

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER

MAY 2017

TITLE OF PAPER : PUBLIC RELATIONS II

COURSE CODE : BA 519

TIME ALLOWED : THREE (3) HOURS

- INSTRUCTIONS :**
- (1) TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN THIS PAPER IS FIVE (5)**
 - (2) THE PAPER CONSISTS OF SECTIONS A AND B.**
 - (3) ANSWER THE QUESTION IN SECTION A WHICH IS COMPULSORY AND ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS IN SECTION B.**
 - (4) THE MARKS ALLOTTED FOR A QUESTION /PART OF A QUESTION ARE INDICATED AT THE END OF EACH QUESTION / PART OF QUESTION.**
 - (5) WHERE APPLICABLE, ALL WORKINGS / CALCULATIONS MUST BE CLEARLY SHOWN.**

THIS PAPER MUST NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR.

SECTION A: COMPULSORY

QUESTION 1 Read the case and answer the questions that follow

CASE: Doing the right thing at Fink, Inc.

It's been only one year since you graduated college and already you are assistant vice president in charge of public relations for the Catfish Division of Fink, Inc., the largest seafood purveyor in the world.

Your Catfish division is the primary income earner in the corporation. All is going swimmingly at Catfish, until your good friend in purchasing asks you to go to lunch with her. At lunch, she confides that she and another young woman in the purchasing department have been the target of offensive sexual gestures and remarks of one Catfish executive.

The executive, you learn, is none other than Catfish President Boris Swine. Swine, a Catfish veteran of 25 years, is the darling of the securities analysts and the press. His beaming face has appeared on the cover of every seafood trade journal. His magic touch in selling seafood has even named him the industry nickname, "the harpoon king"

Swine's unit continually surpasses profit projections, and his is the best - run subsidiary in the organization. He is the odds-on favorite to replace Fink, Inc. CEO Rhattan Fink, when the kindly founder, who built the company, retires in two years. Indeed, Swine is like a son to the elderly Mr. Fink.

You learn that the women three weeks ago voiced their complaints to Swine's executive assistant, and officious young Ph.D. named Seano Evil. They reminded the executive that Swine's behaviour was a violation of the Fink, Inc. "Code of Conduct," for which the company has received numerous awards.

"We have been demeaned and denigrated in the most obscene way" they told Evil. "If the company doesn't take action, we'll be forced to."

Evil, you are told, promised to get back to your friend and the other woman but, as yet, has failed to do so.

A VISIT TO DR. EVIL

You pay a call on Seano Evil, who says he has "looked into the accusations" and found that the women's complaints are just "smoke." He explained, in picturesque fashion, how the two women are "merely frustrated ladies."

He explained to you that the "most important value" at Fink, Inc. "loyalty." He points out that the staff members who show themselves to be "disloyal" are eventually shown the door. "The most loyal employee this place has is Boris Swine," he tells you. "You don't mess with Boris if you know what's good for you."

"These women are making a mountain out of a molehill. Boris says there is nothing to it," he scoffs. "Let it go. We'll handle it here. You just do your job, and let us worry about managing the company."

You leave Evil's office even more concerned than when you entered.

Your mood does not improve, after you take a call from local investigative reporter Max Grudge. Grudge says he has received “anonymous calls” from Fink about some kind of “sex scandal involving a top exec---possibly Rhattan Fink himself.”

“I get these kinds of calls all the time,” he explains. “But this one sounds legit. Have you heard anything about this?”

Your mind is racing. The real answer to Grudge’s question, of course, is “yes.” But that would “open the gates” for a major scandal at the company. You answer instead, “let me look into it, Max, and get back to you.”

PUNCHING OUT THE CODE

You convene an emergency meeting with human resources Director Ophelia Paine and General Council Noah Comment. You lay out the facts as you know them to both.

Paine volunteers that although the two women have exemplary work records, at least one of them is a “known complainer.” “Let’s try to keep this quiet,” she counsels. “You are good at deflecting these obnoxious reporters.”

Comment explains that no matter how obnoxious Swine might have been, “he clearly didn’t violet any law.”

“That might be true,” you answer, “but the Fink Code of Conduct says explicitly: “Any employee, who is found to have violated the personal rights of another—most particularly in the realms of racial , religious, and sexual harassment---will be dealt with in the most severe and uncompromising manner.”

Attorney Comment glares at you, “What about Swine’s personal rights? The fact is that no law was violated, so it’s nobody’s business. Period.”

As to what you should do with the inquiring reporter, Comment’s comment---“Stonewall him.”

SEEKING THE ETHICAL COURSE

Now, you’ve got a real ethical dilemma.

- ❖ The four highest-ranking executives in your division have not only failed to follow through on the women’s complaints, but they also have expressly forbidden you from further action.
- ❖ You’ve got an aggressive journalist, waiting to learn if the CEO might be involved in a sex scandal.
- ❖ You’re facing two irate employees, who feel that their legitimate complaints have fallen on deaf ears. “I know who obviously is trying to cover this up,” mistakenly concludes your friend in purchasing. “It’s that dirty old Rhat Fink himself.”
- ❖ Finally the corporate code of conduct, created by CEO, is being violated, while the CEO himself is being blamed.

As Mr. Fink’s speechwriter, you are scheduled to see him today at 3 p.m. to discuss his speech on “corporate responsibility.”

Oy vey, do you have a headache!!

QUESTIONS:

1. Describe the real ethical dilemma faced by the assistant vice president in charge of public relations for the Catfish Division of Fink, Inc. [10 marks]
2. How would you respond to the journalist? [10 marks]
3. Many different professions have come up with their own codes of conduct to act as guidelines for ethical behavior. Explain how these codes help organizations. [20 marks]

Total [40 marks]

SECTION B

Answer any **three (3)** questions from this section.

QUESTION 2

You are employed by a reputable company as Public Relations Officer and you are informed that top management has agreed to set up a press conference to announce a very important strategic change that must be implemented and would directly affect the company's publics. Management also directed that all media must be given equal access to key company individuals driving the change. What are the major decisions you would make in organizing a successful press conference? [20 marks]

QUESTION 3

Employees in organizations have different needs that public relations can solve through internal communications. However, regardless of their status, all employees have **certain expectations** from their organizations. Discuss [20 marks]

QUESTION 4

Legal and public relations counsellors approach situations from different perspectives. Explain clearly, the differences between public relations and law. [20 marks]

QUESTION 5

All organizations that want to maintain their positions of power in society have to accept their social responsibilities. Discuss some reasons why it is vital that businesses engage in social responsibility. [20 marks]