



## Ethics and Legal Considerations For Internal Co-Active Coaches

### Internal Coaching Ethics & Legal Considerations

#### Ethics: Overview

##### Objectives

*In a recent coaching conversation with one of your organizational clients you learn that a senior leader is engaging in stock trading activity that is illegal and may put the company at risk. Although you have an agreement to maintain confidentiality with your client, you know that an investigation is needed. How should you proceed?*

*You have been providing coaching services to several managers of the Marketing department. Your boss, the Senior Vice President of Human Resources has asked you to provide an assessment of the future leadership potential of all Marketing Department Managers, including your clients, for the purposes of making decisions about an imminent down-sizing. How should you respond?*

These are two examples of the types of situations that an internal coach may infrequently encounter that pose ethical dilemmas and choices. The boundaries of what constitutes ethical behavior for internal coaches may be complex, and it is important for internal coaches to recognize them and be able to apply sound criteria to their decision-making. While discussion of the ethical issues that could potentially arise in an internal coaching engagement could erroneously create a sense that coaching is risky business, keep in mind that awareness of ethical responsibilities helps ensure that the coaching relationship will be as strong as possible, and that the interests of both the individual employee and organization are protected.

The intent of this material is to familiarize you with ethical issues to pay attention to as an internal coach. The objectives of this material are to:

- Raise awareness of ethical or legal considerations that you may confront as an internal coach.
- Introduce decision-making processes to assist you in thinking through ethical dilemmas.
- Provide an overview of several types of situations that could be encountered by internal coaches.

It is *not* the objective of this material to provide comprehensive answers to specific ethical or legal questions that you may encounter, but rather to support you in how you approach making ethical judgments while standing firmly in the cornerstones of Co-Active Coaching. It is important to become familiar with the specific ethical and legal codes that guide behavior in your organization, State and Country, and profession in addition to the coaching profession.

##### Background of Ethics

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines code as “a system of principles or rules,” and ethics as “the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group.” With that in mind we can say that a Code of Ethics (or Code of Conduct) is a system of principles or rules that govern the conduct of an individual or a group.

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A code of ethics serves as a central guide to support day-to-day decision making at work. It clarifies the cornerstones of an organization — its mission, values and principles — helping organizational members understand how these cornerstones translate into everyday decisions, behaviors and actions. While some may believe codes are designed to limit one's actions, the best codes are actually structured to liberate and empower people to make more effective decisions with greater confidence.

An effective code has many uses, two of which stand out. A code should (1) clarify gray areas or questions organizational members have concerning organizational values and expectations and (2) help build trust and commitment.

In addition, a code is intended to:

- Increase awareness of ethical expectations
- Encourage communication about ethical issues
- Build consensus around vital issues
- Support ethical decision-making
- Prevent misconduct and provide a basis of enforcement

The first known example of a profession-generated code of ethics is the Hippocratic Oath (dating back to around 400 BC), still widely used and quoted in the medical profession. It was established to embody obligations of physicians to their patients. The oath includes what treatments might benefit or harm patients, matters of competence and confidentiality, sexual involvement with patients, and respecting laws in general. Today, as with the Hippocratic Oath, profession-generated codes of ethics originate out of an organization's or profession's recognition that it has special obligations to the employees, members, and public based on the services they provide.

In the early 1990's, the International Coach Federation (ICF) created standards of practice, credentialing, and ethical guidelines (See Attachment A: ICF Code of Ethics) for the coaching profession. Most, if not all, professional organizations create similar structures to ensure its members comply with a standard of conduct suitable to the profession. In business organizations, a Code of Ethics is often outlined in an employee handbook of standard practices available to employees at the time of hire.

#### *Ethics and the Internal Co-Active Coach*

The ethical landscape for internal coaches becomes complex because the internal coach wears multiple hats. In addition to being a corporate employee, she may also be a representative of an organization such as Human Resources or Learning & Development, may be an organizational manager or supervisor, or work in an industry governed by other State or Federal regulations (for example, the SEC for the finance industry). In addition to being guided by ethical principles that guide the coaching profession, the internal coach is also guided by corporate values and policy, employment law, and the ethical guidelines for areas such as human resources.

