

## 4.6.13: Professional Integrity

### Learning Objectives

Discuss the importance of professional integrity in written communication/reports

Consider the earlier discussion on the CRAAP Test for evaluating sources:

1. Currency
2. Relevance
3. Authority
4. Accuracy
5. Purpose

The test and its authors argue that for a source to be useful, it must meet criteria laid out in the above categories. The same concept applies to material you author, and the materials you submit to others in your organization.

For decision-makers or colleagues to trust the reports you write, your professional integrity, and the manner or how you go about doing your work, must be above any concern.

Consider the following ethical violations in recent memory; all of which highlight the role of the individual's behavior:<sup>[1]</sup>The 10 Biggest Business Scandals of 2017

- Facebook's use of your personal data, and the role of Cambridge Analytica in the 2016 US Presidential election
- Wells Fargo's fake accounts, and over-charging of customers
- Apple's deliberately slowed down iPhones
- Melania Trump's speechwriter's use of Michelle Obama's speech

In viewing the above instances, and thinking on your own role in the development of reports and other information, we can consider the concept of professional integrity to orient our thinking and action. In each of the above cases, individuals, or groups of individuals, knowingly violated reasonable ethical standards and norms. These standards are either codified in law, as is the case around copyright and use of someone's personal data, or what we could consider a common sense standard.

A common sense standard is one about which we could quickly ask ourselves: "Would anyone question the manner in which I'm doing this work or activity?" If the answer is yes, your behavior needs to adjust. In the above cases, it is clear that this did not happen.

The University of St. Andrews describes Professional Integrity, and details the following concepts as central to the idea:<sup>[2]</sup>

- The researcher (or business report writer), operates at the highest levels of ethical responsibility. We should take this to mean that you will do everything you can to build reports, and use information in ways that no one would ever question your conduct. Proper citation and use of others' work, care to anonymize sources—especially anyone vulnerable, and safeguarding of data to ensure it is not tampered with, are all germane.
- Operate and conduct yourself within your skillset. This is an interesting concept that can be difficult to think through and maintain in one's action in a busy and competitive organization. St. Andrews' here is describing a sort of intellectual honesty around what you might be qualified or unqualified to do. Bottom line: if someone asks you to do something for which you are not qualified, consider ways to turn down the project, rescope the project, or get help with the areas or pieces that are outside your skillset.

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1. Shen, Lucinda. "The 10 Biggest Business Scandals of 2017," *Fortune*. 21 Dec 2017. Web. 18 June 2018.
  2. University of St. Andrews. "Professional Integrity." Web. 18 June 2018.
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