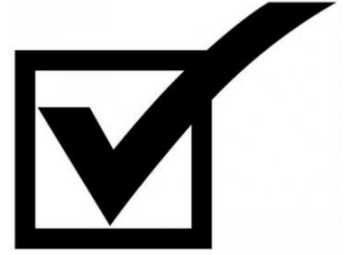


BUSINESS
PROFESSIONALS
of AMERICA
Giving Purpose to Potential



ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM

(540)

REGIONAL 2026

FINAL
Judge Key

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

DESCRIPTION

Explore the application of ethical frameworks to various aspects used in business today.

REGIONAL FINAL SCENARIO

Talia recently joined Digital Solutions as a graphic design assistant. She is ambitious, confident, and highly active on social media. Known for her trendy fashion sense and bold personality, Talia sees herself as a future creative director and believes that being "authentically herself" is what sets her apart.

Digital Solutions hosts a quarterly partner strategy session where external clients and company leadership will attend in-person and online. This session is scheduled for 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at a local event venue often used for business meetings after work hours. Talia is assigned to assist with hospitality, take meeting notes, and prepare materials. She arrives 20 minutes late because she wanted to change into comfortable, after-work attire. She shows up wearing a graphic hoodie, leggings, and sneakers, which she often wears in her social media posts. When a senior client glances at her attire during introductions, Talia responds casually, "Don't worry, I work better in comfort and we're not in the office."

After the meeting, Talia posts a selfie photo from the conference room on her Instagram story with the caption: "*Corporate Comfy Life.*" Her manager sees the post and expresses concern about the tone and image it projects. Talia doesn't understand why people are making such a big deal, especially since she completed her tasks without issue, it was after work hours, and outside of the office.

Talia now faces a decision: Should she maintain her personal brand in the workplace and risk being seen as unprofessional, or reflect on the feedback and consider how her image, punctuality, and communication style affect her credibility and the company's reputation?

What should Talia do to strike a balance between authenticity and professionalism, and what expectations should Digital Solutions have for workplace conduct after hours and at offsite events?

EVENT GUIDELINES

1. Prep Room Details

- As a team of judges, create two to three questions to ask at the end of each presentation. *Make sure to ask the same questions to every team.*
- The contestants will be given an ethics and/or professionalism scenario. Please refer to the *Ethics and Professionalism Resources Manual* as a guide for judging this event.
- The contestants will be provided twenty (20) minutes to develop the topic. Notes will be made on the three (3) note cards provided by the event proctor. No advisor contact will be allowed between the time of receiving the topic and the delivery.
- Only the three (3) note cards from the preparation room can be used in the presentation. *Ethics and Professionalism Resources Manual* may not be used during the presentation.

2. Presentation Details

- Contestants will be introduced by Contestant ID. **Contestants may continue to wear their name badges.**
- Contestants will present before a panel of judges and timekeeper.
- The length of the event will be no less than five (5) minutes and no more than seven (7) minutes.
- The contestant will be given warnings via flash cards when there are two (2) minutes remaining and when there is one (1) minute remaining during the speaking time.
- The speech will be stopped at seven (7) minutes.

3. Judge Details

- Contestants should be dismissed after the judges' questions are finished.
- **There can be no ties between the top ten (10) contestants.** It is the responsibility of the judges to break any ties.
- The administrator will fill out the ranking sheet prior to dismissing the judges.
- If more than one (1) section is necessary, finalists will be determined by selecting an equal number from each section.
- Give the administrator all Judges' Rating Sheets, Judge Evaluation Sheets, and contest materials.
- No audience is allowed in the contest room.

SOLUTION

Answers will vary, but may include the following from the *Ethics and Professionalism Resources Manual*:

- **Professional Dress:** Appropriate dress and grooming are foundational to how professionals are perceived. While Talia's attire may reflect her personal brand, it is inappropriate for a high-profile business meeting. The manual emphasizes that dressing professionally creates a consistent and positive impression and is part of respecting colleagues, clients, and the company.
- **Punctuality:** Arriving 20 minutes late at a client-facing meeting disrespects her team and company. Being "fashionably late" is never acceptable in a professional setting and can negatively affect how clients view Digital Solutions.
- **Professional Communication Skills:** Even non-verbal communication, such as social media posts, affects how others perceive professionalism. Talia's casual tone and public commentary on a company event may undermine client confidence and could be seen as flippant or dismissive of corporate culture.
- **Conversations & Tone:** How Talia responds to client cues and manager feedback matters. Brushing off concerns or joking about workplace expectations sends a message that she may lack self-awareness or respect for professional norms.
- **Correspondence & Digital Presence:** The manual encourages professionalism in all forms of communication, including social media. Talia's post, although informal and off-the-clock, reflects publicly on her employer and could affect Digital Solutions' brand image.

- **Respect for Others:** Respect is a central tenet of professionalism. That includes showing up on time, dressing appropriately for the occasion, and engaging in a manner that considers how others, especially clients, may perceive her actions.
- **Personal Responsibility:** Professionals take responsibility for how they present themselves and how their behavior affects others. Talia must learn that professionalism is not about suppressing identity but about aligning behavior with workplace expectations and company values.
- **Professionalism Reflects on the Company:** The manual emphasizes that an individual's professionalism doesn't just impact personal success, it affects the company's reputation. Talia represents the company during all client interactions, whether she's leading a project or providing support.

POTENTIAL JUDGE QUESTIONS

1. What might clients think when they see Talia in a hoodie and leggings at a business event?
2. Why is it important to follow company rules about dress and behavior at offsite events?
3. How could Talia share her personal style on social media without upsetting her manager?
4. What advice would you give Digital Solutions to help employees know what's OK to wear and post?

FINAL STEPS

Double-check and verify all scores.