Rules Government Affairs Professionals AND Elected Officials Should Abide By

By: Elizabeth Z. Bartz

1. Know the rules in the states where you live. We joke—and it isn't funny—that the last person to ask whether a gift can be accepted is a legislator. Lobbyists, do your own homework.
2. Lobbyists, alert new hires to the rules. Legislators, do not take advantage of these new folks.
3. Legislators and lobbyists—beware of "everyone does it."
4. Determine the permissibility and appropriateness of conduct beforehand. You have heard it before, Know Before You Go.
5. Be the "go to" person at your company.
6. Establish a process for tracking activity.
7. Be consistent when calculating expenditures. Trust me—newspapers will know if the lobbyist reports do not match up with what legislators' report. And, sometimes it isn't the newspaper. We once got a call from an American University student telling us she reviewed reports for a class and the numbers didn't match up with the law firm reported. And, she was correct. Our client accurately reported the pro-rata share of the retainer attributable to lobbying while the law firm reported the whole retainer. They wanted to be #1.
8. Training and retraining is important for legislators and lobbyists.
9. Ask questions.
10. Will it pass the Washington Post test? The Atlanta Journal Constitution test? The New York Times test?

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