You'll find that the cornerstones of Co-Active Coaching provide a solid place to stand when making choices in what seems like a complex ethical dilemma. Holding the highest agenda for the individual client AND the organization as a whole, "dancing in the moment" with what is needed in a given moment, interacting from the stance that the client and organization are "naturally creative resourceful and whole" support making sound ethical choices.

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## Ethical Decision-Making

This section provides an overview of key elements of ethical decision-making, criteria that help identify and think through ethical questions, and a general decision-making model.

### *Elements of Ethical Decision-Making*

In their book *Law & Ethics in Coaching*, Patrick Williams and Sharon Anderson (2006) describe four major elements to thinking through and making sound ethical decisions. These are:

1. Sensitivity to ethical issues — ability to recognize that an ethical issue exists; and, the ability to recognize and identify the ethical and non-ethical components of an issue. As an internal coach, this addresses the question: “How do I know when the situation has ethical or legal implications?”
2. Sound decision-making process — ability to navigate through an issue; think it through, and assess and apply alternatives. As an internal coach, this address the question: “How do I think through the issues to arrive at a good decision?”
3. Applying specific criteria or “filters” for the sake of identifying ethical components, alternatives and the best solution/decision. As an internal coaching, this addresses the question: What information should inform my decision-making?”
4. Implementing choices and evaluating effectiveness — ability to execute choice, and assess results. As an internal coach, this addresses the question: “How to I act on decisions and then assess the results?”

The following section presents a set of criteria or “filters” that can be applied to decision-making, followed by a general decision-making process that incorporates these filters.

### *Criteria and Six-Step Decision-Making Model*

Substantive guidance is needed that helps you to recognize that an ethical issue exists, informs what courses of action may or may not be appropriate and what the consequences of different choices may be. The Ethics Resource Center ([www.ethics.org](http://www.ethics.org)) has devised a set of filters with the acronym of “PLUS” as a way to remember them (Policies-Legal-Universal-Self = PLUS). These are described below.

*P= Policies.* Is this alternative consistent with the relevant policies, procedures and guidelines? For internal coaches, relevant policies may come from the organization, the department (e.g. Marketing), the profession or industry (e.g. Human Resources or Financial Services) or the coaching profession (e.g. ICF Code of Ethics).

*L= Legal.* How does this alternative conform to the labor or industry laws and regulations? What and where are the legal violations? What’s the legal risk associated with this alternative? Where is the organization at risk or liable? Does proper evaluation of the issue require advice from legal counsel? As an internal coach, this means incorporating relevant laws or regulations into your decision-making.

*U= Universal.* Does this alternative conform to the organization’s operating principles and values? Organizational values and operating principles include things like open communication or an open-door policy, treating others with respect, integrity, formal and informal communication policies and practices, performance guidelines, and so forth. As a coach, it is being guided by the values that characterize the organization of which you’re a part.

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*S= Self.* Does it satisfy your own personal definition of right, good and fair? For internal coaches, it is the inclusion of your own moral compass in making decisions.

These criteria inform the 6-step decision-making model recommended by the Ethics Resource Center.

*Step 1:*

- Define the problem — describe why a decision is called for and identify desired outcome(s).
- Apply PLUS criteria to identify and surface ethical issue.
- Does the existing situation violate any of the PLUS considerations?

*Step 2:*

- Identify alternative solutions to the problem — identify as many alternatives as possible.

*Step 3:*

- Evaluate the identified alternatives — look at the positive and negative impact of each alternative. Differentiate between what is fact and what is believed to be true. Determine the impact of each alternative and how probable the impact will be realized. The more fact-based the evaluation the more confident the decision maker can be that the expected outcome will occur.
- Apply PLUS criteria to assess ethical impact.
- Does the alternative resolve the PLUS violations?

*Step 4:*

- Make the decision — natural next step after identifying the best alternative.

*Step 5:*

- Implement the decision — take action to implement best alternative.

