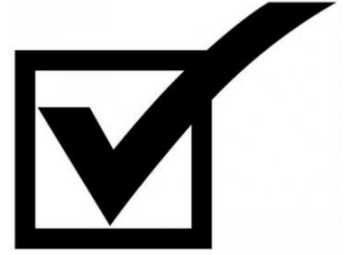


BUSINESS  
PROFESSIONALS  
of AMERICA  
Giving Purpose to Potential



# **ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM**

**(540)**

**REGIONAL 2026**

**PRELIMINARY**

**Judge Key**

**Preparation Time: 20 minutes**

## DESCRIPTION

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

## REGIONAL PRELIMINARY SCENARIO

Marcus is a software engineer at Digital Solutions and recently started working on a confidential technology integration project for a high-profile client. Because of the sensitive nature of the project, all team members signed a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and were explicitly instructed to avoid discussing any project details outside of designated internal channels.

One evening, Marcus meets with former college classmates for dinner. During casual conversation, he mentions how exciting his new project is, vaguely describing some of the new systems being developed and the companies involved, without using official names. His intent is to impress his peers and demonstrate that he's doing impactful work.

The next day, Marcus receives a message from one of his dinner guests: her boyfriend works for a competing tech firm and is "really curious" about the integration project Marcus mentioned. She asks if he can provide more details, promising to keep it between them. Marcus is flattered by the attention and tempted to share a little more. After all, he thinks, he didn't say anything *technically* confidential the first time, and this would just be a "friendly follow-up."

Marcus now must decide: Should he report the initial conversation to his manager, say nothing and ignore the follow-up request, or risk sharing more to build influence with his peers?

Should Marcus disclose his actions to management and reaffirm the boundaries of the NDA, or attempt to manage the situation quietly without drawing attention? What are the professional and ethical expectations moving forward?

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## 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*:

- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is critical in many professional engagements. Marcus signed a non-disclosure agreement and was instructed not to discuss the project. Even casual comments outside of work can violate trust and lead to liability.
- **Professional Communication Skills:** Effective communication includes knowing when to speak and when to stay silent. Marcus failed to exercise discretion and blurred the line between personal conversation and professional obligation.
- **Trustworthiness:** Good business practice requires trust. Sharing even vague or indirect information about confidential projects could damage Marcus's reputation as a reliable and discreet employee.
- **Dependability:** Dependability means being someone others can count on to follow through with commitments, including legal agreements like NDAs. Failing to report the incident or continuing the conversation would show a lack of accountability.
- **Integrity:** Integrity involves doing the right thing, even when it's inconvenient or when no one is watching. Reporting his slip-up to a supervisor and recommitting to confidentiality is the ethical course of action.
- **Personal Ethics:** A person's ethics in their personal life will affect how they conduct business. Marcus's decision to use confidential project details to impress friends reflects poor ethical judgment.
- **Internal + External Consistency:** Ethical behavior should be consistent inside and outside the workplace. Professionals should "practice what they preach" by protecting company interests at all times.
- **Leadership:** Even though Marcus is not in a management role, ethical leadership can be demonstrated at any level. Owning up to his mistake and protecting the company sets a positive example.

### **POTENTIAL JUDGE QUESTIONS**

1. What might happen if Marcus talks about the project outside the team?
2. How could sharing project details hurt the client or the company?
3. What steps can the team take to keep project information safe?
4. Why is it important for Marcus to keep the project secret, even under pressure?

### **FINAL STEPS**

Double-check and verify all scores.