



Code of Business Conduct  
for  
RTÉ Employees

September 2010

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** The Code of Business Conduct for RTÉ Employees (“Code of Business Conduct”) is intended to steer the conduct of RTÉ employees as they carry out business activities. It is incumbent on everyone in the organisation, both individually and collectively, to do his or her best to adhere to the standards outlined in this Code of Business Conduct.

RTÉ’s ability to live up to its commitments and ethical standards is directly dependent on the day-to-day actions of each individual. These choices should be based on the principles of honesty and integrity in the conduct of business activities, loyalty to RTÉ and confidentiality. These principles are explained in detail in Sections two to four of this Code of Business Conduct.

### **1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of this Code of Business Conduct are to:

- establish an agreed set of ethical principles in line with good practice;
- give clear advice and practical guidance to employees in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Code;
- avoid adverse publicity associated with instances of non-compliance;
- prevent the adoption of unethical practices; and
- preserve the reputation and integrity of RTÉ and its employees.

It is impractical to provide in sufficient detail to cover every eventuality that could arise to present employees with a conflict of interest. Accordingly, employees should be aware that the spirit as well as the precise wording of this Code should be observed.

### **1.3 Staff duty of care**

- (i) Members of staff are obliged to comply with all laws and regulations applicable to RTÉ’s activities and its places of business.
- (ii) Staff are required to act with integrity at all times and must never engage in fraudulent activity of any kind.
- (iii) RTÉ is committed to ensuring that cost effective controls and procedures are operated to prevent, detect, deter and deal with fraud and staff are required to fully co-operate at all times with these measures.

### **1.4 Scope**

- (i) This Code of Conduct is applicable to all RTÉ employees, irrespective of the nature and duration of their employment contract. The terms ‘employees’ and ‘staff’ are used interchangeably throughout this document and denote individuals with a current valid RTÉ contract of employment.
- (ii) While applicable to RTÉ employees, this Code of Conduct is also a relevant reference point for non-employees engaged under a service contract (Contractors, Freelance personnel, Sole Traders etc). These individuals should honour the key principles of honesty & integrity, loyalty and confidentiality and apply these principles in their business dealings with RTÉ.

## **2. HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

### **2.1 Use of resources**

- (i) It is each employee's responsibility to ensure that all preventative measures are taken to ensure the most efficient use of RTÉ equipment and resources. Everyone who uses equipment also has a responsibility for understanding its proper use and maintaining it in good condition.
- (ii) Staff should be alert to any situations or incidents that could lead to the loss, theft, or misuse of RTÉ property. Upon departure all individuals should notify their immediate manager of any RTÉ materials they have in their possession. All such materials and property should be returned to RTÉ prior to departure.
- (iii) The important role of internal information and communications facilities in carrying out the business of RTÉ makes it crucial to ensure their integrity. These facilities should only be used for conducting business on behalf of RTÉ, or for purposes authorised by management.
- (iv) Any unauthorised use of these facilities, whether or not for personal gain, will be considered a disciplinary matter. It is each person's responsibility to ensure that the use made of RTÉ information systems is relevant to the work undertaken and is properly authorised. It is understood that individuals may, from time to time, make short local calls or use the internet in keeping with the e-mail guidelines within the RTÉ Technology Usage policy. However, abuse will not be accepted.
- (v) Staff are required to familiarise themselves with the RTÉ Technology Usage Policy to ensure that the integrity of the organisation's information systems is maintained to the highest standards.

### **2.2 Gifts and entertainment**

#### ***Definition***

- (i) In this context a gift is broadly defined as anything that is given to a member of staff, either as a result of a relationship with a particular party or because the member of staff is a public figure, and for which the recipient does not pay fair market value. For the avoidance of doubt, this also includes the use of services (facilities, property, equipment etc.) for which the recipient does not pay fair market value.
- (ii) Gifts offered by personnel of different organisations differ widely and may include material goods, services, travel and accommodation for business or vacation purposes, tickets to sporting or cultural events, and continuing or once-off discounts not generally or readily available to the public at large.

#### ***Guiding principles***

- (i) It is each staff member's responsibility to ensure that RTÉ's image is not damaged in any way by the acceptance of gifts or entertainment which would compromise their position, or RTÉ itself.
- (ii) In all instances staff members should remember that RTÉ is a high profile public broadcasting organisation and must ensure that their dealings with suppliers and customers reflect on the organisation positively.

- (iii) Staff who have concerns relating to the acceptance of gifts and other entertainment items arising from their business dealings should refer their query to the appropriate RTÉ Divisional Head.

