

Fundamentals

Journalism and PR pursue different objectives and thus interact in various ways. PR represents the interests of organizations. One of its functions has always been to inform the public and to offer editorial content and topics to the media. Journalists have a mandate to supply information to the public or their segments of the public. They choose topics and content, verify and research them, and decide on the nature and scope of the publication.

The autonomy of journalism must not be undermined through pressure, or financial or other incentives. Due to economic developments and the resulting economic pressure, more and more journalists, especially freelance journalists, also undertake PR assignments alongside journalistic tasks. Transparency and a conspicuous separation of roles are mandatory here – towards editorial offices or clients, as well as the public or the relevant segments of the public.

I. PR assignments

1. When salaried or freelance journalists undertake PR assignments on particular topics, they cannot work as journalists on the same topic at the same time. Employers, i.e. PR agencies, companies etc., may neither initiate nor remunerate this, nor should they condone it.
2. No payment for editorial publications in journalistic media may be offered or made.
3. Journalistic publishers, broadcasters or internet platforms of any kind must inform their readers or viewers/listeners in an appropriate and transparent way about special services fully or partially paid for by third parties: sponsored items must always be clearly and immediately recognizable as such to the user.

II. Gifts for the press

1. In PR work, it is not permissible to give any gifts or other benefits of any kind that are liable to or aim to compromise the decision-making autonomy of editorial offices or journalists with regard to their reporting.
2. In cases where invitations are extended or gifts are given, their value may not exceed the framework of normal social practice.
3. The offer and acceptance of promotional products and other low-value items, such as writing pads, appropriate writing materials or USB flash drives and the like is unobjectionable.
4. Products and services that are offered to be tested must be used in moderation and must not be understood as incentives themselves or supplemented with incentives. Test products must not be connected with accompanying payments or sponsorship.

III. Invitations, press workshops, press trips

1. Invitations to events, especially press trips, must be clearly related to the information event. They must not be tied to any explicit expectation of a positive story, still less associated with gratuities of any kind.
2. Journalists and other editorial representatives may not be paid a fee for participating in press events.
3. The framework of normal social practice should be taken into consideration with regard to accommodation, transport, meals and the organization of the trip, so that no undue incentives are created.
4. It is not permissible to offer journalists first-class flights, or to invite them to bring friends or family for free.
5. The program of the trip is to be set beforehand and must be in relation to the reason for the trip. The editorial offices are to be informed about the program prior to the trip.
6. Payment of travel expenses is only permissible if these cannot be covered by the employer, i.e. the respective editorial offices, and if suitably comprehensive reporting will not be possible without the trip.
7. Personal expenses that the journalist faces during the trip are not to be paid for.