Applying Standards:
Media Owners and Journalism Ethics

A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance

By Eugene L. Meyer

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CIMA Center for International Media Assistance

NED National Endowment for Democracy
Supporting freedom around the world

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), at the National Endowment for Democracy, works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of independent media development throughout the world. The Center provides information, builds networks, conducts research, and highlights the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies. An important aspect of CIMA's work is to research ways to attract additional U.S. private sector interest in and support for international media development. The Center was one of the of the main nongovernmental organizers of World Press Freedom Day 2011 in Washington, DC.

CIMA convenes working groups, discussions, and panels on a variety of topics in the field of media development and assistance. The center also issues reports and recommendations based on working group discussions and other investigations. These reports aim to provide policymakers, as well as donors and practitioners, with ideas for bolstering the effectiveness of media assistance.

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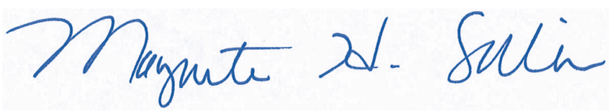
Preface

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) at the National Endowment for Democracy commissioned this study about the ethics of news media owners and executives. The report examines the inherent conflict of interest many media owners face in placing responsibility for content above their commercial interests and how this affects the practice of journalism in countries where independent news media already face challenges.

CIMA is grateful to Eugene Meyer, a veteran journalist, for his research and insights on this topic.

We hope that this report will become an important reference for international media assistance efforts.



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Methodology

This study is based on more than a dozen interviews by telephone, e-mail, and Skype; primary and secondary documents; commentaries; websites; blogs; and other sources.

The author is especially grateful to the following persons, who were consulted in the preparation of this report:

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Bharat Bhushan–former and founding editor of India's tabloid *Mail Today*

Chris Elliott–Readers Editor at *The Guardian*

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Aidan White–Global Ethics Network; director, Ethical Journalism Network; former general secretary, International Federation of Journalists

Muhammad Ziauddin–Editor, *Express Tribune*, Karachi, Pakistan

Introduction

Recent focus in global discussions of media ethics has been on establishing and raising standards for rank-and-file journalists, including reporters and lower or mid-level editors. But there is a nascent effort to refocus a critical lens on the proprietors of media.

When it comes to codes of ethics for media owners, the traditional organizations concerning themselves with ethics in journalism have been noticeably silent. Scan the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) code of ethics, considered the gold standard in the United States, or the brief, but global code of principles of the International Federation of Journalists and you will not find "media owners" or proprietors mentioned anywhere. Perhaps it is assumed that one size fits all. But does it?

Focus on media owners is a relatively recent phenomenon in the twenty-first century, but it is not entirely new. In the United States, reformers in the early decades of the twentieth century aimed their criticism at the "press lords" who owned large newspapers and chains. These critics emerged from the Progressive Era and, later, from the Great Depression-spawned social movements of the 1930s.

More recent criticism has focused on ownership concentration and the perceived evils of media monopolies stifling competition. A market with less concentration, the argument has gone, encourages pluralism and has at least the potential to offer diverse voices and more of what has come to be called "accountability journalism." In 2002, prominent journalists called for media boards of directors to include working journalists to balance corporate responsibility with social responsibility in coverage. The idea created some buzz among media theorists but went nowhere.

In Western democratic societies there exists an inherent conflict of interest as ownership has shifted from private to public, with corporate boards that must, by law, respond first and foremost to their shareholders. Thus, even media corporations with high ethical standards reflected in their content have been forced to sell to abide by their fiduciary responsibility. Champions of private local ownership over the larger publicly-traded corporate model are vocal, but the evidence of one method being superior to the other is contradictory. In either case, conflicts over the interests of owners–whether large corporations or private parties–and journalistic values persist.

In countries where news media are considered less free, the conflict is even more troublesome. While several codes in these countries call for media owners to place responsibility for content above their commercial interests, the reality is that when promulgated by governments they can threaten rather than enhance freedom of the press. When voluntary, they are little more than aspirational.

Thus, some view the very notion of codes of ethics for media owners as potentially dangerous as well as ineffective. Nonetheless, media funders and implementers are urged to assist groups that seek to hold media owners accountable for the sins of omission and commission that occur in the publications, broadcast networks, and other media they own and control. As the funding of public-interest journalism becomes more challenging, notions of corporate social responsibility and good governance in management of media become more relevant and confidence-building actions that will encourage change across the ownership landscape, old and new, are urgently needed.

Backdrop: Media Owners and Ethics in the West

In the spring of 2012, a new media support group, the Ethical Journalism Network, was formed in Paris. Led by an Anglo-Irish expatriate, Aidan White, its mission was, he said, "groundbreaking" by giving equal prominence to the need for ethical practice in the boardroom as well as the newsroom. But it was also replaying an old refrain.

The group came together as a commission in Great Britain chaired by Lord Justice Brian Leveson was continuing its probe of the illegal-hacking scandal that was enveloping reporters, editors, publishers, police, and politicians–all players, some arrested, others just implicated–in the swelling controversy that had earlier led to the closing of the *News of the World* tabloid. The tabloid was revealed to have hacked into the mobile phone voicemail messages of politicians and celebrities, as well as private citizens, including a 13-year-old girl who had been murdered. There seemed to be enough unethical behavior to go around, but the public focus this time was heavily on the top of the corporate chain, and on media mogul Rupert Murdoch himself.

"The News International case in the United Kingdom has provided much evidence to support the view that media monopolies are dangerous to democracy," White said. "Some might say that the scandal that has enveloped Murdoch's News International and the behavior of Silvio Berlusconi, prime minister and media magnate … in Italy, are the smoking guns which support the calls of [those] who have for decades argued for limits to the power and reach of powerful media companies."[1]

While the primary focus for this report is to examine the state of ethics in news media ownership in partly-free and not-free countries, as defined by Freedom House,[2] it is instructive to look first at the behaviors of media owners and top editors in Western democracies, such as Britain and the United States. For if media owners cannot be held to account in free societies, what hope can there be for such standards to exist in any meaningful way elsewhere?

Media codes of ethics–always a lively topic in academic circles, think tanks, and organizations of working journalists–seemed to have entered a new realm in the twenty-first century.