*Step 6:*

- Evaluate the decision — assess the impact of the implementation process: Is the problem fixed? Did it go away? What new problems did the solution create, if any?
- Apply PLUS to surface any remaining or new ethical issues.
- Does the decision resolve the earlier PLUS considerations?

### **Issues for Ethical Consideration**

This section outlines several types of situations that can present internal coaches with ethical considerations. They include:

- Competence
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Confidentiality and Privilege
- Dual Relationships

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- Use of Assessments
- Conflict of Interest
- Designing the Alliance

### *Competence*

Part of being an internal Co-Active Coach and an ethical agent in the coaching profession is being competent and forthright in one's process and progress. A competent professional coach has a distinct skill set as defined by the ICF (See Appendix A: ICF Code of Ethics).

To build competence, internal coaches:

- Attend a coach training program
- Engage in a coach relationship as a client
- Practice what they learn
- Understand and accept principles of the coaching relationship
- Engage in continued professional development

Ethics and coaching competence are interrelated — coaching competence cannot exist without the understanding and use of coaching ethics, and coaching ethics cannot be clearly demonstrated without competence in coaching skills.

### *Confidentiality*

The creation of a relationship characterized by trust is central to the power of coaching, and is why the “designed alliance” is a prominent part of the Co-Active Coaching model. Confidentiality is crucial to creating and maintaining client trust. The client must be free to discuss whatever is necessary to his/her agenda. The freedom to reveal information that will not be shared with others allows the client to work diligently and steadily toward their goals without fear of repercussions.

There are, however, exceptions to what types of information can be kept strictly confidential by internal coaches. Exceptions include areas dictated by corporate policy, State or Federal employment law and so forth. The following are sample types of information that an internal coach may NOT be able to keep confidential:

- Information pertaining to discrimination or harassment of any protected classes of employees (for example, race, age, gender, disability).
- Evidence of hazardous or unsafe working conditions.
- Illegal activity that may put employees or the organization in some form of risk.

The example illustrated on page one of a leader engaged in illegal stock trades illustrates a scenario where an internal coach is obligated to inform others of the situation. To establish a solid relationship of trust, the boundaries of what can and cannot be kept confidential should be explored as part of creating a powerful designed alliance.

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### *“Confidentiality” versus “Privacy”*

A distinction exists between “confidentiality” and “privacy.” Confidentiality is entrusting another person (the coach) with information with the expectation that it will be held in confidence. Although maintaining client confidentiality is considered ethical no law mandates that information be held as confidential.

Privacy, on the other hand, is one’s legal right to be free from unwarranted public distribution of information. Although there is some overlap with coach-client confidentiality, the right to privacy is much more extensively law-bound than the agreement of confidentiality. Right to privacy is especially applicable to relationships such as doctor-patient, lawyer-client, principal-agent, trustee-beneficiary, parent-child and the like. These are relationships where one person, with specialized expertise, may owe a fiduciary duty to, or exercise a degree of good faith on behalf of another.

In some circumstances, violation of the client’s right to privacy may lead to legal liability. Examples of the types of information for which the client has a right to privacy include:

- Medical information — for example, the existence of a life-threatening illness.
- Personal data such as social security number — confidential financial information.

This distinction is relevant for internal coaches because, in addition to honoring agreements of confidentiality, the coach is legally-bound to ensure that certain information remain private.

### *“Confidentiality” and “Privilege”*

Another distinction in the internal coach-client relationship is that of confidentiality and “privilege.” In some professions (law and medicine, for example) information shared by the client may be considered “privileged” in which case the professional may have a legal obligation NOT to disclose that information. This type of privilege does NOT apply to the coaching profession, and although a coach may agree to hold client information confidential the coach could be legally required to disclose the information if mandated to do so in a court of law.