**Policy**

- (i) Staff are responsible for ensuring that they maintain the highest standards when involved in dealings with outside agencies, whether or not they are acting on behalf of RTÉ in this capacity. As such, staff should never solicit or accept personal advantages or gifts of material value from firms or persons as a result of the staff member's association with RTÉ.
- (ii) Business gifts and entertainment may be accepted by employees as courtesies where such are designed to build understanding and goodwill among business partners. In this context, during the traditional gift giving seasons, gifts of modest value may also be accepted, where refusal to accept might give offence.
- (iii) Employees can accept promotional items of limited value, such as inexpensive pens, calendars, mugs that bear the company name. Employees can also present gifts to other business partners which fall into this category.
- (iv) Members of staff may accept gifts offered by virtue of the public profile of the staff member connected with RTÉ provided:
- the gift is unsolicited;
  - the gift is of moderate value;
  - not more than one gift is accepted in any year from any one source; and
  - details of gifts are notified at once to appropriate Divisional Head within RTÉ.

Under no circumstances may gifts of cash or cash vouchers be accepted by any member of staff arising from their public profile and/or their association with RTÉ.

- (v) When an employee is a guest in another country and if the gift is being offered as part of a public occasion it is best to accept the gift on behalf of the organisation. In such situations the employee should report the gift to the Divisional Head and hand it over to RTÉ.
- (vi) Staff should not give any money or any gift to any director, executive, official or employee of any supplier, customer or any other organisation if doing so would influence or could reasonably give the appearance of improperly influencing the organisation's relationship with RTÉ. RTÉ staff shall not make a gift to any third party whatsoever where such a gift could be construed as unlawful. Staff may provide a gift of a nominal value once it falls within the parameters set out in this Code of Business Conduct.
- (vii) The entertainment of staff by suppliers or customers is acceptable within normal commercial criteria. However, business entertainment must be moderately scaled and clearly intended to facilitate business goals. This criteria is defined as follows:
- business entertainment in the form of meals and beverages is acceptable as long as it is modest and infrequent

- a ticket for a sports event or other public entertainment may be accepted
- entertainment should, as far as possible, be on an equivalent and reciprocal basis

### **2.3 Purchasing**

- (i) In many circumstances staff will be required to transact business on RTÉ's behalf. Staff must ensure that all business transactions are properly accounted for and reported in RTÉ's books and records.
- (ii) The RTÉ Purchasing Procedures and Guidelines apply to all staff and are particularly relevant to staff members dealing directly with customers or suppliers. Adherence to the purchasing regulations will ensure fairness in the choice of suppliers and honesty in all business transactions with them.
- (iii) Any staff member who, in the course of his/her official duties, may have dealings with an outside business in which he/she has an interest, must immediately disclose the nature of the interest to the relevant RTÉ line manager. Another staff member may, if deemed necessary, be then asked to deal with the matter. Likewise, any member of staff involved in purchasing decisions is obliged to inform the relevant RTÉ Line Manager and the RTÉ Purchasing Manager of any interest in, or connection they may have with, the firm with which RTÉ are contemplating doing business.
- (iv) Where a member of staff has an interest in a company, which supplies products and/or services to RTÉ, he/she must not attempt to influence decisions regarding the selection process in order to obtain special treatment for a particular supplier. Any attempt to do so will undermine the integrity of the organisation and will be in breach of purchasing regulations, which may result in the staff member being subject to disciplinary proceedings as appropriate.

### **2.4 Expenses**

- (i) Employees are entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses, but only if these expenses are actually incurred. The submission of claims for expenses not incurred represents dishonest reporting and is strictly prohibited. The submission of claims for expenses reimbursed separately by another organisation is also strictly prohibited.

### **2.5 Competitors**

- (i) RTÉ will ensure that as a public service broadcaster, all decisions and actions taken by the organisation are taken on the basis that they are not inappropriately counter to competition regulations, or contrary to laws that govern competitive practices in the marketplace.
- (ii) For staff, it is each individual's responsibility to ensure that they do not improperly denigrate competitors and / or their products or services. Where comparisons are made between RTÉ and its competitors, employees should ensure that these comparisons are fair and objectively based. Materially false or misleading statements and innuendoes about competitors, their products or services, is considered to be improper. Such conduct invites complaints from competitors and will affect the respect and integrity of the organisation.

