



Ethics Policy

PREAMBLE

Bend Weekly is committed to the highest ethical standards. To take pride in the work we do, we must do our work honestly.

Fairness and accuracy are among our core values. But perhaps nothing stands above the need for the newspaper to maintain and preserve its integrity. We cannot hold the people we cover to standards we do not meet ourselves. The public's trust in our work - our most important asset - depends on our meeting these high standards.

This document is meant to provide a set of guideposts. It examines the fundamental and often difficult questions staff members might confront in the course of carrying out our journalistic mission. No policy can forecast every possible conflict of interest or ethical quandary that an employee of Bend Weekly might confront. But this policy is an attempt to provide boundaries and encourage employees to be aware that, as journalists, we must adhere to a code of conduct that is equal parts ethics and common sense.

An ethics policy should be a living document. The committee that drafted these guidelines anticipated that Bend Weekly, on occasion, must revisit the important ethical issues of the day to ensure its ethics policy does not become obsolete or, worse, ignored. Therefore, these are broad outlines; the newspaper will establish a fair method of dealing with ethical questions.

(An important note: Our relationship to our parent company, .Com Endeavors, Inc. (DCEI), is a special case and, therefore, outside the boundaries of this policy. It is unique among all possible relationships and we acknowledge that at the outset. For example, it is permissible to hold stock in DCEI -- even if you're covering it or making decisions about play and placement.)

FAIRNESS

Bend Weekly strives to operate with fairness, accuracy and independence.

It strives to be diligent in its pursuit of the truth without regard to special interest and with fairness toward all. Although the law does not require it, Bend Weekly whenever possible seeks opposing views and solicits responses from those whose conduct is questioned in news stories.

Editors and reporters should make news decisions without regard to the connections or outside activities of editorial employees, the publisher or employees of any other department.

FINANCIAL HOLDINGS

The business and commercial activities of newsroom employees and their families shall not influence news decisions. Employees shall not benefit financially from news decisions they make or information they obtain, nor shall they make news decisions with the intention of creating a financial gain or loss for someone else.

This means, for example, we should not own stock in individual companies or industries we cover or make news decisions about them as part of our regular assignment, regardless of where those companies are located. In other words, we don't own what we cover, and we don't cover what we own.

If you have questions about what poses a conflict of interest, or what is on your beat, or the appropriateness of holding a particular stock, it is your responsibility to ask for direction from your ME. In all cases, get a clear "yes or no" response before proceeding. If necessary, get a response in writing (such as an e-mail) before taking any action. This policy applies to stock no matter how it's acquired, including direct purchase, inheritance, and "friends and family" grants. Shares in pooled investments such as mutual or index funds, or in an account you don't actively manage (i.e. a blind or family trust), are excluded.

Although staff members may work or operate a business in addition to their employment at Bend Weekly, it shall not conflict with their journalistic duties or give the appearance of conflict. For example, an editor whose spouse or significant other is employed by an auto dealership should not make decisions about that dealer or its competitors. Or, a staff member whose family owns several buildings in downtown Bend should avoid redevelopment stories that could affect that area.

Even those staffers not involved in news decisions are reminded that information often available in the newsroom is in advance of public announcement and should not be used to make financial decisions.

In general, employees should avoid any potential conflict of interest between their financial holdings and their jobs. If for any reason you are asked to report or make key decisions about a story concerning a company in which you have a financial interest, this interest shall be fully disclosed to your ME. If a significant assignment is undertaken, you may not buy or sell securities of the company, or the industry of which it is a part, before the story's publication date.

The ethics policy should be read by all employees annually, and prospective and new employees will receive this policy. All employees will be held responsible for adhering to this policy.

FREELANCING

Freelancing by staff members is permissible, with some restrictions. This policy provides guidelines for what staff members can do without permission, what they need permission to do, and what they cannot do. We want to avoid conflicts of interest and to protect the paper's integrity, while acknowledging that staff members sometimes supplement their incomes by freelancing on their own time.

Bend Weekly staffers may not work for media that are in direct competition with the paper. Direct competition is defined as daily and weekly newspapers that originate in the Bend market area, as well as Web sites that are focused primarily on Bend. The same is true of local radio and television programs that target our core content. Any exceptions must be made by the Managing Editor.

We use "freelance" as a broad term, to include text, photos, graphics, illustrations, and copy-editing. (Similarly, when we say that staff members may not work for organizations or companies they cover, we use "cover" to include writing, editing, photography, illustration or page design. We say this because any facet of coverage could be compromised in a way that could favor an organization.) The umbrella extends overall.

As Bend Weekly employees, our first obligation is to the newspaper.

Freelancing for magazines that originate in the Bend Area is permitted after possibilities for publication in Bend Weekly have been explored, and their immediate supervisor has been notified of the assignment.