White, a former general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, says that introducing the notion of "good governance" underscores the point that ethical journalism depends absolutely on the presence of ethical management, which fosters essentially good moral conduct. "If there is one lesson we can learn from events in London around the Murdoch case and subsequent Leveson inquiry," he said, " it is the direct link between the culture of the boardroom and confidence in and quality of the newsroom."[3]

The apparent lack of internal self-regulation and good corporate governance at the *News of the World* and elsewhere also raises another perhaps even more troubling question, according to White: “Can you trust the media to regulate themselves? There’s a powerful argument on the part of the victims of journalistic malpractice that, because the media failed to regulate themselves, we’re going to need laws to bring them into line. This is very tricky for those of us in journalism to deal with.”

For the “media development community,” those who encourage best practices from the outside, as opposed to those who actually perform them, “the challenge is pretty straightforward,” White said. “Most focus has been on the bottom of the media pyramid–to improve the skills and competence of journalists, and that’s entirely valid. The problem is we haven’t focused at all on the top of the pyramid. Yet it’s the top that determines the moral character of the organization. Unless you have a clear message coming from the top–that we are going to be open, honest, ethical, and accountable to the public we serve–it’s not going to happen.”

Of course, White noted, “It is very difficult to get media owners to buy into this.”

In 1983 the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) ordered up a survey on the subject of editors, publishers, and newspaper ethics. “Unless advertising or a publisher’s pet interest in involved, publishers are usually left out of the discussions,” wrote Robert H. Phelps, chairman of the ASNE ethics committee, in his foreword to the published report.[4] “Yet there is no escaping the fact that the greatest power in a newspaper is wielded by the publisher. Decisions he or she makes often set the tone of the newspaper. Anyone interested in newspaper ethics ought to look at the publishers and their relationship with editors.”

The survey of 333 newspapers was coordinated by Philip Meyer, then a professor of journalism– now emeritus– at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a former Washington bureau chief for the Knight-owned *Akron Beacon-Journal*. He recalled in an interview: “The most controversial thing I recommended was that organizations like SPJ [Society of Professional Journalists] have enough on the enforcement side to declare something unethical when it happens. That has happened three or four times, but in no systematic way.”

Funded by the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation, the study, Meyer said, was inspired by the positive example of *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham and executive editor Benjamin C. Bradlee during Watergate “working together to do something politically hard and dangerous at the time. ASNE wanted to know what makes that possible to make their publishers behave that bravely and responsibly.”

Meyer categorized publishers by how they participated in the editorial direction of their newspapers–from benign (a helpful suggestion to an editor to improve quality) to malign (expecting special treatment for friends or advertisers "or using the newsroom for personal benefit"). Smaller newspapers appeared to have "politician" publishers, who are into everything. Most publishers were termed "absentee," meaning their involvement was minimal. "Statesmen," the publishers who don't interfere but sometimes try to be helpful, were more common "at larger newspapers owned by publicly held groups … Perhaps the need to answer to shareholders fosters professionalism and editorial-side strength," he speculated.[5]

Among other variables, Meyer also looked at size and ownership to determine if one or the other produced more or less ethical behavior. The study found no difference.

It is mainly when bad journalism affects the bottom line that publishers seem to take notice: In Britain, for example, the Murdoch family's News Corporation's hacking scandal cost the company $57 million in expenses related to continuing investigations into ethical-legal violations at the *News of the World*, the 168-year old newspaper and cash cow shuttered by its parent company in the wake of the controversy.[6] In May 2012 a parliamentary committee's Labor Party majority declared: "News Corp exhibited willful blindness, for which the company's directors–including Rupert Murdoch and James Murdoch–should ultimately be prepared to take responsibility … Rupert Murdoch is not a fit person to exercise the stewardship of a major international company." [7]

White, of the Ethical Journalism Network, sees good governance in journalism as key: "In order to have ethical journalism you need have ethical management. If there is one lesson we can see from events in London around the Murdoch case and the subsequent Leveson inquiry, it is the direct link between the culture of the boardroom and the quality of the newsroom."

The Leveson report was published in November 2012, following nine months of hearings. It was 1,987 pages long–with a 48-page executive summary.[8] It called for Parliament to create an independent regulatory body–by law–for newspapers. The body would not only investigate complaints but also could impose fines. In the view of some, the proposals met excess with excess. "For the first time we would have crossed the Rubicon of writing elements of press regulation into the law of the land," warned Prime Minister David Cameron. "We should, I believe, be wary of any legislation that has the potential to infringe free speech and a free press."[9]

But Leveson also took Murdoch's News Corporation to task not only for allowing widespread unethical practices within its news operation but also for failing to probe allegations of abuses.

"If News Corporation management, and in particular Rupert Murdoch, were aware of the allegations, it is obvious that action should have been taken to investigate them," Leveson wrote. "If News Corporation were not aware of the allegations … then there would appear to have been a significant failure in corporate governance."[10]

By contrast, the United Kingdom's *Guardian* sets the standard of ownership ethics in newspapers and media. But then its structure it is quite unlike any other. Founded in 1821 as the *Manchester Guardian*, its profits are entirely plowed back into the product, and it is overseen by a trust dedicated to that endeavor.

If media owners cannot be held to account in free societies, what hope can there be for such standards to exist in any meaningful way elsewhere?

The newspaper's values were articulated in a front page centennial letter, published in May 5, 1921 by editor C.P. Scott. Scott's declaration is replete with such statements as, "comment is free, but facts are sacred," and the uplifting notion that newspapers have "a moral as well as a material existence."[11]

It is not surprising, then, that the 16-point ethics code of Britain's Press Complaints Commission is part of the employment contract of every *Guardian* journalist. Breaching it is a potential disciplinary offense. Additionally, the *Guardian* has its own code of ethics to which employees must subscribe. It was a key recommendation of the Leveson Report that other proprietors follow the example of the *Guardian* and make such obligations a contractual responsibility. The first response of editors of major titles is that they will do so.

The Guardian Media Group, which includes the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, is overseen by the Scott Trust, established in 1936 "to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of the *Guardian* … Its core purpose is to secure the financial and editorial independence of the *Guardian* in perpetuity … Profits are reinvested to sustain journalism that is free from commercial or political interference."[12] The trust is the sole shareholder.

"In the absence of a proprietor, our journalists' main relationships are with other colleagues and with readers, viewers or listeners," wrote the editor-in-chief of both the *Guardian* and the *Observer* Alan Rusbridger, in an introduction to a recent reprinting of Scott's centenary letter. "There should be a high premium on transparency, collaboration and open discussion … The character of Scott Trust journalism depends on its independence of ownership, behaviour and belief."[13]

The Trust also hires and, in rare cases, fires the editors of the *Guardian* and *Observer*. Chris Elliott, the *Guardian's* readers' editor, rose through the ranks as a beat reporter and editor and was hired for his current position by the trust.

