

Integrity

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Editorial integrity should be the heart of a news organisation.

Without integrity your journalism is untrustworthy and suspect.

Integrity effects every area of a news organisation from senior management to the most lowly job.

It gives you the authority to investigate and dig where others don't; without integrity you can't do this.

Without integrity, journalism because malleable and easy to manipulate, and there are many cases where that is apparent in today's media.

To stand apart and to inform the public debate with crisp, rigorous journalism, you need integrity.

In editorial terms it means the following:

- to be independent of both state and partisan interests
- to not endorse or appear to endorse any organisation, its products, activities or services
- to not give undue prominence to commercial products or services
- to not unduly promote our own media organisation
- to be a rigorous in our coverage of our media businesses dealings as we are with others

A journalist must never include a product or service in sound, vision or print in return for cash, services or any consideration in kind. When dealing with products in our output we must:

- ensure that references to trade names, brand names and slogans are clearly editorially justified
- not linger on brand names or logos and use verbal references sparingly unless there are very strong journalistic reasons for repeated references to a brand
- not accept free or reduced cost products or services in return for on air or online credits, hotlinks or off air marketing
- take particular care to minimise product references in output designed to appeal to children
- only use material from advertising campaigns or promotions when clearly editorially justified.

Promotional stories

Everyday news releases arrive in the newsroom promoting a product or a company, often these are disguised as news items, when clearly they are advertising material. The following rules should apply:

- We must retain editorial control of all our output even when dealing with contributed material and not be guided or led by those who submit the material
- We must select and cover stories for our own independent editorial reasons, and we need to be able to present and defend those reasons
- We must be on our guard for "spin" from outside bodies and commercial companies
- We must ensure that when a product, service or organisation is named in a news report or factual content it is clearly editorially justified.

Free material and gifts

It is extremely dangerous for a journalist to take gifts. It will never be free. There will always be a bill to pay at some future date. The best advice is to say no. A journalist should always pay for their own travel and accommodation costs. There may be some situations where a producer of a lifestyle programme is offered facilities to sample so that they can report on them, in such cases the following rules should apply:

- keep accurate departmental records of what has been accepted
- never guarantee any product or service will be featured
- always inform suppliers that they cannot refer to your news organisation in selling their products
- only give on air, online or in print credits if clearly editorially justified

- never offer suppliers an editorial say in the programme or be given a preview of it.

Media trips

It is best not to accept expenses paid trips, unless they are the only way to cover the story --- such cases might be the first flight of a new service. Undue prominence

Be careful where a guest on a programme has a particular product to push, such as a book, a CD or a film. It is fine to discuss the editorial issues, but you need to ensure you are not taken advantage of. Online links

When creating links to articles online, make sure that you link to material that adds value and is not simply promoting a product. Lazy links go to home pages, well thought through links explain more about the item being written about. Also, consider offering balance in your links so that those using your service will be better informed.

You must never include a link to a commercial site, in return for cash, services or any other consideration in kind.

All links must be editorially justified and should lead to sites which are:

- clearly relevant to the content of the page where the link is placed
- normally free to access
- normally factually accurate

We must never give the impression that we are endorsing a commercial product or service. Conflicts of interest

There must never be any suggestion that personal, commercial, business, financial or other interests have influenced your news organisations editorial decisions. Presenters, reporters, producers, editors, researchers and managers are all affected. The higher someone's level of editorial responsibility, the greater the need to avoid any possible conflicts of interest.

Typical conflicts of interest for journalists include:

- writing for another news organisation
- public speaking/public appearances
- media public relations training
- connections to charities and campaigning organisations
- political activities
- hospitality and personal benefits
- financial and business interests.

Journalists must declare all these to their senior editorial managers if they feel there is any likely conflict of interest that could damage the news organisation's integrity. Social action

Journalists should not be seen to campaign about social issues. They are free to have their own opinions, but these must not influence their journalistic work. They must remain impartial. This is particularly important where:

- social action programmes or campaigns coincide with a government campaign or lobbying initiative
- the output could be seen to embrace the agenda of a particular campaign group. Charities

The same is true with charities. Many are competing. Journalists will, naturally, have their favourites. This must never influence their story choice or story treatment. Again, it is healthy to declare charitable interests at the earliest opportunity. A media organisation will work with charities in a number of ways:

- broadcasting/publishing appeals
- mounting major fundraising appeals
- reflecting the work of charities in the editorial output
- as partners in social action or awareness campaigns.

However, remember that for every charity doing good there is likely to be another competing in that space. Also, don't get too close. You may end up covering a story about wrong doing involving a charity and you need to be free to examine all issues without fear of being compromised. External relationships

When entering into an external relationship journalists and producers must ensure that:

- editorial impartiality and integrity are not compromised and they editorial control of all output
 - the choice of partners is editorially justified and will not bring the media organisation into disrepute
 - no money or other services are accepted in exchange for broadcast coverage or publicity
 - that they work with a range of organisations and do not unduly favour one above another
 - they do not promote or appear to endorse other organisations, products, services, views or opinions.
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This site has used the BBC's Editorial Guidelines as the basis for these short modules on values and ethics. We sought and were given permission to quote from the guidelines and to develop the themes to the extent that they are no longer an accurate reflection of the BBC's stance. These guidelines contain a mix of regional experiences and sensitivities which have been used to develop the guidelines and give them local relevance. These pages are not endorsed by the BBC. MHM would like to thank the BBC for allowing us to use its material.