Bend Weekly staffers must not scoop the paper. Breaking news, enterprise stories and noteworthy items about the people, places, events, etc. you cover should be reserved for the paper.

ONLINE FREELANCING

When freelancing for a print publication, it is important to not allow the publisher to automatically claim online rights. There are cases where a print publication does not compete with the paper, but the publication's online site does. Check with a supervisor before granting online rights.

Generally, freelancing for online sites shall follow the guidelines for print. However, online is developing so rapidly and business alliances are so fluid, it is difficult to draw a definite line between what Bend Weekly staffers can and cannot do.

Because the "Friend or Foe" distinction is often blurred online, freelance decisions are best made on a case-by-case basis. In general, staffers will need to notify a supervisor to freelance for online publications that compete directly with the Bend Weekly digital site. When making "Yes or No" decisions, supervisors must take the marketplace into consideration. (For example, if a staffer is offered \$1,000 to do freelance work for an online site and Bend Weekly can only offer \$25, the supervisor must take the disparity in pay into account.)

When freelancing online, the staffer, when appropriate, is to be identified with Bend Weekly. Whenever possible, a cross-link between the site and BendWeekly.com will be established.

RADIO AND TELEVISION

Shows that are related to a staffer's area of expertise - in other words, shows where the appearance is generated by work that has appeared in the paper - require the approval of their immediate supervisor. The guest must be clearly identified as a staffer at Bend Weekly.

Staffers who appear as private citizens to discuss subjects not related to their work at the paper do not need the permission of a supervisor. (Example: An assistant features editor does not need permission to go on the air to discuss his opinions about U.S./China relations.) If the guest is to be identified as a Bend Weekly staffer, it must be clear that he or she is appearing as an individual and is not representing the paper.

Staff members shall demonstrate the same commitment to fairness and high standards of impartiality that they do in the newspaper.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Freelance PR assignments should always be discussed with a supervisor. Because the potential for conflict is high and often indirect, this practice is discouraged. (The director of a PR firm may tell a client, "I've got an in at Bend Weekly. John Doe is writing copy for us.")

Staffers must not accept freelance assignments from PR firms and marketing agencies that have a connection to the area they cover. No writer will do work for a PR journal that is connected to the area they cover. Writers must not write for the publications of institutions they cover ... the

business writer assigned to a local business should not write for that business's in-house magazine; the writer who covers COCC may not write for their alumni magazine.

Remember when freelancing for trade journals that breaking news belongs to Bend Weekly.

USE OF COMPANY PROPERTY WHILE FREELANCING

Staffers may not make use of company equipment or resources while freelancing for outside publications.

MEALS, TICKETS, TRAVEL POLICY

Staff members may accept free admission to plays, concerts and other performances and sporting events for the purpose of reviewing them or covering them for Bend Weekly. Otherwise, free tickets to sports events, movies, plays, fairs, amusement parks and all other entertainment for which admission is normally charged shall not be accepted or solicited.

If the event being covered is a private screening or special press conference for which tickets are not being sold to the public, it is permissible to attend gratis. Similarly, in cases such as a business seminar or meeting, a reporter covering the event may attend without paying the registration fee after receiving permission from a supervisor. Special press box facilities, photo galleries and passes to areas exclusive to the press are also accepted, provided these are used only for business reasons or by the persons assigned to cover the event. These press passes must never be given or sold to anyone.

Arrangements for transportation and other expenses used in the performance of professional duties are made on an individual basis with Bend Weekly and the staffer, and may vary from case to case, and may or may not be paid for by Bend Weekly.

GIFTS AND SAMPLE PRODUCTS

Employees should not accept or solicit business-connected gifts or free services. Items received whose value is greater than \$25 should be taken to a central location where they will be returned or donated to a charity. A letter explaining the paper's policy will be forwarded to the giver.

Items that are of token or insignificant value (under \$25), such as calendars, pencils or key chains, may be accepted if returning them would be awkward.

Books, records, sample food products, software or other items sent to Bend Weekly for review purposes are accepted as news releases. They may be kept by the person who reviews them or given to staff members who can use them as part of their job. Materials that are not distributed should be given to a charity or public institution. These items should never, under any circumstances, be sold for personal profit.

CONNECTIONS

Employees shall not use their positions with Bend Weekly to get any benefit or advantage in commercial transactions or personal business for themselves, their families, friends or acquaintances.

For example, they shall not use company connections to:

Get information or a photograph for purposes other than those of the newspaper.

Expedite personal business with, or seek special consideration from, public officials or agencies, such as police.

Seek for personal use information not available to the general public.

Get free, or at a reduced rate not available to the general public, considerations such as tickets, memberships, hotel rooms or transportation.

Employees shall not use the company name, reputation, phone number or stationery to imply a threat of retaliation or pressure, to curry favor or to seek personal gain.