## **2.6 RTÉ competitions**

- (i) RTÉ operates a variety of audience / reader competitions across all areas of output. These include postal competitions, premium rate phone and text competitions, non-premium rate phone and text competitions and online competitions.
- (ii) In order to avoid allegations of improper conduct or bias, RTÉ competitions are not open to staff of RTÉ and their immediate family members. This policy applies irrespective of the prize on offer or the division administering the competition.
- (iii) Where premium rate phone and text competitions are used as part of RTÉ programmes / publications / etc., RTÉ shall ensure transparency to participants in relation to costs / charges and entry mechanisms. The Programme Interaction and Competitions Unit in Publishing will oversee all premium rate competitions. The principles of fairness and transparency will apply in the selection of winners for all RTÉ competitions, irrespective of the competition type and entry mechanism.

## **3. LOYALTY**

A conflict of interest may arise if an individual engages in any activities, or advances any personal interests, at the expense of RTÉ's interests. Members of staff are therefore required to manage conflicts of interest to ensure that the reputation and good name of RTÉ, and its staff, is maintained.

### **3.1 Attendance to duties**

- (i) RTÉ accepts that members of staff are free to engage in any activity outside normal working hours provided that, in doing so, this does not impair their ability to give a satisfactory service to the organisation in accordance with their contract of employment. It is up to the individual concerned to avoid any situations in which loyalty to the organisation may become divided.
- (ii) It is incumbent on RTÉ employees to ensure they give regular and undivided attention to their duties. Any activity which impedes the employee from carrying out his/her duty involves a breach of his/her contract of employment. Where such activities impact the employee's capacity to perform his/her work in a competent manner the employee will be open to disciplinary action being taken, which may include dismissal.
- (iii) RTÉ may request employees to discontinue their involvement in any activity or interest which could potentially be in conflict with the interests of the organisation, impair the ability of employees to perform their work in a satisfactory manner, or have an adverse effect on their punctuality or attendance.
- (iv) To avoid even the perception of inappropriate behaviour, all staff must inform the appropriate RTÉ Divisional Head of their involvement in any activities or interests outside work, if these activities or interests might be regarded as incompatible with their employment in RTÉ.

### **3.2 Involvement in other businesses**

- (i) Staff must not become engaged in outside activities or have a business or financial interest that may be in competition with RTÉ, or could be regarded as being a conflict of interest with their terms and conditions of employment.
- (ii) Any member of staff who is either gainfully employed or running any business, consultancy or company outside of his/her relationship with RTÉ, or who has a significant financial interest in such a business, must inform the appropriate RTÉ Divisional Head in writing.
- (iii) The Divisional Head will assess if there is a conflict of interest and will notify the member of staff accordingly.
- (iv) An employee may be requested to discontinue his/her involvement in the outside business or activity concerned or, in certain circumstances, asked to dispose of his/her financial stake in such interests. Alternatively, RTÉ may alter the employee's contract of employment in order to avoid such a conflict of interest.

### **3.3 Competing against RTÉ**

- (i) Employees must have no involvement with any commercial broadcasting and/or production company (national and local radio station, television station and on-line services). Employees must have no involvement with any other competitor to RTÉ, unless approved in advance by the Managing Director of the relevant division.
- (ii) Involvement in outside business activities which do not compete with the organisation may not be regarded as constituting a conflict of interest, provided the two activities are strictly separate. The following criteria must be observed by all staff engaged in activities outside RTÉ:
  - work for the other organisation is not performed on RTÉ time;
  - whilst engaged in outside activities staff must ensure that RTÉ equipment and supplies are never used, nor the inappropriate time of other RTÉ personnel utilised; and
  - staff must not promote or attempt to sell products or services resulting from their outside business activities to other staff within the organisation, on RTÉ premises or on RTÉ time.

### **3.4 Registrable interests**

- (i) Board members and staff who are holders of certain designated positions are required to prepare and furnish to the RTÉ Group Secretary a statement in writing of their registrable interests. Please refer to the website of the Standards in Public Office Commission (<http://www.sipo.gov.ie/en/>), or contact the Office of the Group Secretary for further details. Further details are also available in the Staff Manual.



## 4. CONFIDENTIALITY

### 4.1 Protecting confidential information

#### ***RTÉ confidential information***

- (i) Members of staff who have access to RTÉ proprietary and confidential information (for example financial reports, employee records, engineering designs, programme information, intellectual property and other data) must take every precaution to keep this information confidential. Staff must also ensure that no information is given out without prior permission being sought and approved by the appropriate manager in RTÉ.
- (ii) Protecting company information also means reporting information as completely and accurately as is practicable. It is incumbent on all staff to ensure that all information reported (for example in written reports) is accurate, relevant and timely as appropriate.
- (iii) Dishonest reporting within RTÉ, or to organisations or people outside the organisation, is strictly prohibited. This involves not only reporting information inaccurately, but also deliberately or carelessly organising it in a way that is intended to materially mislead or misinform those who receive it. Staff must ensure that they do not make false or misleading statements in external reports and/or other documents submitted or maintained for government departments. Dishonest reporting can lead to civil or even criminal liability for staff.

