



## Editorial Code of Ethics

*Revised October 2, 2009*

Business-to-business editors have earned the highest level of trust among their audiences. Many surveys have shown that executives and managers believe business-to-business media provide the most accurate and credible information available.

That trust is both a high compliment and a challenge for those who plan, write and edit print and digital business media and direct or produce face-to-face events, setting a high standard they must maintain. It is founded directly upon the credibility and authority of editorial content and the integrity of those in position to influence it.

American Business Media has always held its editors to such high standards. ABM's Code of Publishing Practice, a part of ABM's Constitution And By-Laws, has been in place for more than 33 years, and requires that ABM member companies maintain strict standards of journalistic ethics.

The Editorial Committee works with its members to maintain editorial quality in member media. As part of that mission, the Editorial Committee regularly reviews and updates this Editorial Code of Ethics and Guide to Preferred Practices, which has been approved by the American Business Media Executive Committee.

This code applies to all business-to-business face-to-face events and print and digital media, which includes but is not limited to Web sites, social networks, e-newsletters, directories, search engines, blogs, digital editions, video, podcasts and webcasts.

Paid content in all references in this code is defined as any content that a marketer pays to have included. It does not mean content produced independently by the editorial staff that subscribers pay to receive.

### **I. General Editorial Code of Ethics:**

Editors, reporters and writers employed by American Business Media members adhere to the highest standards of journalistic practice. In doing so, they pledge to:

- a. Maintain honesty, integrity, accuracy, thoroughness and fairness in the reporting, editing and all other development of editorial content.
- b. Avoid all conflicts of interest as well as any appearances of such conflicts.
- c. Maintain an appropriate professional distance from the direct preparation of paid or otherwise sponsored content.
- d. Show the distinction between news stories and editorials, columns and other opinion

pieces.

e. Accept as their primary responsibility the selection of editorial content based on readers' needs and interests.

f. Do their utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

The appropriate place to make a correction is in the next edition of the same product. If online content is corrected after it has been posted, the heading "Corrected Version" should be posted at the top of the document with an explanation of the correction.

g. Respect the privacy of their users. If a magazine, Web site, e-newsletter or any other product intends to collect information about its visitors - whether the data will be disseminated to third parties or not - it must offer users a chance to decline to have their data collected if they choose.

As part of its privacy policy, a Web site should explain its use of cookies and other data collection methods and tell what it intends to do with the information it collects. Potential benefits to the user - broader site access, better personalization features, etc. - should be presented as well.

## **II. American Business Media Guide to Preferred Practices:**

### **II-1. Conflicts of Interest**

a. Editors should not invest in companies and/or industries they personally cover (this does not preclude investments in mutual funds, pensions or 401(k) plans that hold shares in a manner not directly controlled by the editor). Their spouses and other immediate family members should also avoid personal investments that might reflect unfavorably upon the editor. Investing on the basis of "insider information" is, of course, a violation of securities laws. American Business Media member employees should not sit on boards of directors of or hold any other position or have personal dealings with business entities covered by their brands that could influence independence and objectivity.

b. If a conflict arises in an investment held by an editor before his/her employment, or because of a merger or acquisition, he/she should immediately bring the conflict to the attention of his/her editorial management.

### **II-2. Gifts**

a. Editors should not accept any gifts or favors, except those of nominal value, from companies or associations they cover, their public relations representatives or any other person or organization related to companies they cover. The editor's supervisor should determine what is of "nominal value."

b. Editors may accept occasional meals and refreshments in the course of business dealings.

### **II-3. Outside Activities**

a. Editors should not accept personal compensation of any kind from companies, associations or any other entities they cover or could cover.

b. Reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in connection with events produced by entities editors cover or could cover may be accepted. Editors may also accept speaker gifts of nominal value for participating in such events.

c. Because editors are expected to speak and otherwise participate as authorities within their markets, they may accept invitations to give speeches or appear on television, radio and other electronic media and may accept personal compensation upon approval of editorial management.

#### **II-4. Travel**

Editors should not accept payment of travel and hotel expenses incurred in the course of performing editorial duties from any source other than their employers unless it is offered without any expectation of reciprocal coverage and it furthers editorial objectives. Any such travel must be approved by the group's top editor.