One way in which this impacts the coaching practice is in the consideration of the extent to which physical notes are to be kept or maintained from coaching conversations. There is no clear answer to this question — in some cases it may prove beneficial to have notes and in others it may be disadvantageous. It is important, though, for the coach to be aware that any notes that are kept may be called for to support an internal investigation, or “discoverable” in the event of a lawsuit or legal action. A good general guideline is to keep notes only as needed as a reminder of key topics, requests, or inquiries — and, to discard notes upon completion of the coaching engagement.

### *Coaching & Dual-Role Relationships*

Ethical considerations may emerge as a result of the multiple roles or relationships that the Internal coach holds. Dual relationships occur when a coach has an affiliation with the client in some role other than coach — the range of opportunities for dual relationships is unlimited. For example, in addition to acting as coach for a particular leader, the internal coach may also act in the role of organization development consultant for that same leader’s team. By virtue of being employed by the same organization, internal coaches always have some degree of dual-relationship with their clients.

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Given that dual-roles and multiple relationships are a product of the organizational setting, the challenge for the internal coach to set aside personal opinions, preferences, judgments, beliefs associated with their various roles and responsibilities is crucial to the coach-client relationship. The internal coach's ability to exercise the Co-Active Coaching context of self-management — to keep his own agenda, opinions, or judgments to the side — is especially important when dual relationships are present.

Dual or multiple relationships are not unethical, but it is important for the coach to recognize that they exist. Ethical violations can occur when an exploitative relationship between an internal coach and client is established in which the coach is tempted to take advantage of the client in some way, or to selfishly use the relationship for the coach's own end.

The important thing to remember about dual or multiple-relationships is that they can work and work well as long as they are well designed. Dual relationships inherent in an internal coach-client relationship underscores the importance of the “designing the alliance” part of the Co-Active Coaching model — clear agreements need to be established up front.

#### *Ethical Use of Assessments in Coaching*

While assessment tools can be a valuable source of information in the coach's toolbelt, they also bring ethical considerations. Three general guidelines for using assessment tools ethically include:

1. Internal Coaches must have the expertise required to administer or interpret specific assessment instruments. If they do not, they engage the expertise of one who does.
2. Internal Coaches should be aware of the risk of “labeling” clients based on assessment results. Many assessment instruments categorize or place individuals into “types” (e.g. Myers-Briggs, DISC, Insight Inventory). While this provides insight, it can also serve to limit the client if over-used.
3. Carefully plan who will have access to assessment results or with whom results will be shared. Sharing assessments and results is fine if, and only if, the client agrees to what is shared and how.

#### *Conflicts of Interest*

A conflict of interest is a situation in which the internal coach's personal interest:

- interferes with their duties and responsibilities to the client.
- may be inconsistent or incompatible with their obligation to exercise their best judgment in pursuit of the interests of the client.
- results in an improper personal benefit as a result of their dual roles and multiple relationships within the organization.

The appearance of a conflict of interest may be just as damaging to the coach as the existence of an actual conflict of interest.

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From the Co-Active Coaching model, the cornerstone of “holding the client’s agenda”, the “designed alliance,” and the context of “self-management” are particularly relevant in situations where conflicts of interest arise. A clearly designed alliance includes conversation about how coach and client will navigate any conflicts of interest that might arise. A key factor for the coach is her ability to recognize when a conflict of interest may be present, and to openly bring that issue into direct discussion with the client — this is an aspect of self-management. Keeping the interests of the client and organization in the forefront rather than personal self-interest guides the coach in this process.

#### *Coaching Agreements — Designing the Alliance*

In Co-Active Coaching, the agreement between coach and client takes the form of an intentionally designed alliance that nurtures a powerful relationship for the sake of the client’s growth and development. To create a relationship in which trust and learning can flourish, it is important to include discussion about how issues will be handled that touch on ethical or legal issues. In essence, it’s important for the coach to be sure that all the agreements that are made can, in fact, be kept, and to be explicit about what exceptions might exist.

