

## **PRSA Professional Standards Advisory Takes Stand Against Expropriation of Intellectual Property in Business Pitches**

NEW YORK (Feb. 11, 2010) – The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) today issued a Professional Standards Advisory (PSA) that cautions against expropriating intellectual property in new business pitches — a practice in conflict with the PRSA Code of Ethics. PRSA issued a formal advisement to public relations professionals that this business practice is unethical, and encouraged practitioners to weigh closely the ethical implications of requiring speculative ideas from agencies during new business presentations.

“Presenting proposed or speculative ideas is often helpful to distinguish one agency’s capabilities and creativity from another, but too often, agencies who don’t win the business believe their ideas are finding their way into a company’s public relations program without fair compensation,” said Gary McCormick, APR, PRSA chair & CEO. “Appropriation of ideas, whether intentional or not, violates code principles.”

In the PSA, PRSA advises those issuing a request for proposals (RFP), as well as those responding to one, that failure to protect intellectual property rights violates code provisions. Among those provisions are promoting healthy and fair competition among professionals, serving the public interest by preserving and protecting intellectual property rights in the marketplace, and avoiding deceptive practices.

To sustain ethical practice, the PSA presents ways for professionals to provide for intellectual property protection. For professionals on the client side, the advisory recommends that they “clearly state that any ideas presented for consideration remain at all times the sole property of the agency or consultant.” For those who are presenting pursuant to an RFP, they should “notify the prospective client in writing and verbally that [their] ideas are protected and may only be used after suitable and equitable arrangements have been agreed upon in writing and in advance.” Moreover, the advisory offers sample language that can be appended to each page of the RFP to make plain that the contents are proprietary and the exclusive property of the presenters. Additionally, the advisory suggests a notification procedure to be used when similar or identical concepts and ideas are proposed by different responders.

The advisory, which takes effect immediately, was developed by the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professionals Standards (BEPS), an independent body that created and maintains the PRSA Code of Ethics. BEPS periodically issues Professional Standards Advisories to address current issues and challenges, applying the code to specific practice situations.

### **About the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)**

With more than 31,000 members, PRSA is the largest organization of public relations professionals and students. PRSA is comprised of 110 local Chapters organized into 10 geographic Districts; 16 Professional Interest Sections that focus on issues, trends and research relevant to specialized practice areas, such as technology, health care, financial communication, entertainment and sports, and travel tourism; and the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), which has more than 300 Chapters at colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. PRSA is headquartered in New York.