

Ethical journalism notes essay sample

[Entertainment](#), [Journalism](#)



In the society we live in, the idea of ethics to the general population of our society are often individual choices, each depending on the ethics of each individual. This however, is not the case when journalists and ethics are juxtaposed. Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles (Media Alliance Code of Ethics. 2012). Once again, ethics is completely dependent on the type of individual, however in journalism, codes such as the MEAA act as a strict guideline which effectively can prescribe the correct action in all circumstance. It is these guidelines that have been created through the years which have kept many journalists' ethics pure. These codes of conduct have span back to the early twentieth-century when several pioneering codes of journalism ethics were created into a single document. (Ward. 2004. 24) it is these codes of conduct that can successfully prescribe the correct circumstances. Taking the MEAA into example, the twelve codes create a informative guideline that can be relied upon in all situations.

A situation where in a journalist is faced with a problematic ethical decision such as having pictures of a figure of importance. To manipulate or edit the picture in any way may be a bad ethical and moral choice, but it would ultimately appeal to the general audience. A journalist that follows a code if conduct of the MEAA would acknowledge rule number nine, “ Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.” (Media alliance Code of Ethics. 2012.) it is this situation and all other various ethical situations that a journalist may come by, that they can find themselves relying on a code of ethics to ultimately steer them towards the correct path of ethical journalism.

“ Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence” (Media Alliance Code of Ethics. 2012). This is the fourth rule in the MEAA code of ethics. This comes into action when understanding the idea of gifts in journalism, and the ethics and choices behind it. There are two types of gift giving, in the journalism business. The first gift, is one given in the hopes that it may influence the outcome of the story, or influence to write or show a particular side of the story or point of view. (Holland, 2008. paragraph 4). These gifts, an almost bribe of sorts are in a direct violation with the MEAA code of ethics. The gift was given with the intention of undermining a journalists accuracy, fairness or independence. (Media Alliance Code of Ethics. 2012).

An example of this type of gift giving could be whilst during an interview of an oiling company whose previous track record is less than perfect, the interviewee attempts to give the journalist gifts that could include free airfares, hotel stays, or discounted prices on objects. This would be the first type of gift giving, and should it is the ethical thing to decline, thus following the MEAA code of ethics. The second type of gift giving is perhaps ethically harder to determine. In many foreign and Asian countries, the idea of giving a gift is a sign of respect and is often used as a means of thanking the journalist after they have already finished the interview. These gifts are a sign of gratitude and are a common place in many Asian countries. It is to this extent that the concept of accepting gifts as a journalist is acceptable only on extreme circumstantial occasions, such as it being a norm in the country your interviewing in, and if it is a custom of that country. Above all,

gifts should never persuade or change the journalist's ideals, to report the truth to the public.

In conclusion, “ Ethical Journalism requires conscientious decision-making” . (Media Alliance Code of Ethics. 2012). It is the fine line between the choices we make and ethical choices we perform that will ultimately shape a journalist between a normal reporter, and an ethical reporter. Codes such as the Media Alliance Code of Ethics are put in place to help steer journalists towards the ethical choices that are to be made in the course of their journalism careers. Through the understanding of ethics, it is now made apparent that all journalists are faced with choices that may question their own ethics, but ultimately it is the high standard of ethics that keeps journalists reporting with honest, fairness, independence and respect.

References:

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