Elliott regards Scott's 1921 declaration as "a bit of a Bible for us in terms of conduct for us to which we should aspire … It's the basic guidance of the way we should behave."[14]

"A code of conduct devoted to editors is an interesting idea," Elliott continued. "It's not one I've had before. To be honest, in principle I can't see any reason why it shouldn't be part of the conversation. But I'm thinking about it for the first time. It certainly is not in our guidelines."

A code of ethics for media owners would almost seem beside the point for an enterprise whose ethical standards are the highest, such as the Guardian Media Group or its Scott Trust. But, as the hacking scandal demonstrated, the *Guardian* does not live in splendid isolation; it inhabits a journalistic world that is far from pure. Indeed, it was journalists at the *Guardian* who pursued the story that would ultimately lead to arrests, resignations and the shutting down of Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World*.

"Inside that media pyramid the real problem in the end is–though there were instances of unethical conduct by [working] journalists–that the corporate culture of the company created an internal way of working which was antagonistic to the values of ethical conduct," White said. "It didn't begin at the bottom of that media pyramid, it began at the top."[15]

Owners and Ethics in the Non-Western World

When discussing the ethics of media owners in a non-Western context, the conversation becomes more problematic–and ironic. In 2010, for instance, a week-long conference on media ethics and law was held at Tsinghua University in Beijing. The Chinese Association of Global Communication put it together in cooperation with UNESCO, Oxford University, and the U.S.-China Education Trust. More than 40 universities and media groups sent more than 70 participants, including scholars from the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Spain. All the right notes were struck, with outsiders espousing the usual hallmarks of a free press.[16]

One may wonder, however, to what extent the message was heard beyond the conference rooms in a country whose authoritarian government tightly controls the news. According to a recent report, Chinese state-owned or controlled media carefully kept news of a major change in top government leadership from the public. Underscoring this, the Chinese government in October 2012 blocked the *New York Times*' website after the paper reported on the wealth of the prime minister's family.[17] Moreover, it was disclosed in early 2013 that Chinese hackers had penetrated the computers of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, Bloomberg News and the *Wall Street Journal*.[18] It was unclear from early reports whether the Chinese government was involved, directly or indirectly, in the hacking of the news organizations.

In Bulgaria, lack of transparency in media ownership is such that business and political groups are said to control top news organizations, which they bend to their own interests. Despite laws ostensibly designed to protect press freedoms, the South East Europe Media Organization said in a report released in April 2012, "Respecting the business interests of media owners and silencing any information that may be interpreted as harmful is widely accepted by most reporters as a way of doing journalism."[19]

A member of the European Union, Bulgaria nonetheless ranks low on most democratic media rankings, garnering only a "partly free" rating from Freedom House.[20]

"I guess journalism can exist without democracy," mused Shakuntala Rao, a journalism professor in the department of communication studies at the State University of New York-Plattsburg. "But what kind of journalism can that be?"[21]

A native of India who frequently travels back and forth between the United States and the South Asian subcontinent, Rao is among a group of academics espousing a global approach to journalism ethics. But she is also a realist when evaluating the cultural differences that often stand in the way of achieving such lofty goals.

These issues were underscored at a three-day conference, held at the Indian Institute of Mass Communications in New Delhi in November 2011. "None of the owners came," Rao reported. One of the editors attending spoke of pressures on what and what not to cover coming from "not [just] from advertisers but from owners."

Owners often use "cultural differences" as an excuse for what Western journalists would consider unethical coverage, Rao said. In India, for example, where religion is a polarizing, and even a deadly dividing line, there is a tendency to exclude information "in the name of hurting people's religious sentiments. That is a consistent issue coming up in our discussions. Owners use that–'This is what we do in India.'–to defend against any kind of criticism, against any kind of future engagement. Those cultural values self-perpetuate themselves."

Unlike in many Western countries, print newspapers in India have seen explosive growth in number and circulation over the past two decades. Television choices have also exploded. "Expansion of media created hunger for ethical answers," Rao said. But commercially appealing products–news of celebrities, fashion, Bollywood–have trumped more serious content, a reflection of media owners' propensity for profit over substance.

Bharat Bhushan, the founding former editor of India's tabloid *Mail Today*, is an outspoken skeptic. "There is no code of ethics for media owners in India," he wrote in an e-mail. "Corporate influence in the media has grown as corporate investments in media have gone up of late. Big business houses are investing in print, television and cable (distribution). So, in effect, they directly control the media … Many journalists–especially those in the business bureaus of media houses–are very close to some corporate houses and do not attempt critical stories about them…There is no separation between the Church and the State, which, at the best of times, could be seen as a shifting frontier in those media houses where such separation exists."[22]

In a blog post, Bhushan noted that half of media advertising revenue in India comes from the government, giving it potent leverage to affect news coverage. While it is seldom used, he writes, "willing editors and media owners … publish positive reports to please the powers that be."

However, he argues that even non-governmental advertising revenue "instead of keeping the Press free, actually becomes a tool in the hands of the market leaders to restrict the market" and shapes "the structure of the media as well as its content … Increasingly as the line between ads and news has got blurred, so has the distinction between editors and ad-sales managers. What used to be a shifting frontier of control between editors and the marketing and ad sales departments has become open and porous."[23]

Bhushan further decries what he says is the pervasive practice in India of “paid news,” that is politicians and others paying media for positive stories that appear during elections without any editorial disclaimer, such as “paid advertisement” or “advertorial,” as in the Western press, thereby selling news space and “keeping the reader in the dark.”[24]

According to the Press Council of India:

> So-called “rate cards” or “packages” are distributed that often include “rates” for publication of “news” items that not merely praise particular candidates but also criticize their political opponents. Candidates who do not go along with such “extortionist” practices on the part of media organizations are denied coverage...In addition, owners of media organizations have financial relationships, including shareholdings, with advertisers, resulting in only favourable information about such advertisers getting disseminated and unfavourable information against them getting blacked out. Such trends have been discernible in sections of the Indian media for some years now.[25]

“Ad-Sales executive and media owners do not always want to take on big advertisers. Many journalists–especially those in the Business Bureaux of media houses–are very close to some corporate houses and do not attempt critical stories about them,” Bhushan writes. Many are believed to be on the payrolls of these business groups and some others get preferential shares.”