For example, it is improper for an employee to write a personal letter of complaint to a merchant on company stationery, or to arrange a personal purchase at wholesale or discount rates through the public relations office of a corporation.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITY

Because the newspaper should be perceived as impartial, staff members should avoid outside activities that could conflict with their jobs. Under no circumstances should a general assignment reporter, for example, work for a political campaign, either for pay or as a volunteer because it could be interpreted by the public as Bend Weekly involvement in the campaign. Likewise, a drama critic should not serve as a fund-raiser for the Tower Theatre because it might indicate a built-in bias on the part of the writer. In many cases, it would be a clear conflict to accept appointive office or run for elective office. In other cases, it may not be a conflict. For example, there would be no problem for most staff members in holding office as president of school PTA. But if the education reporter were to hold the same office, a conflict would be present. There is no desire to unduly restrict staff members' exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship. But we must recognize that the reputation of Bend Weekly is important to us all, and that a full discussion of possible conflict is essential to avoiding public embarrassment.

Staff members should avoid advertising or blatantly espousing viewpoints on public issues while at work, such as wearing an anti-nuclear button while covering a rally. Reporters and editors should be aware that such blatant espousal casts doubt upon their impartiality. Staff members should also avoid signing petitions or otherwise identifying themselves with causes they are expected to cover.

RELATIONSHIPS

Employees shall not write, photograph, illustrate or make news judgments about anyone related to them by blood or marriage, or with whom they have a close personal relationship. This does not apply to first-person stories or stories in which the relationships are clearly spelled out. Nor shall personal relationships within the newsroom affect news judgment.

For example, it is clearly a conflict to report on a public official with whom one is romantically involved.

MISREPRESENTATION

Under ordinary circumstances, reporters or photographers ought to identify themselves to news sources. There might be times, however, when circumstances will dictate not identifying ourselves. Only the Publisher or Managing Editor may approve such exceptions.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism exists in many forms, from the wholesale lifting of someone else's writing to the publication of a press release as news without attribution. The weekly newspaper should be an original work. Do not borrow someone else's words without attribution.

PAYING FOR NEWS

Any attempt to pay for news or for access to news raises serious questions about the validity of the news and the motives of seller and buyer. Except in extraordinary circumstances - approved by the Publisher or, Managing Editor - we do not pay for news.

UNIDENTIFIED SOURCES

We will avoid the use of unnamed sources. We will make every attempt to get sources to speak on the record in every instance.

We will not allow the use of unnamed sources in the case of personal attacks and we will avoid letting them be the sole basis for any story.

In all cases, we will attempt to get independent, corroborating sources for every assertion in a story.

We will attribute information to unnamed sources only when news value warrants and it cannot be obtained any other way.

When a story arises where the reporter and editor together believe that the use of an unnamed source may be necessary, the following guidelines apply:

1. The editor and reporter need to ask each other: why does this person need to remain unnamed? There must be a thorough discussion between reporter and assigning editor of whether there is any other way to get the story and the ramifications of using the unnamed source, considering the option of not running the story at all if the source cannot be identified. We recognize that some people may be risking their livelihood by speaking out for a story and need to be protected.
2. If both reporter and editor agree that the use of an unnamed source is necessary, the source must be described in as much detail as possible to indicate the source's credibility. Simply attributing a comment to "a source" is inadequate.

We should try to be as specific as possible. We should use the source's job title or general job description or say how they know the information if possible. We should use the word "person" or an equivalent rather than the word "source" in most cases; the word "source" is journalistic jargon and is vague. And we should be precise about the number of sources we have for any piece of information; saying "sources close to the investigation" when there is only one source is not acceptable.

Some examples of phrasing that works in describing an unnamed source: "a city employee" or "a person present at the meeting" or "a university administrator" or "someone who has seen the affidavit."

3. While it is important to protect the identity of our unnamed sources, we should not mislead our readers in order to provide this protection. So we should not say that a key source "could not be reached for comment" if we reached them and had a not-for-attribution interview. Likewise, if an unnamed source in a story is quoted on the record elsewhere in the same story, we should not allow the source to use the on-the-record quote to make contradictory assertions or distort the facts.

4. The reporter must identify the source to his or her editor and the editor must ask for the identity of any unnamed source used in the story. Editors who learn the identity of the source will be bound by the same confidentiality agreement reached between the reporter and the source, and the source's identity will not be made known to anyone outside of Bend Weekly.

5. In cases where the assigning editor judges the story to be of great importance, of a highly sensitive nature or has any questions about using the unnamed source, that editor needs to bring the story to a department head for discussion and approval. In all cases where a story is based largely on unnamed sources, the matter should be discussed with a department head. Department heads should discuss any sensitive issues with their supervisors.

6. Every story that includes an unnamed source must include a notation indicating that the use of the source has been discussed with an assigning editor (Sources OK - Luis). In cases where the use of the source has been brought to the attention of a department head, there should also be a notation indicating the department head's approval (Sources OK - Elisabeth).

