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# **Code of Ethics for Participating Media Web Sites**



# **BPA Media Exchange**

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Business-to-business media brands have earned the highest level of trust with B2B marketers, which is among their strongest business asset. Collectively, we need to make sure those standards are maintained.

This code applies to all content published under a member brand's web site, and general business practices. Compliance is required to be eligible to sell inventory in the BPA Media Exchange.

We wish to acknowledge the Connectiv Editorial Committee and Connectiv's Board of Directors for developing this code of conduct for all formats of media. We have adapted it for the BPA Media Exchange with permission. We fully support Connectiv in its mission.

## I. General Code of Ethics

Participants in the BPA Media Exchange must adhere to high standards of journalistic and publishing practice. In doing so, they pledge to:

- a. Maintain honesty, integrity, accuracy, and fairness in all content.
- b. Avoid all conflicts of interest as well as any appearances of such conflicts.
- c. Champion and enforce best practices that ensure that the source of all content the brand publishes is transparent.
- d. Understand and champion end users' privacy expectations and rights, and protect their personal data, whether it is gathered for surveys, through online feedback or comment mechanisms, or as part of a subscriber or member database.

## II. Guide to Preferred Practice

### 1. Conflicts of Interest

- a. Editors and their immediate family members should not invest in companies and/or industries the editors personally cover (this does not include investments such as mutual funds that hold shares in a manner not directly controlled by the individual investor).
- b. Editors should not accept any gifts or favors or compensation, except those of nominal value, from organizations they cover, their public relations representatives or any other person or organization related to companies they cover.
- c. Publishers should not enter into business relationships that would call into the question the brand's reputation as a provider of trusted content.
- d. Editors and/or staff should not accept any travel junkets or trips from companies they cover where they are the sole organization being invited to participate. It is, however, okay to accept a press trip where other media are invited and the event is strictly informational.

## 2. Relationship with Advertisers

Only the editorial staff may make editorial 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. Editors must never permit advertisers or sponsors to review editorial content prior to publication.

## 3. Differentiating Editorial and Sponsor Content

- a. All content under the media brand's logo or banner is considered editorial content, and solely under the control of the brand's editorial staff, unless otherwise designated. Sponsor content – content paid for, provided by or commissioned by a sponsor—that is published under the media brand's logo or banner must therefore always be clearly distinguished from editorial content.
- b. It is the mutual obligation of the editorial and sales leadership to ensure that editorial and sponsor content are effectively differentiated. To achieve this, both professionals must work in concert with colleagues in other departments, and especially with each other, to develop and consistently apply appropriate design and disclosure policies
- c. Labeling: Generally accepted labels designating sponsor content include but are not limited to “advertisement,” “paid content,” “paid post,” “sponsor-generated content” and “sponsor content.” Labeling must be such that a typical end user understands its meaning and intent. Labeling must be prominently placed in the overall design structure, such that the typical end user understands meaning and intent.
- d. In December 2015, the Federal Trade Commission issued an enforcement policy statement and guidance for businesses on how to utilize native or sponsored content without crossing the line into deceptive advertising. With these materials, the FTC maintains that that this type of content should not be “indistinguishable from news, feature articles, product reviews, editorial, entertainment and other regular content.” Both editors and revenue teams should be aware of the [FTC's official policy statement and guidance outline](#).
- e. Staffing: Great care must be taken with editors' involvement in the production of sponsor content, ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided and the brand's reputation are protected. That said, ranking editors may supervise teams or individuals that separately produce sponsor content and editorial content.
- f. Editorial content should not be used on an advertiser's site or otherwise syndicated, or as part of sponsored content section of the brand's own products, without an explanation of the relationship.

## 4. Site Traffic

- a. The publisher must acquire traffic primarily from organic sources and shall use best efforts to ensure that none of the traffic is fraudulent.
- b. The publisher may not artificially inflate impressions, clicks or requests, or source traffic from pop-ups, pop-unders, forced redirects or similar means.