Then, there is the additional problem of “owner-editors,” owners who designate themselves as editors, completely obliterating any distinction between the business and editorial interests of a publication, whether print, electronic or digital. According to Bhushan, “There is no separation between the Church and the State, which at the best of times could be seen as a shifting frontier in those media houses where such separation exists.”

The same can be said for neighboring Pakistan which is a place of both peril and potential for the press. Deemed the deadliest for working press in 2011 and 2012 by Reporters Without Borders,[26] the country has media that has attempted to establish ethical standards of coverage. However, its outlets are also commercially-driven, and, critics charge, practitioners are as often concerned with rewards as reportage.

Muhammad Ziauddin, executive editor of English-language daily *Express Tribune*, was the first to create the post of ombudsman in Pakistan three years ago. However, he said, the ombudsman “doesn’t write anything. He keeps an eye out. During the last two years, he received just one complaint," which concerned a delay in issuing a correction for linking the wrong judge to a land controversy. With its new interactive website, however, Ziauddin said, "we react very quickly to any complaint. We apologize even before anyone can complain to the ombudsman."

His publisher, a member of the Lakhanis business family, "keeps out of the day to day affairs" of running the newspaper's editorial side.[27] In 50 years of newspapering, Ziauddin said he has witnessed an explosive growth in the number of ethical violations because of the growing competition.

Most newspaper owners, he said, "have no background in media. They jumped in from the private sector." As such, profit rather than professionalism is their primary motive, "except for a couple of papers like mine and Dawn [where he formerly worked], where the professionals have the last word in editorial policy and decision-making and the publisher stays out of it."

Ziauddin is chairman of the Pakistan Coalition for Ethical Journalism, formed in March 2012 with support from Aidan White's Ethical Journalism Network and other organizations. Its stated purpose is to raise the standards of working journalists and management.[28] However, he said, there is only "remote, remote chances to get media owners to comply. Before, we tried to get all the owners in but failed; none of them came. We tried again," with similar results.

The results of work carried out over the past year suggest this might change. A series of meetings organized by the new coalition under Ziauddin's leadership have focused on coming elections and internal standards of ethics. Among the participants have been senior executives from the major media.

The Press Council of Pakistan and Pakistan's electronic media regulatory body "have approached us to help them out in their own role," said Ziauddin. The press council chairman, a former judge, is paid by the Pakistani government, which raises questions, but most of the members are media owners, which he said at least opens up a path toward accountability.

Meanwhile, GEO TV has initiated Asool (which means "principles" in Urdu) and devoted a page on its website to the concept of self-monitoring.[29] "It's quite an important step forward," said White, who worked with GEO executives on developing it. "It's the first time any major media in Pakistan has been willing to do that."[30] It's perfectly okay, White said, if the company uses Asool primarily as a marketing tool, to demonstrate its good corporate policies. "I see nothing wrong with that. Why not if you do good journalism use it as part of branding, marketing? But you have to monitor, make sure your people are following" the manifesto.

The website touts its "Geo Manifesto" as a "social contract with our ultimate employer–You!" It contains "our values, goals, and declared biases," and sidebar quotes from prominent Pakistanis, such as this from Raja Riaz, opposition leader in the Punjab Assembly: "It is a good step. When GEO will practice it, other media groups will certainly learn a lesson and they will also try to apply it." The preamble declares, "The social contract between the media and its consumers is sacrosanct and any breach in this contract will have serious repercussions." But there is also a disclaimer: "This Code of Conduct mainly represents the aspirations and high standards that Geo management and Geo team wish to uphold professionally. Being an internal standard yardstick, this Code or any part of it, may never be used as a basis to pursue a claim against any company of Geo Group, any member of Geo management or any journalist working in Geo Group, if such claim is otherwise not maintainable under general provisions of law."

Most newspaper owners "have no background in media. They jumped in from the private sector." As such, profit rather than professionalism is their primary motive.

The draft, dated August 14, 2012, contains a list of principles that comport with Western standards of ethical journalism, and also this pledge: "If and when we are forced to choose, we will choose news over business. If any one doubts our ethical position then they may appreciate our enlightened sense of long-term gain instead over short-term greed. For we understand that in the long run our balanced coverage leads to better commercial performance for us and our stakeholders."

Azhar Abbas, managing director of GEO TV, said, "There are media owners who theoretically cover government to get benefits, advertising, or like giving coverage or supporting one political party, rather openly supporting one candidate," but not GEO.[31] "Same is case with Dawn [the country's third largest media group], total independence. But the rest–it's totally what the owners are saying. The owners are now deciding what is ethical and what is not. I think that's the most dangerous." Abbas studied journalism in the United States, in Boston and Syracuse, and had an internship at the Nashville *Tennessean*.

Abbas is one of four brothers with prominent media roles in Pakistan. One, a professional soldier, served as spokesman for the military. Another is editor of *Dawn*. A third is current affairs editor of Express TV, the second largest television network in the burgeoning Pakistani media landscape. “When three or four of us get together at the dining table, we always a have huge debate, no common ground as such,” says Azhar Abbas. “We don’t agree. We are in competition. We discuss politics and different things, and the next morning, I see a huge exclusive story in *Dawn* he gave me no hint on. This is how it works.”

White and his group have also been working with *Dawn* to institute an ethics self-audit, which company officials have agreed to “road test” as a pilot program for other media to follow. (See appendix for the text of the ethics audit.)

“The questions are not very controversial but it gets the media to report to itself–they review it themselves–and to assess performance,” White said. “The audit asks them a series of questions: who they are, what’s their mission … do they have guidelines … the number of journalists they employ… how they evaluate their journalism and how they deal with complaints. The aim is to produce a prototype to be used by others.”

Of course, it is an internal audit, with no requirement that it be made public. The ever-hopeful White adds, “Part of this process is to say to the media we’re not aiming to undermine you but to encourage from you a change within how you work if necessary. If they want to publish results, they can do it.” It’s a step in the right direction.

In Egypt, some media owners find the whole notion of ethics antithetical. “The owners are not with the idea,” said Abeer Saady, an Egyptian journalist actively pressing for codes.[32] “We are talking with them. We are trying to convince them. I don’t know how successful we can be.”

That the government also owns or controls most of the Egyptian media makes such codes even more problematic, said Saady, vice president of the Egyptian Press Syndicate. “Credibility is a challenge because … people are not going to buy newspapers in the future, because of the shape of ownership by the government … It was controlled by the regime and reflecting the views of the regime, and it lied to people.”

At the same time, she added, citizens took out their frustrations on the newspapers by physically attacking them, and other revolutions came from within the media. “It was a revolution inside the revolution. Some [journalists] were able to kick out their editors in chief.” Then, “some of those reporters were kicked out completely. This was not good for newspapers.”

