

Tribune Code of Editorial Principles

Preamble

Public service through journalism is central of our mission. Our work as journalists must always center on meeting the needs and interests of readers, viewers and listeners, and we must provide them with journalism that is trustworthy, relevant and valuable. If they have reason to doubt the credibility of our work, quality won't matter—they will go elsewhere.

Those who turn to us must:

- know that our name signifies integrity and courage in gathering and presenting the news;
- be confident that the news we deliver—as text, audio or video—is accurate and free of the influence of special interests, whether public or private, commercial or political, our own or that of our friends;
- believe we do not make news decisions in a self-interested manner, or needlessly damage or cause pain to those we cover;
- see that we respond to the needs and interests of our communities with journalism of high public purpose and broad individual appeal.

To earn and keep this public trust, we rely upon the professionalism and wisdom of the men and women in our newsrooms and their commitment to these ideals. Each of us, regardless of rank or job title, is responsible for safeguarding our legacy of public service and leaving it undiminished, if not enhanced.

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Truth and integrity

Breaking the law

Tribune editorial employees will not engage in illegal activities in pursuit of news, and editors or news directors should not encourage or tolerate illegal behavior.

Plagiarism, fabrication and deception

Plagiarism, the taking of another's wording, ideas or distinctive language without attribution, is a cardinal sin of journalism. When original information, quotes, ideas or distinctive language from other sources are used in our reports, they should be clearly attributed to those sources. Likewise, the fabrication of stories, in whole or part, and presenting them as factual is forbidden. Neither practice will be tolerated.

Misrepresenting one's identity to get information is generally unacceptable, although there may be occasional exceptions. (A restaurant critic, for example, may need to make reservations under an alias.) However, these exceptions must be approved by a senior editor or news director. Reporters who contact news sources with the intention of gathering material for a story should be candid about who they are and what they are doing.

Conflicts of interest

Opportunities for conflict of interest are many, varied and often complex. We invite public scrutiny of our activities, so special vigilance is required throughout our editorial and news departments to guard against not only actual conflict, but also the appearance of conflict.

In this and all other areas, a supervisor should be consulted if there are doubts about the appropriateness of an affiliation, a practice or a course of action.

To forestall questions about our independence and impartiality:

- Editorial departments should make full and timely disclosure, in published or broadcast reports, of potential conflicts of interest. When there is doubt about whether to disclose, remember that it generally is best to err on the side of openness. We should cover Tribune and its business units as we would any other company.
- It is appropriate for editorial and advertising departments to work together to build audiences and therefore the company's financial strength, but never in a way that would give advertisers an opportunity to influence our news coverage. Editorial and news departments also may work with marketing, promotion, creative, circulation or other departments to improve readership and financial success, but they should never do anything that might jeopardize the integrity of the news report.
- No editorial employee should accept any gift of material value like junkets, meals or other items from news sources or news subjects.
- Editorial employees may not use their job titles or company connections for personal advantage, for example to obtain tickets to a show, settle a disputed bill, gain preferential treatment in court or get a child into a special school.
- Editorial employees should not have membership in, any financial relationship with, or other ties to a business or institution if they have regular and continuing influence over any aspect of coverage of that organization. They should avoid situations in which their activities in connection with any group or cause could be perceived as influencing what Tribune publishes or broadcasts.
- Political organizations present particular challenges. Donor lists are public information, so there is no such thing as a "private" donation to a party or cause. For that reason and because it would be impractical to police exceptions, no editorial employee, whether involved in political coverage or not, may donate to or be affiliated in any way with such groups. Like other citizens, journalists are free to exercise their right to vote. Those who cover campaigns should avoid voting in primaries requiring party declaration if that could raise questions about balance and fairness of their reporting.
- Editorial departments also should be careful to report immediately and fairly when a Tribune colleague has a newsworthy encounter with the legal authorities. There ought never to be the suggestion of a cover-up to keep the spotlight off ourselves when we would have focused it on others in similar circumstances.
- Tribune journalists may write books, do freelance work, write blogs and make paid appearances according to guidelines of their individual business units, but any such activities ought to be approved in advance because of the potential for conflicts, competition or legal problems for Tribune. A personal Web site of almost any nature could be seen as competition

to Tribune's various online offerings, so proposals must be examined closely before permission is granted.

Manipulation of photography

Advances in digital technology have made possible the manipulation or outright fabrication of photographic images. Therefore the credibility of photojournalism requires that we rigorously adhere to strict standards in the presentation of these images.

News photos and video images should be faithful portrayals of events as seen through the eye of the photographer and the camera's lens. News photos and video should not be manipulated mechanically or digitally in any way that materially alters these images as authentic records of events.

In some features areas, such as entertainment, fashion or cooking, it is commonplace and acceptable to stage photos or manipulate images for illustrative effect. These images are fundamentally different than photographs of news events. Nevertheless, readers or viewers should always be alerted that such manipulation has occurred. Typically a small caption or credit that says "photo illustration" is sufficient.

