

Interactivity

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A media organisation must engage with its audience to ensure it accurately reflects the issues and concerns of that audience.

There has to be some editorial control over interactivity to ensure offensive and legally dangerous material is not broadcast or published.

Increasingly the audience expects more of a say in how their trusted media organisation covers the issues of the day.

Social networking sites, blogs, instant messaging tools such as Twitter , are changing the media landscape.

Mainstream media needs to adapt or be left behind. Basic rules

It is good to set out some editorial principles for interactivity. You might want to ensure that it:

- is distinctive and has a clear editorial purpose
- matches the expectations of the likely audience
- respects the privacy of the user
- does not act as a commercial service
- does not cost a prohibitive amount to participate
- enhances the overall understanding of the issue.

Phone-in programmes

Producers of phone-ins may use comments sent via text, email and, in the case of digital TV, the red button. The live nature of phone-ins means programme producers must be alert to the possibility of contributors breaking the law or causing widespread offence. The following best practice may help to minimise the risks:

- contributors to phone-ins should normally be called back and if necessary briefed before they go on air
- content producers should read emails and texts before they are broadcast
- presenters should be adequately briefed on the media organisations editorial guidelines and the law
- the production team should be briefed on how to deal sensitively with contributors and support systems should be in place.

Telephone services

Telephone services are used for programme support, phone-ins, voting and interacting with game shows and competitions. The following rules are worth considering.

- do not use premium rate lines for help lines
- do not use premium rate lines for phone-ins
- tell people clearly how much a call should cost
- prompt children to seek the permission of the bill payer

User-generated content

More and more media organisations are turning to user-generated content, or UGC, in order to involve the audience in newsgathering and story telling. However this can never be a free for all, where anything goes. The user will be sharing the broadcasting space you occupy and their material needs to match the same rigorous editorial guidelines that you set for yourself. The fact that explicit and offensive material appears on other channels and sites does not mean it should appear on yours.

The rules must be made clear to the users who are likely to upload content at the point where they register to join your community and contribute. You need to make clear where you as an organisation stands on issues such as copyright and privacy. Forums

User-generated content covers everything from submitted material to involvement in public forums. Media organisations will moderate such forums to protect the brand and the audience. Usually there are three types of moderation:

- Pre-moderation: where material cannot be accessed by visitors to the website until the moderator has seen it and decided it is suitable for posting
- Post-moderation: where the moderator sees the material after it has been posted and decides whether it is suitable to remain
- Reactive moderation: where visitors to the website alert the moderator to an inappropriate or offensive message.

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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.