**Ethics Awareness Month**

**Scenario 4**

**Sharing Donor Information**

**Scenario**

I became aware of a situation where the chief development officer of an organization "partnered" with her significant other's organization in co-branding and sending out emails for a joint event. This helped populate the mailing list of the organizations (especially for one, which was struggling due to being closed due to the pandemic). This personal relationship was not disclosed to donors or members of the organizations.

The situation seemed like a personal conflict of interest, revealed a lack of transparency and may have also involved the inappropriate sharing of data. When fundraising professionals are working from home, it's important to emphasize that donor information should be kept private and not shared freely with family members or others in co-working spaces. Sensitive information may be overheard by others, and we should continue to maintain donor privacy, as well as avoiding conflicts of interest.

**Questions**

What ethical issues are involved in this scenario, and what are some of the potential unethical practices taking place?

What’s the best way for the fundraiser to approach this situation? Should the fundraiser talk with the executive director or CEO of the chief development officer’s organization? Should boards be getting involved?

What is the fundraiser’s responsibility to the organization that they are not directly involved in or work for?

**Outcome**

The situation is still ongoing.

**Commentary**

There’s a lot of information and details that need disclosing in order to make any final judgments. But assuming that donors and/or members of the two organizations did not know of the information and list exchanges, that situation would be a violation of Standards 17 and 19, and likely 18—all pertaining to the treatment of confidential and proprietary information. Plus, not disclosing their personal relationship with their organizations may have violated Standard 3 pertaining to conflicts of interest.

It is unclear if the person who wrote the scenario is an employee of either of the organizations. They can always contact AFP directly to get more clarity on which Standards were violated. They could then go back to their colleagues with the information they learn from AFP and create a teachable moment. Perhaps the colleagues didn’t realize what they were doing. If they were aware of what they were doing, we need to ask if either was a member of AFP. If one or both are, a complaint could be filed by completing the “Complaint of Ethic’s Violation” form that can be found on the AFP website [here](https://afpglobal.org/ethicsmain/enforcement-sanctions). A member or non-member can do that, but the person or people in question must be AFP members.