Magazines often enhance or touch up feature photographs involving models or other staged shots. That is acceptable, but in no case is it permissible to make such alterations to photographs or video when hard news is involved.

Sourcing

Editorial departments should always be as candid as possible with readers and viewers about the sources of our reports. Our credibility is undermined if we cite unnamed sources excessively or unnecessarily.

Use of anonymous sources

When a reporter proposes to use an unnamed source, his editor or news director should discuss the case and proceed if satisfied that the information the source provides is of compelling importance to the public interest. Reporters and their supervisors should strive first to obtain information from sources that can be named.

Reporters should not give guarantees of absolute anonymity, and any promise to withhold a source's identity ought to be discussed in advance with a supervisor before a story is aired or published. A source must be told that even if it is withheld from publication, his or her identity is likely to be disclosed to a supervisor before a story is aired or published. Tribune recognizes that making and honoring such promises sometimes is necessary to do quality journalism, and we will vigorously defend our reporters acting within these guidelines. We must acknowledge that courts, as seen in recent events, may legally compel disclosure of sources. Everyone deserves to know from the start what they are undertaking and what is at stake.

Quoting an unnamed source to disparage an identified individual should be avoided. Exceptions to this guideline should be rare and made only with the approval of the editor or the news director.

If it is decided to publish or broadcast reports using unnamed sources, readers or viewers should be told why in a timely and meaningful way.

Single-source stories

Careful judgment should be exercised in publishing news stories that rely on a single source of information. The reasons and circumstances for relying on a single source, including the possible motives of the source, should be considered before publication. Editors and reporters may proceed if they believe the source is reliable, information credible or there is either no need or no means for further confirmation.

Decency, fairness, privacy

The professional behavior of Tribune reporters, photographers or camera operators should never become an issue. We must not lose sight of the responsibility we have to report the news as thoroughly and accurately as possible. But it also is important to weigh the public's need to know against the risk of causing unnecessary discomfort to an individual, especially a private person thrust into the limelight through no fault of his or her own.

- Our newspapers, television news programs and Web sites should be sensitive in the depiction of uncovered dead bodies, particularly faces. Caution always is required before publicizing vivid images of dying and death.
- Reporting on children poses special challenges. Children often are eager to talk and be photographed, but they may have no idea of the potential consequences of having their names, pictures and words in the newspaper or on television. Before photographing, interviewing or filming a child, reporters and supervisors should weigh the subject's age and the nature of the story in considering whether to first ask permission of the parents or supervising adults. Whether we have permission or not, we always must be mindful that children are not responsible for their words or actions in the same way adults are.

To guard against intrusions upon decency, fairness and privacy:

- A "no comment" response from an individual in the news should be phrased neutrally.
- Efforts to reach news sources should allow them reasonable time to respond, even if it means delaying a report to include their comment. "Ambushing" news sources generally should be avoided.
- Quotes may be shortened through the use of ellipses and other generally understood and accepted editing devices. But editing should not change the essence of what the person said. If a quote includes a slur or a profanity, it should be used only when the news value of the story depends on it.
- Surreptitious recording or use of hidden cameras in preparing reports should be cleared first with supervisors and legal advice sought before proceeding.
- With rare exceptions, we do not publish or broadcast the names of sexual assault victims without the victim's consent.
- Generally, adult criminal suspects may be identified only when charges have been filed and juveniles only if they have been charged as adults.
- We ought to resist publishing or broadcasting uncorroborated reports about a person just because other news organizations have done so. The same applies to identifying sexual assault victims whose names have appeared elsewhere.

- In general, a person's race belongs in a story only if reporters and editors can articulate its relevance. The same applies to religion, ethnic origin and sexual orientation.

Individuals running for public office open themselves to particularly close media scrutiny. Reporters and their supervisors ought to consult regularly and often about which pieces of information about the candidate are of sufficient importance to the public to warrant publication.

Objectivity, opinion and accountability

Fair and impartial reporting is a goal toward which we should strive as journalists. Journalists should effort to make their stories free of any bias that would misrepresent the subject and thereby do a disservice to the subject, the readers or viewers. (For instance, some feature stories can be evocative and written from a point of view, sometimes the subject's.)

When journalists appear on or report for other media, they generally should avoid offering opinions on the beats they cover unless this is otherwise permitted in their regular jobs.

Finally, if we determine that we have made errors, we owe it to our readers and viewers to correct them. The nature and magnitude of what requires correction or clarification may vary from case to case and medium to medium. But we ought to be prepared to set the record straight.

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The Code of Editorial Principles supplements the Tribune Code of Business Conduct that applies to all employees, as well as ethics policies of individual newspapers, which may be more specific on certain issues.