

# Public Relations - what is it

Specialties · By Simon Townsend · 3 min read

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You ask where do you start. Well, you always start by ASKING. Use the Yellow Pages and find an organisation, university or business connected to your topic. Ask for the PR (public relations) person. As a journalist you must make good use of PR people. A PR person can make the life of a journalist a little easier. PR people have names, phone numbers and other valuable information at their finger tips. You might ask: "I need to get some information and a few opinions from an expert on spaghetti making in the 1800s." The PR person might say: "Look, I'll email you information now, but you want Tony Torellini. He's on 0417 777 666." And 30 seconds later you're talking to him. Five minutes later you're typing the PR's information and your expert's quotes into your computer. THAT's how fast and easy it can be. Always ring back and thank them. So few journos ever thank PR people, it comes as a pleasant surprise, and they remember you next time you ask for help. Accept help from PR people because they're there to assist journalists. A lot of journalists resent getting help from PRs, considering them as spin doctors who have sold-out on the truth seeking of journalism. I don't agree. I find most PRs to be ethical and honest. This is their ethics code:

## Public Relations Institute of Australia

### Code of Ethics

The Public Relations Institute of Australia is a professional body serving the interests of its members. In doing so, the Institute is mindful of the responsibility which public relations professionals owe to the community as well as to their clients and employers. The Institute requires members to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence. All members are duty-bound to act responsibly and to be accountable for their actions.

The following Code of Ethics binds all members of the Public Relations Institute of Australia.

1. Members shall deal fairly and honestly with their employers, clients and prospective clients, with their fellow workers including superiors and subordinates, with public officials, the communications media, the general public and with fellow members of PRIA.
2. Members shall avoid conduct or practices likely to bring discredit upon themselves, the Institute, their employers or clients.
3. Members shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information and shall take care to avoid doing so inadvertently
4. Members shall safeguard the confidences of both present and former employers and clients, including confidential information about employers' or clients' business affairs, technical methods or processes, except upon the order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

5. No member shall represent conflicting interests nor, without the consent of the parties concerned, represent competing interests.
6. Members shall refrain from proposing or agreeing that their consultancy fees or other remuneration be contingent entirely on the achievement of specified results.
7. Members shall inform their employers or clients if circumstances arise in which their judgment or the disinterested character of their services may be questioned by reason of personal relationships or business or financial interests.
8. Members practising as consultants shall seek payment only for services specifically commissioned.
9. Members shall be prepared to identify the source of funding of any public communication they initiate or for which they act as a conduit.
10. Members shall, in advertising and marketing their skills and services and in soliciting professional assignments, avoid false, misleading or exaggerated claims and shall refrain from comment or action that may injure the professional reputation, practice or services of a fellow member.
11. Members shall inform the Board of the Institute and/or the relevant State/Territory Council(s) of the Institute of evidence purporting to show that a member has been guilty of, or could be charged with, conduct constituting a breach of this Code.
12. No member shall intentionally injure the professional reputation or practice of another member.
13. Members shall help to improve the general body of knowledge of the profession by exchanging information and experience with fellow members.
14. Members shall act in accord with the aims of the Institute, its regulations and policies.
15. Members shall not misrepresent their status through misuse of title, grading, or the designation FPRIA, MPRIA or APRIA.

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