“We are not popular and don’t try to be,” said Saady, speaking of Egyptian journalists in general as the Muslim Brotherhood came to political power. “We are not movie stars, celebrities; we are just journalists … trying to help people make right decisions in a very delicate transition, period.”

What they are, however, is a large work force, of perhaps 50,000 to 100,000, most of whom have operated largely within government-controlled press and broadcasting companies. The independent (private) media sector is vocal and energetic, but is dwarfed by the scale and influence of the state media. The whole notion of a free press exists largely outside the Egyptian tradition.

But this is the context in which Tarek Atia, an Egyptian-born journalist raised in the United States, has worked. For 15 years, he worked for the state-supported newspaper *al-Ahram*. Since 2006, however, he has worked to train journalists, first under a USAID-funded program, and now under his own private company, Egypt Media Development Program (EMDP). Until the middle of the last decade, he noted, Egypt had a “monolithic system” with virtually all media controlled by the state. Then, licenses were granted to independent media, while state-affiliated outlets were overseen by a parliamentary council allegedly on behalf of the public.

“Things are a bit fluid now,” Atia said in early November 2012. “What’s happened after the revolution is there’s a lot more demand for transparency and also budget adjustments. So the whole state-media apparatus is facing a lot of pressure, because people [are] saying, ‘Why should the state control and financially support these organizations when they’re not playing role of public media but serving their masters.’”

“After the revolution, there are a lot more of these private entities, whether newspapers, websites or television, so it’s a much more crowded marketplace. But editorial lines and coverage are very confusing now for readers. It’s not clear when they cover an issue whether [they’re] covering it because of a political alliance of owners or some sort of political enmity with a certain party,” Atia said. “There is active involvement in the owners, from what I know and what people told me, in determining what is covered, how and why it’s covered.” [33]

Across the Mediterranean, in Turkey, ethics in journalism are a sometimes thing–and codes of ethics specifically for media owners remain at worst an oxymoron and at best a distant hope.

“There has been no discussion in Turkey of holding media owners to standards,” asserted Doğan Tılıç, who teaches media and cultural studies at the Middle East Technical University, in Ankara.[34] Added Baris Soydan, managing editor of the Istanbul daily newspaper, *Sabah* (which means morning), “Media ethics is still quite new for Turkey.”[35]

Not least among the challenges are the often blatant conflicts of interest between the financial interests of owners and the public interest in being fully and fairly informed.

Media competition in Turkey can be intense, Tılıç said, but there are certain boundaries that are not crossed, certain issues that are untouchable. For example, he noted, a workers strike last year at *Sabah* went unreported elsewhere in Turkish media. "There was not a single word about it," he said. "For days and days, weeks and weeks, the journalists were in front with their banners, but the others never touched it, because a strike is something that harms the interest of every owner."

In another example, there were questions raised, Tılıç said, after a 2011 earthquake caused toxins from a silver mine to be released into the environment. "It was a very big story, but the mainstream Turkish media didn't touch it. There was almost no Turkish media owner not invested in the mine. So, for a journalist who knows his duty is to tell the truth, it becomes difficult. No media owner would give a place in his [publication] to that story."

Not least among the challenges are the often blatant conflicts of interest between the financial interests of owners and the public interest in being fully and fairly informed.

In some sub-Saharan African countries, there are codes for media owners. Tanzania has separate codes for media owners and publishers, media managers and editors, broadcast journalists and photojournalists.[36] These are not imposed by government but are self-enforcing codes– which are not legally binding– under the Media Council of Tanzania.

The Press Council of Botswana was also working last year towards a code of ethics that would "govern the conduct and practice of all media practitioners," including owners and publishers. However, there were certain self-imposed restrictions that would run counter to journalistic standards in Western democracies, such as refraining from publishing material "that is intended or is likely to cause hostility or hatred" to a sweeping variety of groups in society.[37]

In West African countries, codes are "directed mostly at journalist and production practice rather than ownership," according to Audrey Gadzekpo, senior lecturer in the School of Communications Studies at the University of Ghana.[38] However, she added, the National Media Commission in Ghana and the Media Foundation for West Africa “have had meetings with media owners in efforts to engage them on a number of issues aimed at ultimately improving content.”

Perhaps the most ambitious initiative to address problems of ethics among media owners on the continent is being undertaken by the African Media Initiative. AMI initiated an industry-led process to place leadership and ethics at the heart of African media by creating a “Leadership and Guiding Principles for African Media Owners and Operators” (LGP).

A working group was set up to draft and promote the principles in close consultation with the Media Owners Association of Kenya and the Media Owners Association of Tanzania. Its members were Christopher Kolade, pro-chancellor of the Pan-African University in Lagos and lecturer on ethics, leadership and governance in media; Guy Berger, director freedom of expression and media development at UNESCO; Wangethi Mwangi, former editorial director of the Nation Media Group; Amadou Kanoute, lead consultant at WAN-IFRA on the Declaration of Table Mountain; and Amadou Mahtar Ba, AMI’s executive director.

The code was adopted in November 2011 at the Fourth African Media Leaders Forum by more than 350 delegates attending the meeting in Tunis.

“The LGP is seen by many media stakeholders as an excellent tool that can bring together governments and media practitioners,” said Roukaya Kasennaly, AMI’s director of programs and knowledge management.[39] “In Rwanda, for instance, the Media High Council has requested that an engagement be started as soon as possible so that the code [can] be adopted by local media. In Malawi, the newly formed media owners association has already made a request for AMI to facilitate the introduction and adoption of the code. A similar request has been received from Ethiopia.”

“When AMI started on this, we made it clear that there is no future for media … if there’s no improvement in leadership,” AMI’s Ba said. “We always say, ‘The fish rots from the head.’”[40]

Ba said that while conditions vary from country to country, many media owners across the continent underpay their journalists and then turn a blind eye when reporters supplement their incomes with cash payments from sources. Owners also become tools of interest groups, taking payments from government officials, businesses, or religious groups in exchange for editorial support for certain positions. Sometimes they will later take the opposite editorial position if a higher bidder comes around.

However, media organizations are starting to realize that while economic conditions are difficult, they can't keep resorting to corruption to maintain their business, Ba said. He pointed out that after one or two early adopters sign on to the LGP, they start advertising their participation. Other media houses then follow suit for competitive reasons.

Because citizens using cellphones and social media are gaining credibility at traditional media's expense, Ba said, "without improved standards, these media houses are going to disappear."

