and countries and is often online until very late. His coworkers are beginning to worry about him because he seems so tired much of the time. Sean knows he doesn’t give his full effort at work, and he often takes a quick power nap during breaks. Sometimes, when he has gamed into the early morning hours, he has started reporting to work late and calling in sick. Last week, his boss found him sleeping and he overheard some of his coworkers discussing his lack of productivity and attendance issues. What, if any, company ethics issues are involved in this situation? What steps could Sean take to correct his attendance and productivity issues? How could this situation impact Sean’s future employability options?
5. Trish, a new Network Administrator with the Management Information Systems Department of Digital Solutions, clocked in five (5) minutes late for work this morning. While clocking in late

will not result in Trish being fired, or written up, it does mean that she is no longer eligible for the company's perfect attendance bonus incentive. Trish is devastated as she was counting on this bonus to pay for her son's recent medical bills. She is also very frustrated as she actually arrived at work ten minutes early but was unable to clock in before her supervisor swept her into an unexpected Zoom meeting with the corporate office. As a Network Administrator, Trish has both the access rights and capability to edit company attendance records. If Trish decides to change her attendance records, what company ethics (if any) would be violated? What other courses of action could Trish consider? How will Trish's actions affect her career options moving forward? Will her decision affect the company and/or other employees?

6. Mary is an administrative assistant at Digital Solutions. While working late one Friday night, she notices that her boss has left his computer on. As she steps into his office to turn off his monitor for the weekend, she notices he has left his email open. Upon noticing her name in the subject line, she briefly scans the message on the screen and is surprised, and embarrassed, to see that it is about her. Specifically, the message to the Human Resources Department describes her work attire and personal hygiene in an unflattering light. What are Mary's next steps? What, if any, company ethics violations are involved in this situation? Based on this scenario, is Mary working in a hostile work environment?
7. LaKeisha is an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department. Her good friend Michael is applying for a job with the company and has agreed to be a reference for him. Michael asks for advice on preparing for the interview. LaKeisha has the actual interview questions asked of all applicants and considers making him a copy of the list so he can prepare. Who else may be affected by LaKeisha's decision and in what ways? What are the implications for LaKeisha's workplace based on her decision? How will LaKeisha's decision affect her future relationship with Michael? What are your next steps?
8. Sam is an employee in the Quality Control Department. Once a year, his company gives away used computers to the local elementary school. As Sam is helping load the donated computers into the company van for tomorrow's delivery, he notices his immediate supervisor quietly slip one into his personal car. Sam knows that the company does not keep records of donated items and is unsure how to proceed. From a professional and ethical standpoint, how should Sam proceed? Who will be affected by Sam's decision and how? What factors in this scenario add to Sam's difficulty in making his decision? What steps should the company take to reduce or remove this ethical dilemma in the future?
9. You work in the Customer Service Support Department and spend a lot of your day responding to email. One day you receive a message from an email address you don't recognize. It says, "I'd like to get to know you better outside of work." You have no idea who sent it, so you delete it. A few days later, you receive another message from the same source. You ignore the message again thinking they will stop. You mention these emails to a coworker, who responds, "You're lucky to have a fan." The messages continue to come every few days and you are feeling pretty weirded out. What does the concept of harassment mean? How do you handle the emails? What are your next steps?
10. Mr. and Mrs. Smith have worked for Professional Business Associates in the Information Technology (IT) department for quite some time. Six months ago, Mr. Smith was promoted to the IT Department Manager. Three weeks ago, their daughter, Susan, was hired as the administrative assistant in the Human Resource (HR) department. As a co-worker in the HR department, you have been mentoring Susan when necessary. Recently, you overheard Susan speaking to her mom and sharing some personal information from the file of another employee in the IT department. How is Mr. Smith held accountable to his wife's evaluation that he will perform? What are your actions towards Susan? At what point should hiring family members be considered unethical? What if a friend of yours had interviewed for the same position and was more qualified? What should her mom's responsibility be from a co-worker standpoint?
11. You work as an administrative assistant for Professional Business Associates in the Receiving Department. The office environment is generally casual and the floor plan is open. One of the vendors, Pete, who drops off products twice a week has been working with the company for

over three years so he is very familiar with the company environment and knows the employees' personalities. He stops by your desk every time he makes a delivery. He is friendly, funny, and a pleasure to talk to but stays long enough that it disrupts your work progress every time he comes. Once he leaves your desk, he stops by two others disrupting their work progress as well. Do you talk to your colleagues about Pete when he leaves? How do you respond to Pete's behavior? How does the nature of your relationship with Pete impact your response? What might you say to Pete to discourage his lengthy visits with you without damaging the relationship with this vendor? What can the company do to protect from this kind of disruption?

