



Dishonest practice

Case Study #2

PR Counseling Company – Situation Report

- Advising one company who is competing for approval of a mine
- Provides media with a tip regarding competitors alleged underhanded tactics to win new mine approval
- Tactics include payoff of public officials
- Tip results in front page story burning competitor and client
- What do you do?

1. Define specific ethical issue

- Is it ethical for disgruntled competitor to tell media what the winning firm has proposed?
- Is it appropriate to share this information with a reporter?
- Or, should you report it to the proper authorities?

2. Identify internal/external factors that may influence decision making process

- Would the new mine benefit or harm the public?
- Are the proposed tactics legal?
- Are the proposed tactics part of the firm' program?
- Are local officials suspected of having a less than perfect reputation?
- Does the competitor know if company will use the recommended tactics?
- How did the competitor discover this information? Was it improperly obtained?

3. Identify key values

- Fairness
- Honesty
- Advocacy

4. Identify affected parties

- Competitor and employees
- Elected officials
- Media
- Citizens
- Losing firm and employees

5. Select ethical principles

- Promote and respect healthy and fair competition among professionals
- Protect and advancing the flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest

6. Make a decision

- Ethical obligation should be based on facts only
- If the facts are unsubstantiated then the “tip” is unethical
- If the fact are substantiated, the losing firm has an ethical obligation to make illegal actions known to the public