Ethical Communication Survey

1999 Communication Ethics Credo Conference

July 24-26, Key Bridge Marriott, Arlington VA

PURPOSE: The goal of the conference is to produce for review by NCA's Legislative Council a credo for ethical communication – a summary of belief statements to underpin ethical communication processes in society. Data from this survey of NCA members and members of the Ethics Commission will be used at the conference to produce the ethics credo.

The credo will consist of:

(1) an opening description of ethical communication – what it is, why it's important, guidelines for how it should work, and the values that underpin it; and
(2) a set of belief statements that explicate the description – robust generalizations to serve as anchors or moorings for understanding ethical communication.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: This survey seeks your opinion about various aspects of ethical communication. On the following pages, provide as much or as little detail as you like for each question. Individual instructions are provided as needed for each question.

The questions that follow relate to:

- Typical situations involving ethical communication and difficult ethical communication

  dilemmas

- Values that are important components of ethical communication

- Your personal definitions of ethical communication and unethical communication

- Uses, applications, or functions for the credo

1. Identify typical situations involving ethical communication that you believe are typically encountered by people as they go about their daily lives.

> (Examples: decision making, engaging in social relationships, dispersing information in mass media)

2. Describe one or two difficult ethical communication dilemmas, for any identified general situation in question one – junctures or decision points related to the situation that you think people may face involving ethical communication.

> (Example: You're attending a public presentation – a speech or a lecture. During the presentation or perhaps during the Q&A that follows it, someone presents information that you are certain is inaccurate. You need to decide whether or not to mention the speaker's wrongful citation – and if so, how to do so.)

3. Given the situations and dilemmas you just described, now help us identify the values that are important components of ethical communication. Below is a preliminary list of values developed by the conference planners. You will probably think of other values as well as those listed.

First categorize the values from the list below using the grid on the next page. There are four boxes on the grid in which to categorize the values. Write the value onto a line in the category of your choice in the grid box. Designate only **eight** of the values listed as first in importance (number 1 box), **eight** as second in importance (number 2 box), **eight** as third in importance (number 3 box), and **eight** as fourth in importance (number 4 box). Don't put the same value in two categories.

If you choose to do so, add any other values that aren't listed below that you think are important. Add those values to any one of the four categories, writing them in the *other* lines at the bottom of each category box.

> Number 1 in importance = Essential, imperative, mandatory
> Number 2 in importance = Valuable, helpful, beneficial
> Number 3 in importance = Optional, sometimes necessary, sometimes not
> Number 4 in importance = Not a major consideration

accountability

accuracy

altruism

anti-totalitarianism

appropriateness

authenticity

benevolence

caring

dialogism

diversity

disclosure

empathy

fairness

freedom of expression

honesty

integrity

interactivity

listening

objectivity

openness

persuasiveness

privacy

reasonableness

respect

responsibility

responsiveness

supportiveness

tolerance

trustworthy

truthfulness

understandability

voice (having a say)

Grid Box for Categorizing and Adding Values

Number 1 in Importance

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Number 2 in Importance

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Number 3 in Importance

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Number 4 in Importance

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

Other:_____

4. Write a definition of ethical communication. (A definition or description of what you think ethical communication is, either derived from literature or your own opinion)

5. Write a definition of unethical communication. (A definition or description of what you think unethical communication is, either derived from literature or your own opinion)

6. Describe possible uses or applications for the Credo for Communication Ethics. What functions do you see it serving and how might individuals, organizations, and/or society use it?