12. You are a new management assistant in the Marketing department. Your desk is directly outside the office of two managers. It is the year-end and several vendors have sent complimentary gifts ranging from small gift cards to expense electronics to show their gratitude. The managers have asked you to organize and inventory that there are enough gifts for each employee to receive at least one in a raffle. As you perform this task you find that there are 6 extra gifts. You overhear the two managers discussing selecting three of the more expensive gifts a piece prior to the raffle to use for their personal satisfaction. As the managers, should they have first choice? Is the raffle an appropriate distribution of these gifts or are their alternatives? Is it fair? Should have you said anything when you heard the comment? And if so, to whom? What ethical considerations should be in place for gift acceptance and distribution?
13. You are one of the employees in the Marketing Department of Professional Business Associates that works with company partners setting up for events. You have been working on three projects for your supervisor that need final analysis and are due to her by the end of the day. One of the company partners, Premier Supplies, is sponsoring a social event today after regular work hours. Your supervisor asked you after lunch to periodically check in with Premier Supplies as they set up for the event to make sure the room arrangements meet the executives' requests. Every time you check in, the representative in charge puts you to work stating that if that is how the company wants it, you will need to help them make those changes. If you help, you fear you won't meet the deadlines of the projects that are due to your supervisor. Should you spend the time helping while your company work requirements are put in jeopardy? How is the partner relationship affected if you refuse to help? What will you say to your boss if you don't get your projects done without simply blaming? Do you think you could ask a colleague to assist without jeopardizing their workload as well? And if so, how would you go about that?
14. You work at PBA Insurance where you answer telephone and email inquiries, prepare estimates for customers, and help promote the agency via social media posts. Your normal working hours are 8:30 A.M. until 5:30 P.M, Monday thru Friday. Recently, your employer went out of town for three days to a national insurance conference. With your employer out of town, you had telephone calls forwarded to your home and kept your laptop with you. Some days you did not get into the office until noon. You knew that your employer wouldn't find out. The next week you are spending some time updating the agency's Facebook page when you notice a couple customer reviews that alarm you. Both customers voiced concern that they came to the agency to have some paperwork signed and there was no one there. The customers posted the dates and times they were at the agency. You know your employer does check social media in order to respond directly to customers. How do you respond to the customers who posted the concern? How do you respond to your boss? How do you create a plan to move forward in your position?
15. You are an employee of PBA Market and have been warned about your excessive absenteeism several times, both verbally and in writing. The written warning included notice that "further violations could result in disciplinary actions," including suspension or discharge. A short time after the written warning was issued, you called work to say you were not going to be in because your babysitter had called in sick and you had to stay home to care for your young child. Your supervisor told you that you had already exceeded the allowed number of absences and warned that if you did not report to work, you could be suspended. When you did not report for your shift, you were suspended for fifteen days. In a subsequent meeting, you argued that it was not your fault that the babysitter had canceled and protested that you had no other choice but to stay home. Your supervisor pointed out that you had not made a good-faith effort to find an alternate babysitter, nor had you tried to swap shifts with a coworker. Furthermore, the

supervisor said that the lack of a babysitter was not a justifiable excuse for being absent. Do you feel the punishment was fair? What are some alternative resolutions to the situation? What does the employee manual say? Are all employees treated equally?

