

ETHICS

SCENARIO: Your boss tells you to write the following sentence in a manual:

"NOTE: Our product has been tested for defects and safety by trained technicians."

You know that it is literally true...the product has been tested, the technicians are trained. However, the product has been tested for only 24 hours by technicians trained on site without knowledge of international regulations.

Do you put the sentence in the manual? What are the ethical considerations you have to make?

Business writing has three concerns, often interacting:

- *Legal* - liability, negligence, consumer protection laws
- *Practical* - dishonesty can cause loss in sales and legal expense
- *Ethical* - promote client welfare and avoid deception

STC Code for Communicators says:

I am committed to excellence in performance and the highest standards of ethical behavior...[it is] my responsibility to communicate truthfully, clearly and economically...I will:

- Use language and visuals with precision
- Prefer simple, direct expression of ideas
- Satisfy the audience's need for information, not my need for self-expression

- Hold myself responsible for how well my audience understands my message
- Respect the work of colleagues, knowing that a communication problem may have more than one solution
 - *Confidentiality*
 - 1974 Privacy Act allows "individuals to control information about themselves and to prevent its use without consent."
 - Electronic Communication Act of 1986 states that e-mail can be disclosed only "with the consent of the senders or recipients." Define sender.
 - *Courtesy*
 - *Copyright*
- Strive continually to improve my professional competence
- Promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment and that attracts talented individuals to careers with technical communication