In Latin America, the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) is particularly well-positioned to promote ethics of media owners, as its membership is made up of publishers from across the region. However, while its website's home page does list among the six principles "To encourage higher standards of professionalism and business conduct," it has not issued a code of conduct for media owners or rank-and-file journalists.

After much debate, the IAPA board did approve a list of 10 "aspirations," one of which states, "The credibility of the press is linked to its commitment to truth, the pursuit of accuracy, fairness and objectivity and to the clear distinction between news and advertising. The attainment of these goals and the respect for ethical and professional values may not be imposed. These are the exclusive responsibility of journalists and the media. In a free society, it is public opinion that rewards or punishes." But the list of aspirations does not specifically mention owners or publishers, and it no longer appears on the organization's website.

Nonetheless, there is at least one example of media owners as a group trying to improve the ethics of their industry in Latin America. The Consejo de la Prensa Peruana (Peruvian Press Council) was created in 1996, and its board of directors is composed of media house executives, in many cases members of families who own the 26 print organizations, a radio chain, and an all-news cable TV channel that are represented on the council.

The council includes an ethics tribunal that considers citizen complaints. According to the council's executive director, Kela León, the tribunal serves as a "collective ombudsman," and media members must agree to comply with its resolutions. The council¸ which has been widely held up as a success story, distributes a bulletin summarizing the tribunal's work from the past year and explaining to citizens how they can complain.[41]

The Double Bottom Line

As media owners have failed to meet high ethical standards, a new corporate paradigm seems to be emerging. It is the so-called "double bottom line," a term used to describe businesses that accept a responsibility to society as well as to stockholders. The UK's *Guardian*, with its annual ethical audit and ownership trust, is often cited as an exemplar of this.

But the double bottom line ethic did not originate with the media. "In the past few years, as the lines between grant-making and investing have begun to blur, the idea of measuring social return concurrent with traditional financial accounting has caught on among investors, funders and entrepreneurs," according to a 2004 Rockefeller Foundation study.[42]

Then, even as the new ethic was emerging, media became part of the mix. A report by the Investors Circle, published in 2005, noted, "Mainstream media companies operate within both an intensely competitive industry and the unforgiving conventional financial markets. It is no surprise, therefore, that most media companies prioritize short-term profit maximization over concern for social impact. Many investors and interested observers, however, are examining the long-term effects that this market condition will have on our communities and global culture."[43]

While some double bottom line media companies had limited success, the report noted, most suffered from under-capitalization, finding philanthropic infusions insufficient.

Fast forward eight years. Traditional or "legacy" media in the West are struggling to survive. The old business models are failing, as news organizations are reducing their news-gathering staffs in order to stanch their fiscal losses, only accelerated by the increasing role of digital media.

As a result, White said, there are two distinct trends: a weakening of commitment to journalism within traditional media and the appearance of a new class of owners, who seek to use media for political influence and in support of their other business interests. "In this sense media in some regions–Eastern Europe, for instance–are becoming trophy possessions for oligarchs and powerful interest groups," he said.

In this situation the double bottom line concept seems no longer theoretical but essential. Is it a lifeline for those who value news at least as much as they do profits? Or is it a hollow promise?

Enter the L3C, for low-profit limited liability company, whose primary objective is its social mission. The structure, first adopted by Vermont in 2008 and now in nine states, would allow media companies to accept philanthropic contributions, much as does a 501C3 charitable organization, thereby providing it with an infusion of operating funds. "The For Profit with a Nonprofit Soul" is how Americans for Community Development characterized it.[44]

News industry analyst Ken Doctor sees such structures as holding out at least the promise of fiscal success that is compatible with social responsibility, giving new weight to the old ideal of newspapers as a "public trust." He cites the UK's Guardian Scott Trust and the Poynter Trust, which has kept the *Tampa Bay Times* afloat, and journalistically honest, since 1988,[45] and he suggests that Murdoch's beleaguered publishing empire could go the same route.

Media funders and implementers can preach about codes for media owners, but only when violations of such standards affect a corporation's bottom line will ethics codes hold sway.

"They *add* a layer of purpose–usually serving the public through journalism–to the fiduciary responsibilities of public companies to maximize profit for the shareholders," Doctor blogged on the Nieman Journalism Lab website in May 2012.[46] "Yet with all the thinking and strategizing, we have few examples of using nonprofits of one sort or another to take over failing newspaper assets … For-profit newspaper companies prefer selling to other for-profits; it's neater and cleaner … Others point to the difficulty of raising new capital within a non-profit structure–and given the downward spiral of newspaper companies, new capital is often needed."

Admittedly, Doctor's commentary comes within the context of a conversation that is Western-centric, and where media funders are investing if not in L3C3 operations than in purely nonprofit news organizations. But after the seed money, how do such operations–in which the owners and practitioners hold themselves to the highest ethical standards–become financially self-sustaining?

"Attempts to legislatively mandate social responsibility have had difficulties, and deregulation has had difficulties," noted Eric Newton, senior adviser to the president of the Knight Foundation.[47] "Here's the basic problem: You've got the law and you've got ethics, but under corporate law you have a fiduciary responsibility to maximize the monetary return."

Ultimately, in the private sector, the business model and owners' codes of ethics may be mutually exclusive, compatible, or complementary, depending on the circumstances. Media funders and implementers can preach about codes for media owners, but only when violations of such standards affect a corporation's bottom line will ethics codes hold sway.

The "best solution," Newton believes, lies in "alternative corporate structures" that sidestep the otherwise inevitable conflict between the legal and the ethical.

Meanwhile, in Europe, the question of future funding of journalism and calls for more regulation of media is high on the agenda. A recent report of a High Level Group commissioned by the European Union calls for more diverse forms of funding for journalism and, worryingly, for the EU to use its centralizing power in Brussels to supervise media regulation across all member states.[48]

In a 2005 report, former editor of the *Des Moines Register* and *Washington Post* ombudsman Geneva Overholser, now director of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, argued that the failure of media to live up to the highest ethical standards (the public good versus the bottom line) stems from the dominant structure of ownership, as publicly-traded companies became increasingly tied to Wall Street.[49]

But history shows that ownership ethics fared no better under the press barons' sole ownership.