Things to consider when creating coaching agreements:

- Coach and client’s policy regarding the recording/note taking of sessions to include the types of information to be recorded as well as how closed files will be maintained or destroyed (See the “Confidentiality” and “Privilege” section of this document).
- The exceptions or limitations to the coach’s ability to maintain confidentiality. The significant ones are those required by law such as a legal duty to report abuse, threats to self-harm or intentions to harm others; illegal activities inside or outside the organization; violations of state or federal fiduciary or labor laws and practices. (e.g. workplace harassment, discrimination against a protected group, illegal substances, misuse of organizational property, selling of proprietary information, plans or intentions to defraud, and so forth).
- What action the coach will take, in cooperation with the client, if the client divulges information that violates internal or external ethics codes, the law, or puts the company at risk of liability.
- A plan as to how the coach will respond to inquiries from others about whether a person is a client or how a client is doing.
- How assessments will be used and who will have access to the results.

Internal coach-client agreements are created autonomously, both parties agreeing to the terms and conditions. They are intentional, backed by the integrity of the coach, the internal coach program and the coaching profession, and critical in establishing the foundation for a strong, trustworthy coach-client relationship.

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## *Appendix A: ICF Code of Ethics*

Can be found at web site: [www.internationalcoachfederation.com](http://www.internationalcoachfederation.com)

### **Part One: The ICF Philosophy of Coaching**

The International Coach Federation adheres to a form of coaching that honors the client as the expert in his/her life and work and believes that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

### **Part Two: The ICF Definition of Coaching**

Professional coaching is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life.

In each meeting, the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future. ICF member coaches and ICF credentialed coaches recognize that results are a matter of the client's intentions, choices, and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of the coaching process.

### **Part Three: The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct**

#### *Professional Conduct At Large*

As a coach:

1. I will conduct myself in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession and I will refrain from engaging in conduct or making statements that may negatively impact the public's understanding or acceptance of coaching as a profession.
2. I will not knowingly make any public statements that are untrue or misleading, or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession.
3. I will respect different approaches to coaching. I will honor the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own.
4. I will be aware of any issue that may potentially lead to the misuse of my influence by recognizing that nature of coaching and the way in which it may affect the lives of others.

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5. I will at all times strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict, or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional relationships. Whenever the facts and circumstances necessitate, I will promptly seek professional assistance and determine the action to be taken, including whether it is appropriate to suspend or terminate my coaching relationship(s).
6. As a trainer or supervisor of current and potential coaches, I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics in all training and supervisory situations.
7. I will conduct and report research with competence, honesty, and within recognized scientific standards. My research will be carried out with the necessary approval or consent from those involved, and with an approach that will reasonably protect participants from any potential harm. All research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with the laws of the country in which the research is conducted.
8. I accurately create, maintain, store, and dispose of any records of work done in relation to the practice of coaching in a way that promotes confidentiality and complies with any applicable laws.
9. I will use ICF member contact information (email addresses, telephone number, etc.) only in the manner and to the extent authorized by the ICF.

*Professional Conduct with Clients*

10. I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact that I may have with my clients.
11. I will not become sexually involved with any of my clients.
12. I will construct clear agreements with my clients, and will honor all agreements made in the context of professional coaching relationships.
13. I will ensure that prior to or at the initial session, my coaching client understands the nature of coaching, the bounds of confidentiality, financial arrangements, and other terms of the coaching agreement.
14. I will accurately identify my qualifications, expertise, and experience as a coach.
15. I will not intentionally mislead or make false claims about what my client will receive from the coaching process or from me as a coach.
16. I will not give my clients or prospective clients information or advice I know or believe to be misleading.
17. I will not knowingly exploit any aspect of the coach-client relationship for my personal, professional, or monetary advantage or benefit.
18. I will respect the client's right to terminate coaching at any point during the process. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.
19. If I believe the client would be better served by another coach, or by another resource, I will encourage the client to make a change.
20. I will suggest that my clients seek the services of other professionals when deemed appropriate or necessary.

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21. I will take all reasonable steps to notify the appropriate authorities in the event a client discloses an intention to endanger self or others.

*Confidentiality/Privacy*

22. I will respect the confidentiality of my client's information, except as otherwise authorized by my client, or as required by law.
23. I will obtain agreement from my clients before releasing their names as clients or references, or any other client-identifying information.
24. I will obtain agreement from the person being coached before releasing information to another person compensating me.

