Guidelines to Professional Employment for Engineers and Scientists

First edition
January 1, 1973

Supported and endorsed by the following societies:

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American Institute of Chemical Engineers
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American Institute of Industrial Engineers
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American Nuclear Society
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American Society of Civil Engineers
345 East 47th Street
New York, New York 10017

American Society of Mechanical Engineers
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American Society for Quality Control
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Engineers' Council for Professional Development
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Engineers Joint Council
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National Institute of Ceramic Engineers
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National Society of Professional Engineers
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Washington, D.C. 20006

Society of Fire Protection Engineers
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Additional copies may be secured from these societies.
Foreword

This publication is a guide to mutually satisfying relationships between professional employees and their employers. In this document, professional employees are defined as engineers and scientists. These guidelines cover factors peculiar to professional employment, and omit many generally accepted precepts of personnel relations which are common to all classifications of employees.

These guidelines are applicable to professional employment in all fields and in all areas of practice (including both non-supervisory and supervisory positions), and are based on the combined experience and judgment of all of the endorsing societies.

It must be stressed in the implementation of these guidelines that they represent desirable general goals rather than a set of specific minimum standards. Wide variations in circumstances and individual organizational practices make it inappropriate to judge any given employer on the basis of any single employment policy or fringe benefit. Rather, attention should be devoted to evaluating the entire employment “package,” including such intangibles as opportunity for future advancement or participation in profits, location, local cost of living, and other factors which may be important to professional employees.

Observance of the spirit of these guidelines will minimize personnel problems, reduce misunderstandings, and generate greater mutual respect. It is anticipated that they will be of use to employers in evaluating their own practices, to professional employees in evaluating both their own responsibilities and those of their employers, and to new graduates and other employment seekers in obtaining a better picture of prospective employers. Where differences in interpretation occur, they may be referred to the headquarters office of any of the endorsing societies.

Objectives

The endorsing societies, with their avowed purpose to serve the public and their professions, recognize clearly that in order to make a maximum contribution, it is necessary for professional employees and employers to establish a climate conducive to the proper discharge of mutual responsibilities and obligations.

Essential and prerequisite to establishing such a climate are:

1. Mutual loyalty, cooperation, fair treatment, ethical practices, and respect are the basis for a sound relationship between the professional and his employer.
2. The professional employee must be loyal to the employer’s objectives and contribute his creativity to those goals.
3. The responsibility of the professional employee to safeguard the public interest must be recognized and shared by the professional employee and employer alike.
4. The professional growth of the employee is his prime responsibility, but the employer undertakes to provide the proper climate to foster that growth.
5. Factors of age, race, religion, political affiliation, or sex should not enter into the employee/employer relationship.

Effective use of these guidelines is accomplished when the employer provides each present and prospective professional employee with a written statement of his policies and practices relating to each of the items covered. Adherence to these guidelines by employers and professional employees will provide an environment of mutual trust and confidence. Local conditions may result in honest differences in interpretation of, and deviation from, the details of these guidelines. Such differences should be resolved by discussions leading to an understanding which meets the spirit of the guidelines.

I Recruitment

Employment should be based solely on professional competence and ability to adequately perform assigned responsibilities, with employee qualifications and employment opportunities represented in a factual and forthright manner. The employer’s offer of employment and the employee’s acceptance, should be in writing, including a clear understanding with regard to relocation assistance; past, present, and future confidentiality and patent obligations; salary; expected duration of employment; and other relevant employment conditions and benefits.

Professional Employee

1. The professional employee (applicant) should attend interviews and accept reimbursement only for those job opportunities in which he has a sincere interest. The applicant should prorate costs for multiple interviews during a given trip on a rational basis. The guiding principle should be that the applicant receives neither more nor less than the cost of the total trip.
2. The applicant should carefully evaluate past, present, and future confidentiality obligations in regard to trade secrets and proprietary information connected with the potential employment. He should not seek or accept employment on the basis of using or divulging any trade secrets or proprietary information.
3. Having accepted an offer of employment, the applicant is morally obligated to honor his commitment unless formally released after giving adequate notice of intent.
II Terms of Employment

Terms of employment should be in writing, in accordance with the applicable laws, and consistent with generally accepted ethical professional practices.

Professional Employee
1. The professional employee should be loyal to his employer. He should accept only those assignments for which he is qualified; should diligently, competently, and honestly complete his assignments; and he should contribute creative, resourceful ideas to his employer while making a positive contribution toward establishing a stimulating work atmosphere and maintaining a safe working environment.

2. The professional employee should have due regard for the safety, life, and health of the public and fellow employees in all work for which he is responsible. Where the technical adequacy of a process or product is involved, he should protect the public and his employer by withholding approval of plans that do not meet accepted professional standards and by presenting clearly the consequences to be expected if his professional judgment is not followed.

3. The professional employee should be responsible for the full and proper utilization of his time in the interest of his employer and the proper care of the employer’s facilities.

4. The professional employee should avoid any conflict of interest with his employer, and should immediately disclose any real or potential problem which may develop in this area. He should not engage in any other professional employment without his employer’s permission.

5. The professional employee should not divulge technical proprietary information while he is employed. Furthermore, he should not divulge or use this information for an agreed upon period after employment is terminated.

6. The professional employee should only sign or seal plans or specifications prepared by himself or others under his supervision, or plans or specifications that he has reviewed and checked to his personal satisfaction.

7. The professional employee should not accept payments or gifts of any significant value, directly or indirectly, from parties dealing with his client or employer.

Employer
1. The employer should inform his professional employees of the organization’s objectives, policies, and programs on a continuing basis.