Even publicly-traded media companies with the best of intentions face unrelenting pressure from shareholders. Few would deny, for example, that the Knight-Ridder chain emphasized quality journalism at all levels. "I'm sure the top executives felt very keenly about the social responsibility of the Knight-Ridder papers," Newton said, "but at the end of the day they sold the company because they had a fiduciary responsibility to the shareholders, and it was best to sell where and when the prices were where they were, and there you have it."[50]

Further, the heartfelt plea of Overholser and others for publicly-owned media corporations to include rank-and-file journalists on their boards of directors met with stony silence. "Not a single company took them up on their offer," Newton said.

But even when the organization in question is nonprofit and publicly-owned, ethical abuses at the top occur. For instance, since 2007, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has also been operating under a trust, which is, among other things, charged with maintaining high ethical standards for the publicly-funded media organization.[51] But such legislated oversight did not avoid the scandal which rocked the BBC in 2012 with revelations that top executives ignored allegations that the late longtime television personality Jimmy Saville sexually abused children for years.[52]

As if ownership structure weren't a big enough hurdle to codes of ethics, both for owners and for senior editors, the digital age has added another layer of uncertainty and challenge.

"If I were to revisit this issue, my first priority would be seeing what the digital age has done to change ethical standards and behavior," said Philip Meyer, whose study for the ASNE on the ethics of print newspaper owners was seminal.[53] "When newspapers were the main journalism outlet and natural monopolies, they pretty well defined the journalism universe. It is more important now as media change, and there are more ways of behaving immorally and more questions–should there be a code of ethics for bloggers, for example?"

Conclusion

The underlying question in any discussion of media owners' ethics are these: Are publishers presumed to be also journalists? Or are they just business people whose product incidentally happens to be the news? And if they are solely the latter, should the same standards applied to journalists also be applied to them? Or do they exist in a separate if parallel universe?

And if they do inhabit the same universe, do the same principles of journalism apply? These principles–truth-telling, independence, impartiality, humanity (do no harm), and accountability–are well understood inside journalism, but how are they applied to the people responsible for the ownership, governance, and administration of media?

Finally, should the rules be different in countries whose governments are less than hospitable to a free press? Or is it simply a matter of recognizing and accepting a different reality? Of resigning ourselves and consigning the public in such media markets to a lesser standard than is the accepted norm in Western democratic societies?

Owners' influence–benign or otherwise–is a global issue. For many reporters and editors, it is just a fact of life, a normal part of doing the business of journalism. "When special interests own you," says Sherry Ricchiardi, an Indiana University journalism professor who has done ethics training in several countries, it is an issue for journalists "all over the world."[54]

It is no surprise then that Aidan White and people like him are increasingly pressing for a free press, responsible ownership, and ethical editors and media houses. In his *Guide for Self-Regulation for Egyptian Media*, he writes, more universally, that "the need for ethical journalism, good governance and media self-regulation poses an enormous and urgent challenge for journalists, editors and owners … It is not only journalists who must show moral courage … Media owners and executive must also demonstrate deep commitment to the core values of journalism … Unless media are led by people of principle there is little chance that journalists will deliver the quality of information that communities need and democracies require."

And if this does not happen, he warns, lawmakers will step in and pass laws regulating media and disciplining journalists. "This can be dangerous for democracy," he says. Indeed, five days after the release of the Leveson report, British Prime Minister David Cameron was advising editors of just such an outcome if they failed to embrace their own tough system of self-regulation, including "million-pound fines, proper investigations of complaints, prominent apologies."[55] A day later, editors of Britain's top newspapers met and agreed to do so.

So the conversation continues. “In some countries, they are better off with no rules,” says the Knight Foundation’s Newton. “It would be fairly dangerous to say to Vietnam all your publishers should have codes of ethics, because the government will say no problem, we’ll write that. Should African publishers have codes of ethics? Good Lord, that’s impossible to answer. For countries outside the Western democracy system, it’s really case by case. [Otherwise,] it would be like trying to apply the rainforest rules in the desert.”

And then there is this from Tarek Atia, the Cairo media development director: “We also need to go beyond a group of media professionals speaking to each other. There has to be a fulltime effort using all kinds of tools. A series of seminars is not going to do the trick. In the end, all these efforts are vocal but are not going to be very effective because it’s the community speaking to each other. It’s an issue of public interest, not just an issue for the media. There needs to be strong push to bring the public into the debate and have the public demand accountability.”

Recommendations

- Foundations should increase funding of nonprofit journalistic ventures to help them succeed in the marketplace of ideas and commerce.
- Media support groups and publishers associations should resist pressure to empower governments to police media in the guise of ethical codes for media owners and senior editors.
- Media owners and managers must own up to their ethical lapses in a public way and announce steps to reform themselves.
- Media owners should not sacrifice their independence by allowing private interests to pay for coverage–either directly by "buying" news space or indirectly by subsidizing reporting trips. New forms of funding public-interest journalism and media ownership are to be encouraged, but only if there are transparent and accountable systems for allocation of resources that do not compromise editorial independence.
- Internal forms of self-regulation and commitment to transparency in governance and high standards of corporate behavior should be implemented across all platforms of media.

Appendix: The Ethical Journalism Network's Media Standards for the Digital Age

Media Standards Audit: Reporting for Good Governance and Transparency

Introduction

Media work at a cracking pace. On all platforms of journalism media compete fiercely for market and audience share. However, many people, including those inside media, worry that in this overheated atmosphere standards of journalism and media governance are put under strain.

Intolerable time constraints, friction between journalism and commercial objectives and the need to adapt rapidly to changing market conditions all take their toll. Media companies themselves often find it difficult to monitor effectively their own performance and particularly their obligations to be open, inclusive and accountable.

The aim of this proposal is to help media establish a process to measure performance, set goals, and manage change through an organisational report that acts as an internal audit, providing information on the company and its work. The objective is to promote accountability through transparency.

It has been developed by the Ethical Journalism Network a network of journalists, media and media support groups, looking at ways of helping media to keep track of their corporate responsibilities by helping them to achieve their objectives.

The information is important for internal consumption, but it can also form the basis of the company's strategy for outreach – as an annual report, for instance – to help build trust with the audience.

It can promote the company's brand as an ethical and responsible provider of journalism and other information services among all stakeholders including staff, shareholders, and the public.

Whatever form it takes, the report should be clear. It should be understandable and accessible; it should contain information that supports analysis relative to other media; and it should be accurate and detailed enough for stakeholders to assess the company's performance.

Finally, this approach benefits everyone and creates confidence at all levels – including with investors, the workforce and the audience. Most importantly, a systematic review of performance opens the door to greater transparency and makes good business sense. It will increase economic opportunities and enable better and more informed decision-making.