*Conflicts of Interest*

25. I will seek to avoid conflicts between my interests and the interests of my clients.
26. Whenever any actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest arises, I will openly disclose it and fully discuss with my client how to deal with it in whatever way best serves my client.
27. I will disclose to my client all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may receive for referrals of that client.
28. I will only barter for services, goods, or other non-monetary remuneration when it will not impair the coaching relationship.

**Part Four: The ICF Pledge of Ethics**

As a professional coach, I acknowledge and agree to honor my ethical obligations to my coaching clients and colleagues and to the public at large. I pledge to comply with the ICF Code of Ethics, to treat people with dignity as independent and equal human being, and to model these standards with those whom I coach. If I breach this Pledge of Ethics or any part of the ICF Code of Ethics, I agree that the ICF in its sole discretion may hold me accountable for so doing. I further agree that my accountability to the ICF for any breach may include loss of my ICF membership and/or my ICF credentials.

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## *Appendix B: CTI's Suggested Rules of Correct and Honorable Conduct*

1. We hold the content of the relationship with our clients as confidential. Even the names of our clients are confidential unless the client give permission to mention to use his/her name.
2. We do not break the law for our clients, nor do we act as accomplices to a client's acts of violence or law breaking.
3. We do no enter into financial agreements with a client based on the client's results; e.g., the client will give the coach a 10% bonus based on the sales bonus they receive from their corporation. The coach does not expect or solicit any gifts or rewards from the client. Any gift from client to coach is unsolicited and completely at the client's discretion.
4. When we enter into agreements with corporations, we hold each individual we coach as a client, and we respect each client's right to confidentiality.
5. We do not work with clients who we cannot champion and see their growing edge.
6. We manage our own Saboteur in such a way that it does not deter or interfere with the client's progress. Further, we manage our own Saboteur so that we are fully able to hold the client's agenda, rather than our own agenda.
7. We treat our colleagues, competitors and the coaching profession with honor and respect.
8. We agree to hold the client's Big "A" Agenda and little "a" agenda so as to point the clients to Fulfillment, Balance, and Process as well as Forwarding the Action and Deepening the Learning.
9. We align with the belief that clients are naturally creative, resourceful and whole, capable of finding their own answers.

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## *Appendix C: SHRM Code of Ethical and Professional Standards in Human Resource Management*

### **Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) CODE PROVISIONS**

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#### **PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

##### *Core Principle*

As HR professionals, we are responsible for adding value to the organizations we serve and contributing to the ethical success of those organizations. We accept professional responsibility for our individual decisions and actions. We are also advocates for the profession by engaging in activities that enhance its credibility and value.

##### *Intent*

- To build respect, credibility and strategic importance for the HR profession within our organizations, the business community, and the communities in which we work.
- To assist the organizations we serve in achieving their objectives and goals.
- To inform and educate current and future practitioners, the organizations we serve, and the general public about principles and practices that help the profession.
- To positively influence workplace and recruitment practices.
- To encourage professional decision-making and responsibility.
- To encourage social responsibility.

##### *Guidelines*

- Adhere to the highest standards of ethical and professional behavior.
- Measure the effectiveness of HR in contributing to or achieving organizational goals.
- Comply with the law.
- Work consistent with the values of the profession.
- Strive to achieve the highest levels of service, performance and social responsibility.
- Advocate for the appropriate use and appreciation of human beings as employees.
- Advocate openly and within the established forums for debate in order to influence decision-making and results.

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## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### *Core Principle*

As professionals we must strive to meet the highest standards of competence and commit to strengthen our competencies on a continuous basis.

### *Intent*

- To expand our knowledge of human resource management to further our understanding of how our organizations function.
- To advance our understanding of how organizations work (“the business of the business”).