#### **II-5. Relationship with Advertisers**

a. Selection of editorial topics, treatment of issues, interpretation and other editorial decisions, whether in print, online or for face-to-face events, must not be determined by advertisers, advertising agencies or the ABM member's advertising department. Only the editorial staff should make content decisions for all products, projects and initiatives in which they are involved. These decisions should be based on editorial content considerations alone and focus specifically on providing value to the audience.

b. Editors must never permit advertisers or sponsors to review content prior to publication.

c. Advertisers and potential advertisers must never receive favorable editorial treatment in print or online because of their economic value to the ABM member. Similarly, nonadvertisers should not receive unfavorable editorial treatment or be excluded from content because they do not advertise. This provision applies not only to stories and articles but to all products of the editorial group, including lists, rankings, product or company of the year awards and other such special features and events. Advertisers or e-commerce partners must not receive preferential treatment in search engines, price comparisons, and other applications presented under the content provider's brand unless this is clearly disclosed. An editorial Web site should not vouch for others' tools that it may offer. If an advertiser or sponsor of an event produced or otherwise directed by editors or presented as editorial in nature is included as a speaker or participant—whether the event is online or face-to-face—full disclosure should be made that the speaker or participant is indeed a sponsor or advertiser.

d. Editors must have the right to review, prior to publication, all sponsored content and other advertiser-supplied content.

#### **II-6. Separation of Advertising and Editorial**

a. Editors must make a clear distinction between paid content and content produced independently by the editorial staff. Editors have an obligation to their audiences to make clear which content has been paid for, which is sponsored and which is independent editorial material. All paid content that may be confused with independent editorial material, whether in print, online or face-to-face, must be labeled or otherwise disclosed as advertiser-sponsored.

b. The publication's Web site should display the publication's name and logo prominently in order to clarify who controls the content of the site. All editorial content must be under the sole control of the editorial staff.

- c. It is permissible to use the term “sponsored” or “brought to you by” as long as clear distinction is maintained between content that has been produced independently by the editorial staff and content that has been paid for or otherwise controlled by an advertiser or sponsor. Whether or not such distinction has been achieved should be determined solely by the chief editor. If an advertiser’s logo is used to indicate such sponsorship of independently produced editorial content, language should be included prominently that explains that the company has sponsored the content but that it was created independently by the editorial staff.
- d. Advertisements should not be intentionally placed next to editorial coverage of the specific product advertised. This does not preclude ads on search results pages, topic index pages, channel pages and the like, as long as selection criteria for those pages are not weighted in favor of advertisers and are free of other commercial consideration.
- e. With respect to special advertising supplements or advertorials: The words “advertising,” “advertisement,” “special advertising supplement” or similar labeling must appear horizontally at or near the center of the top of every page of such sections containing text, in type at least equal in size and weight to the publication’s standard body typeface [adapted from American Society of Magazine Editors Editorial Guidelines, Nov. 2004]. This applies to digital media as well as print.
- f. The layout, design, typeface and style of special advertising sections or custom publishing products must be distinctly different from those of the ABM member’s normal layout, design, typefaces and literary style. This applies to digital media as well as print. [adapted from ASME, Nov. 2004].
- g. Special advertising sections must not be slugged on the publication’s cover (including stickers) nor included in the table of contents. In general, the ABM member’s name or logo may not appear as any part of the headlines or text of paid material [adapted from ASME Nov. 2004]. This also applies to online content and event content that is paid for by a sponsor.
- h. Editorial staff members and freelancers used by editorial should not be involved in any production of paid content, whether print, online or face-to-face, such as advertorials, paid conference sessions, e-mail sponsorship material, etc. Editors can place paid online materials within online media products but should not participate in collecting it from the advertiser or sponsor. The chief editor may review contents of such sections before they appear. These guidelines apply to digital media and face-to-face events as well as print.
- i. Hypertext links that appear within the editorial content of a site, including those within graphics, must be solely at the discretion of the editors. Links within editorial should never be paid for by advertisers.
- j. To protect the brand, editors/producers should not permit their content to be used on an advertiser's site or otherwise syndicated without an explanation of the relationship (e.g. "Reprinted with permission").