#### ***Third party information***

- (iv) The receipt of sensitive business, creative, financial, schedule, production or technical information from competitors or other industry organisations carries significant risks.
- (v) Other organisations also have intellectual property, including confidential information, which they want to protect. In some circumstances these companies are prepared to disclose and allow others to use this proprietary information for a particular purpose. In certain situations companies may in return seek information from RTÉ. Where requests of this nature are made, and before information is disclosed, it must first be cleared by an appropriate manager within RTÉ of an adequate level of authority.
- (vi) If members of staff receive another party's proprietary information, they must proceed with caution to prevent any accusations that RTÉ misappropriated or misused the information. They must also ensure that the public profile of the organisation is not adversely affected by the manner in which proprietary information is used.

#### ***Personal information***

- (vii) Staff who have responsibility for maintaining personal information are obliged to ensure that it is factual, accurate and retained in a safe manner.
- (viii) Staff are obligated to ensure that any personal information recorded and maintained by them concerning RTÉ is done so in accordance with acceptable standards. All information kept on file, either in the form of hard copy or electronically, should be 'relevant' and 'accurate' to ensure that the

release of this information will not unfairly cause embarrassment to, or reflect negatively on, RTÉ.

#### **4.2 Intellectual property**

- (i) RTÉ's proprietary information is any information owned by the organisation, much of which is confidential. This information may be subject to patent, copyright or other intellectual property protection and includes technical information, creative information, scheduling information, business plans and projections, marketing plans, financial data, and personnel information.
- (ii) Upon commencement of employment with RTÉ, members of staff assign all rights, title and interest in intellectual property developed when employed in certain capacities, such as managerial, technical, programming or other professional capacities.
- (iii) This intellectual property includes such things as programme ideas, technical plans, IT programs, documents which relate to RTÉ's actual or anticipated business, or documents relating to work performed. This property is exclusively owned by RTÉ, whether or not it results from tasks performed on behalf of RTÉ either during or after work hours but relating to RTÉ business.
- (iv) Employees who leave RTÉ are obliged to ensure that intellectual property developed by, or entrusted to them, is maintained by the organisation. There is an onus on employees leaving the organisation to ensure that under no circumstances is this property disclosed to outside agencies, or prospective employers, who may operate in the same market as RTÉ and would be deemed by the organisation to be competitors.
- (v) Copyright work completed by a staff member during their term of employment with the organisation shall remain with RTÉ for the full term of the copyright. Similarly any patent developed during employment will also belong to RTÉ. Employees will not be entitled to any additional copyright payments or patent royalties.

## **5. RTÉ STAFF MANUAL**

- (i) The behaviour and conduct of RTÉ employees as they carry out their duties is also guided by a number of additional policies set-out in the RTÉ Staff Manual. These are:
- Dignity at Work Policy
  - Diversity Policy
  - Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy
  - Grievance Procedure Policy
  - Disciplinary Procedure Policy
  - Personal and Public Activities of Staff Policy
  - RTÉ Travel Policy
  - Technology Usage Policy
  - Purchasing Policy
- (ii) Staff members are required to consult the Staff Manual on the corporate intranet and to be familiar with these policies. Updates to policies are also available from time on the Corporate Intranet.

## **6. RAISING CONCERNS**

- (i) RTÉ's existing line management structure and system of internal control are the normal and correct mechanisms to detect and/or draw attention to irregularities of all kinds.
- (ii) In exceptional circumstances, it is sometimes necessary to have an alternative reporting line available to staff as a mechanism of last resort. In such instances, the RTÉ Whistleblowing policy applies. This sets-out the policy for staff to raise concerns that they may have about actual, or potential, material irregularities in
- (a) the running of RTÉ, or
  - (b) the activities of colleagues, contractors, suppliers or customers

in so far as such activities have a material adverse bearing on the work of these parties within RTÉ.

This policy is available on the RTÉ Intranet and outlines the reporting lines open to staff to report irregularities.

- (iii) Staff should consult with the relevant Department Head, Divisional Head, or Head of Human Resources if they have any doubts or require clarification in relation to any aspect of RTÉ's Business Conduct Policy.

## **7. REVIEW**

- (i) This Code and the corresponding Code of Conduct for Board Members will be reviewed periodically.