2. The professional employee should receive a salary in keeping with his professional contribution which reflects his abilities, professional status, responsibility, the value of his education and experience, and the potential value of the work he will be expected to perform. The salary should be commensurate with the salaries of other employees both professional and nonprofessional. Sound indirect compensation programs should be provided. The most important are retirement plans, health and life insurance, sick leave, paid holidays and paid vacations.

3. The employer should establish a salary policy, taking into account published salary surveys, and provide equitable compensation for each employee commensurate with his position and performance. The salary structure should be reviewed annually to keep the assigned dollar values adjusted to the current economy.
4. Each individual position should be properly classified as to its level in the overall salary structure. The evaluation of each position should consider such factors as the skill required for acceptable performance, the original thinking required for solving the problems involved, and the accountability for an action and its consequences.

5. Economic advancement should be based upon a carefully designed performance review plan. Provisions should be made for accelerated promotions and extra compensation for special accomplishments. At least annually, performance evaluations and salary review should be conducted for the individual professional employee by his supervisor. Performance evaluations should include discussion on how well he has performed his work and what he can do to improve. The professional employee should be clearly informed if his performance is considered unsatisfactory. All promotions in salary and responsibility should be on an individual merit basis.

6. For the professional employee whose aptitude and interests are technical rather than supervisory, equivalent means of advancement and recognition should be provided.

7. It is inappropriate for a professional employee to use a time clock to record arrival and departure, particularly since situations may arise which require unusual effort on his part. However, if the work demanded of a professional employee regularly exceeds the normal working hours for extended periods, the employer should compensate him for his continuing extra effort according to a clearly stated policy.

8. The professional employee should be included in an adequate pension plan which provides for early vesting of rights in safeguarded pension funds. Vesting should be so scheduled that it does not seriously affect either the employer's or the professional employee's decision as to continued employment. As a goal, eligibility for participation should not exceed one year after employment. Maximum full vesting time should be five years, and the minimum pension upon reaching retirement should be no less than 50% of the average best five years' salary (based on a forty-year working career with a single employer). If a pension plan is not provided or the benefits are less than outlined above, other compensation should be increased proportionately.

9. The employer should provide office, support staff and physical facilities which promote the maximum personal efficiency of the professional employee.

10. Duties, levels of responsibility, and the relationship of positions within the organizational hierarchy should be clearly defined and should be accurately reflected in position titles.

11. The employer should not require the professional employee to accept responsibility for work not done under his supervision.

12. The employer should provide formal assurance through organizational policy that it will defend any suits or claims against individual professional employees of the organization in connection with their authorized professional activities on behalf of the employer.

13. There should be no employer policy which requires a professional employee to join a labor organization as a condition of continued employment.

14. It is the employer's responsibility to clearly identify proprietary information.

III Professional Development

The employee and the employer share responsibility for professional development of the employee—the employee to establish the goals and take the initiative to reach them, and the employer to provide the environment and attitude which is conducive to professional growth.

Professional Employee

1. Each professional employee is responsible for maintaining his technical competence and developing himself through a program of continuing education.

2. The professional employee should belong to and participate in the activities of appropriate professional societies in order to expand his knowledge and experience. Such participation should include the preparation of professional and technical papers for publication and presentation.

3. The professional employee should achieve appropriate registration and/or certification as soon as he is eligible.

4. The professional employee should recognize his responsibility to serve the public by participating in civic and political activities of a technical and non-technical nature. Such participation, however, should be undertaken solely as a responsibility of the individual without interfering with the timely execution of his work and without involving the employer.

Employer

1. The employer, as a matter of policy, should provide an atmosphere which promotes professional development. This will include, among other programs, encouraging and supporting membership and attendance at professional society meetings and at formal courses of study which will enable the employee to maintain his technical competence.
2. The employer should consider compensated leaves of absence for professional study as a means of enabling the employee to improve his competence and knowledge in a technical field.

3. Consistent with employer objectives, the employee should be given every opportunity to publish his work promptly in the technical literature and to present his findings at technical society meetings.

4. It is in the best interest of the employer to encourage continuing education to broaden the qualifications of employees through self-improvement, in-house programs, formal education systems in the institutions of higher learning, and meetings and seminars on appropriate subjects.

5. The employer should encourage and assist professional employees to achieve registration and/or certification in their respective fields.

IV Termination and Transfer

Adequate notice of termination of employment should be given by the employee or employer as appropriate.

Professional Employee

1. If the professional employee decides to terminate his employment, he should assist the employer in maintaining a continuity of function, and he should provide at least one month's notice. When termination is initiated by the employee, no severance pay is due.

Employer

1. Additional notice of termination, or compensation in lieu thereof, should be provided by the employer in consideration of responsibilities and length of service. As a desirable goal, permanent employees (after initial trial period) should receive notice or equivalent compensation equal to one month, plus one week per year of service. In the event that the employer elects notice in place of severance compensation, then he should allow the employee reasonable time and facilities to seek new employment.

2. Employers should make every effort to relocate terminated professional employees either within their own organizations or elsewhere. Consideration should be given to continuing major employee protection plans for some period following termination, and to their full reinstatement in the event of subsequent reemployment.

3. If a professional employee is involuntarily terminated on the basis of early retirement, the employer should consider an equitable provision for an adequate income for the period remaining until the employee receives his pension at his normal retirement age.

4. In a personal interview, the employer should inform the employee of the specific reasons for his termination.

5. The employer should provide an adequate transfer-time notice, with due consideration to the extent of personal matters which the professional employee must settle before moving. All normal costs of the transfer should be paid by the employer including moving expenses, realtor fees, travel expenses to the new location to search for housing, and reasonable living expenses for the family until permanent housing is found. Unusual moving expense reimbursement should be settled in a discussion between the employee and employer.

This document is subject to periodic review by the participating societies for the purpose of keeping it current. Suggested amendments will be considered collaboratively in connection with future revised editions.