TRUTHFULNESS

It is obvious that we should not knowingly publish falsehoods.

A reporter should not make it sound as if a source made a statement to the reporter if, in fact, it came to us through a third party. Nor should we write about an event we did not attend in a way that gives the impression we did.

In the interest of integrity and fairness, photographers and editors should exercise caution in the use of "set-up" photographs. In the same way that reporters do not make up quotes, photographers do not reconstruct scenes or events with the purpose of making them appear as if they were "found" moments.

However, photographers are often called upon to make environmental portraits or do illustrative photography. In no way should such photographs be approached or treated as anything but what they are. They are either portraits or are demonstrative of a situation. Both should be clearly labeled.

That means that care should be taken in writing captions so they do not suggest the picture is something it is not. For example, is Clark Kent working in his study or is he simply in his study (for purposes of a portrait)? Is Lois Lane actually practicing her technique of boomerang tossing or is she demonstrating her technique of boomerang tossing (for purposes of a photograph)? Such distinctions make a difference.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

Any employee who is aware that another staff member has caused or intends to cause publication of a falsehood has a responsibility to alert a supervisor. Any employee who suspects a fellow staff member of committing ethical violations is encouraged to report the matter.

QUOTATIONS AND ATTRIBUTION

Quotations should always be the exact words that someone spoke, with the exception of corrections in the type of errors, as of grammar and syntax, that often occur unnoticed when someone is speaking but are embarrassing in print. In most cases, the grammar of people for whom English is a second language should be corrected as well. Spoken hesitations such as um and ah should usually be omitted.

Parentheses within quotations are almost never appropriate and can almost always be avoided. Quotations are used to enliven and emphasize elements of a story, and internal explanations will often bog them down. If many parenthetical explanations are needed, the quote probably wasn't set up properly or wasn't a good quote to start with.

Avoid ellipses within quotations. While reporters often use ellipses in an attempt to remove extraneous elements, to readers they simply signal that we have altered the quotation and raise concerns that we may have changed its meaning in the process. Simply put: ellipses raise issues of credibility. We will, however, use ellipses to remove profanity from quotations.

How do we identify the manner in which quotes are received? Quotes obtained in a face-to-face conversation or over the phone need no special explanation. However, we generally should explain when a quote was received in some other way: via e-mail, in a prepared statement, in a televised press conference.

We should avoid the vague term "could not be reached for comment" in favor of phrasing more specific to the medium (by phone, e-mail, left message with assistant), time frame and number of attempts. For instance, instead of writing "Anita Roberts could not be reached for comment," we should say, "Anita Roberts did not respond to a message left with her assistant or to an e-mailed inquiry on Friday."

In cases where we conduct an interview through a translator, we should identify quotes received in that manner ("said through a translator"), as a signal to the reader that there are limits on our ability to attest to the accuracy of the information. In cases where the reporter does the translation, no special designation is necessary, unless the fact that the interviewee spoke in a foreign language is material to the story.

TRANSPARENCY: BYLINES, DATELINES AND CREDIT LINES

Bylines, datelines and credit lines should accurately convey to readers the source of our reporting.

Bylines tell readers who is responsible for an article's content while giving credit where credit is due.

When multiple bylines are proposed for an article, the editor should consider, did all reporters contribute significantly and more or less equally? If not, a credit line is more appropriate for lesser contributors.

In multiple bylines, the first name generally should be that of the reporter who wrote the article, or if different, of the largest contributor. This most directly tells readers who is responsible for the content.

When a reporter writes an article based on wire service reports, the source should be cited in the article and the article should carry the reporter's byline and a credit to the wire service. If the reporter independently reports the facts of the story, the byline can stand alone. If the reporter simply inserts some local reaction, or simply assembles the wire copy, the byline should be the originating source with a reporter's credit at the end.

Datelines: There is clear policy on the use of datelines - a dateline means that a reporter was there.

RESPECT FOR PRIVACY

Bend Weekly is sensitive to the privacy of victims of rape and child molestation, and of subjects who clearly would be in physical danger by publication of their names and addresses. There may be circumstances in which we would nevertheless publish such names, but they must be approved by the Publisher or Managing Editor.

Ordinarily, consent is implied if a photographer approaches a subject, indicates that he/she is a newspaper photographer and asks for names and other facts. In some circumstances, written releases may be required (at mental health institutions or orphanages, for example).

CORRECTIONS

Bend strives to guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortion through either emphasis or omission.

Errors, whether made by the reporter, editor or source, shall be acknowledged. This includes all matters of fact, including the misspelling of proper names. When an error has been made, it shall be acknowledged in a straightforward correction, not disguised or glossed over in a follow-up story. Corrections and clarifications shall appear in a consistent location.