

The Code of Ethics (Professional Charter) for the Council of Public Relations Firms Hong Kong (CPRFHK)

(September, 2002)

1 A member firm shall:

- 1.1 Have a positive duty to observe the highest standards in the practice of public relations. Furthermore a member has the responsibility at all times to deal fairly and honestly with clients, past and present, fellow members and professionals, the public relations profession, other professions, suppliers, intermediaries, the government, political parties or people in the public service, the media of communication, employees, and above all else the public.
- 1.2 Be expected to be aware of, understand and observe this code, any amendment to it, and any other codes which shall be incorporated into this code, and to remain up-to-date with the content and recommendations of any guidelines issued by the CPRFHK, and shall have a duty to conform to good practice as expressed in such guidelines.
- 1.3 Uphold this code and co-operate with fellow members in so doing by enforcing decisions on any matter arising from its application. A member firm that knowingly causes or permits a member of its staff to act in a manner inconsistent with this code is party to such action and shall itself be deemed to be in breach of it. Any member of staff of a member company who acts in a manner inconsistent with this code must be disciplined by the employer.

A member firm shall not:

- 1.4 Engage in any practice nor be seen to conduct itself in any manner detrimental to the reputation of the Council or the reputation and interests of the public relations profession.

2 **Conduct towards the public, the media and other professionals**

A member firm shall:

- 2.1 Conduct its professional activities with proper regard to the public interest.
- 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 to use proper care to avoid doing so inadvertently.
- 2.3 Have a duty to ensure that the actual interest of any organization with which it may be professionally concerned is adequately declared.
- 2.4 When working in association with other professionals, identify and respect the codes of these professions and shall not knowingly be party to any breach of such codes.
- 2.5 Shall not offer, or assist a client to offer, monetary or related benefits to members of the media in return of editorial favor or as an attempt to influence editorial independence.
- 2.6 Honor confidences received or given in the course of professional activity.
- 2.7 Neither propose nor undertake any action that would constitute an improper influence on organs of government, or on legislation, or on the media of communication.
- 2.8 Neither offer nor give, nor cause a client to offer or give, any inducement to persons holding public office or members of any statutory body or organization who are not directors, executives or retained consultants, with intent to further the interests of the client if such action is inconsistent with the public interest.

3 **Conduct towards clients**

A member firm shall:

- 3.1 Safeguard the confidences of both present and former clients and shall not disclose or use these confidences, to the disadvantage or prejudice of such clients or to the financial advantage of the member firm, unless the client has released such information for public use, or has given specific permission for its disclosure; except upon the order of a court of law.
- 3.2 Inform a client of any shareholding or financial interest held by that firm or any member of that firm in any company, firm or person whose services it recommends.
- 3.3 Be free to accept fees, commissions or other valuable considerations from persons other than a client, only provided such considerations are disclosed to the client.
- 3.4 Be free to oblige a prospective or current client to respect the intellectual property rights of any original idea, creative design or strategic recommendation that it proposes
- 3.5 Be free to negotiate with a client terms that take into account factors other than hours worked and seniority of staff 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 specialized skills and the seniority levels of staff engaged, the time

spent 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 assignment is carried out in whole or in part.
- (e) The scope, scale and value of the task, and its importance as an issue or project to the client.

3.6 Be entitled to timely compensation for professional service rendered for a client and request reasonable interest surcharge for overdue payment.

A member firm shall not:

- 3.6 Misuse information regarding its client's business for financial or other gain.
- 3.7 Use inside information for gain. Nor may a consultancy, its members or staff directly invest in their clients' securities without the prior written permission of the client and of the member's chief executive or chief financial officer or compliance officer.
- 3.8 Serve a client under terms or conditions which might impair its independence, objectivity or integrity.
- 3.9 Represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of the clients concerned
- 3.10 Guarantee the achievement of results which are beyond the member's direct capacity to achieve or prevent.
- 3.11 Invite any employee of a client advised by the member to consider alternative employment; (an advertisement in the press is not considered to be an invitation to any particular person).

4 ***Conduct towards colleagues***

A member firm 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.
- 4.2 Be free to represent its capabilities and services to any potential client, either on its own initiative or at the behest of the client, provided in so doing it does not seek to break any existing contract or detract from the reputation or capabilities of any member consultancy already serving that client.

A member firm shall not:

- 4.3 Injure the professional reputation or practice of another member.

5 ***Discriminatory conduct***

A member is required to take all reasonable care that professional duties are conducted without causing offence on the grounds of gender, race, religion, disability or any other form of discrimination or unacceptable reference.