16. You are employed at PBA Boutique selling collectible jewelry and other items. Your responsibilities are to straighten and stock merchandise, handle telephone orders, and sell to customers shopping in the store. You also have closing responsibilities when there is no manager on duty. It is the responsibility of all employees to be alert to shoplifters who might steal merchandise. If the store is busy, it might be difficult to monitor the entire store while checking out customers. Sometimes your friends come into the store to shop or visit. You enjoy their company and are always glad to see them. One evening you were very busy with customers when friends came to visit, and you saw one of your friends steal an item of jewelry from on top of a jewelry case. Startled, you looked the other way and pretended not to see the theft. After visiting with you, your friends left the store to go to a movie. The person who stole the merchandise took it and left with the group. The next morning, the manager noticed a particular item was missing and there was no record of that item selling in the POS system. Following the store procedures, the manager began meeting with all employees working the night before, as well as reviewing security footage. How do you respond to your manager's questions? How do you approach your friend who stole the item? Does the nature of your relationship with your friend affect how you handle the situation with both your manager and your friend? What more can the store do to protect itself from this kind of theft? What can you do to protect yourself from being implicated in the theft? What do you do if two days later, your friend feels remorseful and returns to the store when you are working and puts the item back?
17. Jennie was recently hired to work as a receptionist for the front lobby. As receptionist, she is responsible for making copies for the people in her office. Her son, Jason, comes in and needs some copies for a school project. He brought his own paper and needs 300 copies for his class. If he doesn't bring the copies with him, he will fail the project. The company copier does not require a security key, nor do they keep track of copies made by departments. Who else may be affected by Jennie's decision and in what ways? What are the implications for Jennie's workplace based on her decision? How does Jennie's decision affect the development of her son's ethics? What are your next steps?
18. Chris was recently hired as a social media strategist for a local marketing agency. As a social media strategist, Chris often will give presentations, conduct meetings, and initiate/respond to a variety of correspondence with colleagues from all levels of the organization. Although the workplace culture is friendly and relaxed, his peers have noted that Chris oftentimes refers to his superiors and clients by their first names. He normally arrives at least five minutes late and is known to reply to text messages and check both personal and company social media sites during company meetings. With his friendly and outgoing attitude, Chris is both well received and respected by his colleagues and supervisors alike. He is in line for a promotion and has scheduled a meeting with his supervisor to discuss his chances. How does Chris influence the other employees in the workplace? Is Chris's casual behavior appropriate for all interactions? How does Chris's version of professionalism reflect upon the company image? If you were Chris's supervisor, what suggestions would you have to improve his chances of promotion using the Ethics and Professional Resources Manual?
19. Tina works for the maker of a high-end computer drive that is favored by many industry manufacturers. Two weeks ago, one of their high volume, but also high maintenance, customers placed a large order with Digital Solutions for these computer drives. Tina promised a two-week delivery when the order was placed, as that is the date she was provided by the Manufacturing Department. The customer called today to confirm the drives would be delivered on time, as he would have to shut down his assembly line if they were late. Based on recent shortages in the current supply chain, Tina estimates there is a 50/50 chance the drives will now be late. Recognizing the importance of meeting this delivery deadline, she is considering whether or not to share the strong possibility of a late delivery with the customer. She is concerned he may cancel the current order and possibly even switch to another company for future orders. How should Tina proceed? What company ethics policies may be

violated based on her decision? How will Digital Solutions' reputation and future relationship with the customer be impacted based on her decision?

