

Letter to the Editor
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Always tell the truth is really the first rule of thumb of any true public relations professional. That's why as president of the Hampton Roads chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), we're concerned with the recent quote from Dennis H. Treacy vice president of environmental, community and government affairs with Smithfield Foods Inc. ("Handling the Truth, Smithfield's Treacy tells it like it is.") In the article he made a statement, "I'm not a communications professional. I try to tell the truth. You can't spin anything anymore. Even the toughest question—tell the truth. If something's wrong, say so."

While I applaud Mr. Treacy's respect for the truth, I hope he didn't intend to disparage the public relations profession by insinuating that we are not truthful. As a 20-year veteran of public relations and an accredited member of my profession, I can tell you that the best public relations professionals revere the truth. Those rare few who mistakenly believe that "spinning" the truth will gain them something are a discredit to the profession and are no more accepted among our peers than crooked accountants are among theirs.

Public relations professionals abide by a strict Code of Ethics that most definitely includes honesty. The core values of PRSA members include Advocacy, Honesty, Expertise, Independence, Loyalty and Fairness. These values are fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole. The PRSA Code of Ethics states, "We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public."

On behalf of our chapter, I invite Mr. Treacy to attend some of our meetings and learn more about our industry and our local chapter. We meet on the first Wednesday of every month. For a complete list of meeting dates and topics, visit our website at www.prsahr.org.

Sincerely,

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President
Hampton Roads Chapter
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