Structure of the Report

The following provides a basic structure for a Media Standards Audit. It could be introduced with a statement from the President or Chief Executive Officer on the values of the organisation. The audit should begin with an analysis of the company's journalism and its role as a public information provider and followed by a detailed review of management and working practice.

The headings set out here may be amended as needed, but the objective should be to provide an accessible and coherent picture of how the company works, its aims and objectives and its vision for the future.

Our Mission

1. Company commitment to good governance and ethical standards
    - Mission statement
    - codes of conduct
    - governance rules (transparency, avoiding conflicts of interest)
    - engagement with external regulators (press council, etc)
    - Recognition and reward for quality work (prizes, etc)
    - Promoting integrity through co-operation between different sections of the company (commercial, marketing and editorial)
2. How much journalism we have produced
    - Numbers of editorial columns, contributions from external sources (commissioned and uncommissioned), and numbers of contributors on all platforms (including online sections),
    - Examples of holding power to account – business, politics, sports cultural life, etc.
    - Examples of issues raised and debates on important topics
3. How company protects editorial independence
    - Separation of commercial activities and editorial activities
    - Independence of the editor in chief : statement of editor on challenges and opportunities
    - Obligation of journalists to respect ethical codes
4. How Company deals with complaints and concerns of audience
    - Internal systems for dealing with complaints
    - Numbers of complaints received internally. How many resolved amicably, how many legal cases, how many complaints to the press council or industry regulator?
    - External systems for dealing with complaints (press council, etc.)
    - Actions for engaging with the audience and readers.

Who we are and how we work

5. Management and ownership of the company
    - Status, name and address of the company, its range of activities
    - Board of Directors
    - Structure of management

- Financial holdings
- Rules of internal governance
- Report on company actions to combat corruption and actions taken in response to incidents of corruption.
- Income received from state sources (advertising, grants, etc.)
- Details of membership and participation in groups such as industry associations or national/ international advocacy

6. Information on economic performance
    - Circulation figures and audience reach
    - Details of the company's financial status and reports as provided to national authorities as required by law.
    - A commentary on financial trends and market conditions.

7. Industrial relations, labour standards and training activity
    - Respect for national and international labour standards including trade union recognition, collective bargaining and gender equality
    - What we have done to improve journalistic skills and other training for staff
    - Numbers of full time, part-time and freelance staff
    - Actions to promote diversity in staff employment

8. Safety and Protection of Journalists and Media Staff
    - Provision of training and awareness-raising for reporting in danger zones
    - First aid training
    - Availability of medical insurance and life insurance
    - Co-operation with industry initiatives to improve safety

Our vision of the Future

9. Company objectives and targets
    - Set out targets – editorially and commercially – for the company
    - Assess successes and failures
    - Highlight specific projects and programmes

10. Industry trends
    - Challenges and risks in the next year

- Opportunities and potential for development

A Checklist for Key Report Information

1. EDITORIAL PERFORMANCE:

   Provide as many facts and figures as possible and focus on work that has enhanced the role of ethical journalism.

2. EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE:

   Report on structures and process for ensuring the right of editorial staff to work ethically and according to conscience including

- Obligations to respect an editorial code of conduct (is this set out in work contracts, for instance?)
- The appointment and independence of the editor in chief
- Systems for monitoring journalism and correcting errors
- Structures for setting out editorial policy and dealing with breaches of codes and guidelines.
- Policy regarding use of social networks (rules regarding Twitter and Facebook)

3. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE:

   The major elements in performance with as much transparency as possible on company revenues and expenditures as well as all income streams from state sources.

4. EMPLOYMENT:

   Provide information on the total workforce by employment type, employment contract, and region, broken down by gender. Key elements of collective bargaining agreements covering staff labour rights.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

   - Set out actions by company to protect journalists and media staff including
   - Provision of training in hostile environment work and first aid.
   - Provision of security protection.
   - Provision of health and life insurance to vulnerable staff members.
   - Other education, training, counseling, prevention, and risk-control actions to assist staff regarding serious diseases and physical attacks.
   - Health and safety topics covered in formal agreements with trade unions.
   - Engagement with safety activities at national and international level including International News Safety Institute.

6. TRAINING AND EDUCATION:

Set out company provision of training by

- Average hours of training per year provided for employee by gender, and by employee category.
- Programmes for skills management and lifelong learning that support the workforce and assist them in managing career endings.
- How workers receive performance and career development reviews, by gender.

7. DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:

   Set out the company's performance in composition of governance bodies and breakdown of employees per employee category according to gender, age group, minority group membership, and other indicators of diversity.

8. EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN AND MEN

   Provide information on the ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men by employee category, by significant locations of operation.

9. HUMAN RIGHTS:

   Report on recognition of and attachment to respect for national and international standards covering:

- Freedom of expression
- Portrayal related to Human Rights
- Cultural Rights
- Intellectual Property
- Protection of Privacy
- Corruption and lobbying
- Audience Interaction
- Advertisement
- Media Literacy

   Set out agreements and contracts that include clauses incorporating human rights concerns, or that have undergone human rights screening as well as total hours of employee training on policies and procedures concerning aspects of human rights that are relevant to operations, including the percentage of employees trained.

   Report on total number of incidents of discrimination and corrective actions taken.

10. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:

   Report on company recognition of the right to exercise freedom of association and collective bargaining and actions taken to support these rights.

Report on number of grievances related to human rights filed, addressed and resolved through formal grievance mechanisms.

11. PUBLIC POLICY:

Set out public policy positions and participation in public policy development and lobbying including the total value of financial and in-kind contributions to political parties, politicians, and related institutions.

12. CONTENT DISSEMINATION:

Report on actions taken to improve performance in relation to quality of content issues (particularly in editorial coverage related to vulnerable audiences) and results.

Report on the number and nature of feedback and complaints over editorial content and the responses of the company and outline the processes for addressing these concerns.

13. AUDIENCE INTERACTION and RATINGS

Report on methods to interact with audiences and results. Explain evaluation of ratings and practices related to customer satisfaction, including results of surveys measuring customer satisfaction.

14. MARKETING STANDARDS

Company policy related to adherence to laws, standards, and voluntary codes related to marketing communications, including advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. Give details of all actions taken to separate marketing communications (advertising and commercial activities) from editorial work.

15. MEDIA LITERACY

Report on actions taken to empower audiences through media literacy skills development and results obtained.

16. PRIVACY and DEFAMATION

Report on total number of complaints regarding breaches of privacy or actions against the company regarding libel or defamation.

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