20. The school year was coming to an end and James needed to get a good summer job. Many of his friends had worked as summer interns at Digital Solutions and were then offered full-time, high-paying positions following their graduation from high school. He is aware that Digital Solutions hires a limited number of summer interns and generally favors students with excellent academic records, high standardized test scores, and strong leadership and community service involvement through Career and Technical Student Organizations such as Business Professionals of America. As a result, James decided to "tweak" his resume. He rounded his GPA up from 3.0 to a more respectable 3.5, listed his ACT composite score as 30 instead of the actual score of 24, and "enhanced" his student organization involvement. James reasoned these "minor" changes really didn't matter as he would show his supervisors at Digital Solutions who he was really was and what he was capable of through both the quality and quantity of the work he would do once he was hired as a summer intern. Who and/or what may be impacted by James' decisions to "tweak" his resume? Are there any laws and/or company policies (written or unwritten) that may apply? What actions may be taken by Digital Solutions if they discover James' misrepresentation? What do you recommend be done to prevent this situation from reoccurring or to minimize the severity of the consequences?
21. Dan, a Marketing Analyst for Digital Solutions, has been unhappy for the past year, feeling that advancement opportunities are either very limited or completely unavailable in his current position. Last month, he made the decision to actively pursue other job opportunities with room for advancement and professional growth. Dan has chosen to keep this job search a secret from his current employer and has continued to perform well in his current position. In recognition of Dan's outstanding job performance and, in private consideration of him as a future Assistant Manager of the Marketing Department, his supervisor signs him up for an out-of-town management training seminar that starts in two days at a substantial financial cost to the company. The registration cost of the seminar is non-refundable; however, the change deadline for the plane tickets and hotel arrangements has not yet occurred and, theoretically, could be changed to another employee, should one be available to attend. Although a formal offer has not yet been extended to Dan by other employers, he did complete a second, very strong, interview today and feels confident that he will be offered the position within the week. What company ethics policies are involved in this scenario? Is it ethical for employers to treat employees differently if they know they are pursuing other jobs? Is it ethical for employees to pursue other jobs without informing their current employer? What decision(s) would you make if you were Dan and why?
22. After taking an extended year-long maternity leave, Terri has returned to her job as the Accountant at Digital Solutions, a small, family-owned and operated retail technology chain. As she reviews the financial records for the period she was on leave, she notices various irregularities which suggest that the company has been reporting less income than they actually made. Terri approaches the company owner, Brad, who admits to altering the financial records as a result of unexpected family medical bills. Although Brad assures Terri that this situation will not happen again now that she is back and monitoring the records, he also states that the company is not financially able to pay any penalties or back taxes. If the true earned revenue is reported to the appropriate tax authorities, Digital Solutions may have to reduce staff and possibly close its doors for good. If she does not report the fraudulent activity, she could possibly lose her license. What company ethics policies should Terri consider before making her decision? How will the company be impacted based on her decision? What procedures should be implemented to reduce the potential for fraud in the future? Is having an ethical conflict with the company and/or the owner's fraudulent activities a sign Terri should leave the company?
23. You were Raj's supervisor in the marketing department of Statement Insurance until about five years ago. You were aware that Raj enjoyed going to the track and visiting casinos, and you began to be concerned that Raj's gambling was becoming excessive. Knowing that his performance was suffering because of frequent absences (all due to extended gambling trips), Raj left his position at Statement Insurance before he was disciplined, and the two of you have

remained friendly. Both you and Raj have since taken jobs at other companies, and Raj is out interviewing again, this time for a job at Regency Mutual. Your neighbor is the interviewing manager at Regency Mutual and learns that you and Raj worked together at Statement Insurance. Your neighbor has asked you, off the record, if you would recommend Raj for the open position. You are concerned when you learn that the position has financial and fiduciary responsibilities, for you know that Raj continues to gamble and sometimes gets in over his head. What responsibilities/loyalty do you have to Raj? Does the nature of your friendship affect your response? What responsibilities/loyalty do you have to your neighbor? Does the nature of your relationship affect your response? What are some options for responding to Raj and your neighbor?

24. You are working for PBA Health Clinic. Your responsibilities are to file, run clinic errands, create and process correspondence, and order supplies for the office and clinic. You initiate all of the orders to the appropriate vendor when the nurses or office manager inform you that they are running low on supplies. However, there is one vendor that calls you regularly to see if you need gloves or syringes. When supplies were low, you would have this vendor fill the order. One day, you received a package from this company. Inside were an underwater camera and a note thanking you for the business. A few weeks later the vendor called to get approval to ship more supplies. You declined and informed the vendor that supplies were not low. The salesperson became annoyed and reminded you that he was under a contract and would face a penalty if the supplies were not shipped and paid for within a specified time period. You knew nothing of a contract and assumed that it was set up before you started working there. The salesperson told you that after payment was received, he would send you a stereo to thank you for the continued business. How do you handle the gifts being delivered to the office? How do you address this issue with your supervisor? How do you deal with the vendor? Does your length of employment with the clinic affect how you handle this issue?
25. You have been hired as the new payroll clerk because the current director moved to the Human Resource Department. Needing some assistance from the previous payroll clerk, you send an email requesting the previous documents that were utilized. The response was "they are in the file". You sent a second email for clarification and received no response. A week later you needed assistance again regarding documents that your supervisor had requested. Again, the response from the previous payroll clerk was "it's in the file" with no instruction of where this file is or attached documents. On casual business Friday, with the clarification from your supervisor of what was acceptable attire, your attire was very similar to everyone in the payroll department. As your department goes to lunch, you encounter the previous payroll clerk who stares you up and down and comments "dressed awfully casual today". Since the second email did not receive a reply, what direction should you go to obtain that information? Is there some correlation between and personal and business ethics? What course of action should you take if your colleagues remain silent?