

Preamble

Media companies or publishers perform two distinct roles in relation to PR: firstly as editorial offices, and secondly as commercial enterprises. In this second role they often collaborate with other commercial companies and PR agencies for certain time periods or particular topics. Such collaborations are usually referred to as media partnerships.

It is essential for PR experts in commercial enterprises and PR agencies to strictly separate both of these roles. When it comes to the first role, the DRPR guidelines for dealing with journalists apply: editorial freedom must be respected and maintained. PR experts and PR agencies must refrain from any action that is liable to interfere with this freedom. When it comes to partnerships with media companies, PR experts and PR agencies must observe the following principles.

Principles of collaboration with publishers

1. Media partnerships must not tempt the business partner and its PR agency to influence the editorial freedom of the media outlet cooperating with them. Even hints are to be avoided.
2. Media partnerships are in most cases exclusive in nature, since usually only one media partner per media type (print, online, television, radio) can be active in a partnership. Exclusivity should not, however, preclude editorial coverage by other media outside the partnership after the initial publication.
3. Exclusivity reaches its limits when it leads to exclusive advertising placement on the part of the business partner, and when the media partner responds with exclusive, editorial coverage. Such exclusivity is to be avoided, as it constitutes an inadmissible tying arrangement.
4. The provision of information, copy and so-called “Materndienste”(a special service preparing print-ready journalism-style advertisements and placing them in media outlets) is not a media partnership. The public and PR professionals can and must assume that the journalistic duty of care will be applied when the information is published. This responsibility rests solely with the media outlets themselves.
5. The usage of advertising space or special forms of advertising must not be connected with well-disposed or critical reporting. The punishment of reporting through withdrawal of advertising material is unethical. Any attempt to mix or link editorial content and advertising is to be avoided.
6. The exclusion or attempted exclusion of other media from public events or events of public interest to maintain exclusivity for a preferred partner company is inadmissible.
7. Offering and agreeing on special formats, special supplements and other conceivable types of advertising is not objectionable, even when they contain purchased editorial space, as long as they are clearly marked as advertising or a special publication.