### *Guidelines*

- Pursue formal academic opportunities.
- Commit to continuous learning, skills development and application of new knowledge related to both human resource management and the organizations we serve.
- Contribute to the body of knowledge, the evolution of the profession and the growth of individuals through teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge.
- Pursue certification such as CCP, CEBS, PHR, SPHR, etc. where available, or comparable measures of competencies and knowledge.

## **ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

### *Core Principle*

HR professionals are expected to exhibit individual leadership as a role model for maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct.

### *Intent*

- To set the standard and be an example for others.
- To earn individual respect and increase our credibility with those we serve.

### *Guidelines*

- Be ethical; act ethically in every professional interaction.
- Question pending individual and group actions when necessary to ensure that decisions are ethical and are implemented in an ethical manner.
- Seek expert guidance if ever in doubt about the ethical propriety of a situation.
- Through teaching and mentoring, champion the development of others as ethical leaders in the profession and in organizations.

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## **FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE**

### *Core Principle*

As human resource professionals, we are ethically responsible for promoting and fostering fairness and justice for all employees and their organizations.

### *Intent*

To create and sustain an environment that encourages all individuals and the organization to reach their fullest potential in a positive and productive manner.

### *Guidelines*

- Respect the uniqueness and intrinsic worth of every individual.
- Treat people with dignity, respect and compassion to foster a trusting work environment free of harassment, intimidation, and unlawful discrimination.
- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills and new competencies.
- Assure an environment of inclusiveness and a commitment to diversity in the organizations we serve.
- Develop, administer and advocate policies and procedures that foster fair, consistent and equitable treatment for all.
- Regardless of personal interests, support decisions made by our organizations that are both ethical and legal.
- Act in a responsible manner and practice sound management in the country(ies) in which the organizations we serve operate.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

### *Core Principle*

As HR professionals, we must maintain a high level of trust with our stakeholders. We must protect the interests of our stakeholders as well as our professional integrity and should not engage in activities that create actual, apparent, or potential conflicts of interest.

### *Intent*

To avoid activities that are in conflict or may appear to be in conflict with any of the provisions of this Code of Ethical and Professional Standards in Human Resource Management or with one's responsibilities and duties as a member of the human resource profession and/or as an employee of any organization.

### *Guidelines*

- Adhere to and advocate the use of published policies on conflicts of interest within your organization.
- Refrain from using your position for personal, material or financial gain or the appearance of such.
- Refrain from giving or seeking preferential treatment in the human resources processes.
- Prioritize your obligations to identify conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof; when conflicts arise, disclose them to relevant stakeholders.



## USE OF INFORMATION

### *Core Principle*

HR professionals consider and protect the rights of individuals, especially in the acquisition and dissemination of information while ensuring truthful communications and facilitating informed decision-making.

### *Intent*

To build trust among all organization constituents by maximizing the open exchange of information, while eliminating anxieties about inappropriate and/or inaccurate acquisition and sharing of information

### *Guidelines*

- Acquire and disseminate information through ethical and responsible means.
- Ensure only appropriate information is used in decisions affecting the employment relationship.
- Investigate the accuracy and source of information before allowing it to be used in employment related decisions.
- Maintain current and accurate HR information.
- Safeguard restricted or confidential information.
- Take appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all communicated information about HR policies and practices.
- Take appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all communicated information used in HR-related training.

### *Resources*

Ethics Resource Center ([www.ethics.org](http://www.ethics.org)). The Ethics Resource Center (ERC) is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the study and promotion of ethical behavior in organizations worldwide. Their mission is to strengthen ethical leadership by providing leading-edge expertise through research, education, and partnerships.

Weiner, Karen Colby. *The Little Book of Ethics for Coaches: Ethics, Risk Management and Professional Issues*. Bloomington, Indiana. AuthorHouse. 2007.

Williams, Patrick; and Anderson, Sharon K. *Law and Ethics in Coaching: How to Solve and Avoid Difficult Problems in Your Practice*. Hoboken, New Jersey. John Wiley and Sons. 2006

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Code of Ethics.  
<http://www.shrm.org/ethics/code-of-ethics.asp>

ICF Code of Ethics: International Coach Federation [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org).