

'This is my job,' By a Journalist

The next PR or marketing person who asks me if they can approve/proof-read a story before it goes to print is going to get the kind of reaction from me that makes a nuclear explosion look calm, controlled and harmless. Thereafter I will take a dictionary, and hit them repeatedly over the head with it, until they beg me to let them look up editorial integrity, and press freedom.

By [Samantha Perry](#) 4 Apr 2007

Once I'm done with that I'm going to add them to the list of people and companies that I will not ever, under any circumstances, deal with again (yes, there is one).

But by way of explanation, perhaps we should take a step back here and take a moment to reflect upon what my job actually is, and what it is not.

My job is to provide relevant, factually accurate information that is interesting, useful and entertaining to my readers (be they Brainstorm or ITWeb readers).

My job is not to get your corporate message across. If you want to get your corporate message out to the market take an advert, or, failing that, do a good enough job that your clients get your message and spread for you, then you wouldn't be so desperate that you have to attempt to force me to do it.

Secondly, my job is to take information from any sources as I feel are relevant or necessary, and process into one smooth, seamless story that makes sense, and is easy and pleasant to read. It is not my job to print every single word of jargon, BS and marketing waffle that spews from your lips. Should you choose to speak said jargon, BS, three-letter acronyms and marketing waffle during an interview, it will not be used. Try plain simple English in future.

Which reminds me, my job is to use comments and quotes that provide knowledge and insight, not to use anything you have said merely because you have said it. What I use and what I do not use in a story is my prerogative. Should I choose not to use your quote there is nothing you can do about it.

Further, my job is to write stories that my readers want to read, thus keeping the magazine or website's raison d'être alive and kicking, and thus providing advertisers with an audience to advertise to. Should I write what you want me to write my readers will stop reading and you will have no vehicle for your marketing and advertising.

Additionally, should you have a hissy fit and threaten to pull your ads, or never advertise again, because I wrote a story you did not like, or did not use your quotes, or looked at you funny when you were having a bad day you are not going to get a sympathetic response. You will get a positive and professional response. Nice people will kindly attempt to explain to you about press freedom, and what is enshrined in SA's constitution and that "really, really, we're sorry but advertising people have no control over what those journalists do".

What you will get from me is the pleasure of never being interviewed by me again. I will not be blackmailed, will not be bullied. And I most certainly will not interview you again, knowing that if you happen to take an advert for that feature you will assume I am running your quotes to keep you happy. Conversely, I will not do an interview knowing that if I do not run your quotes you will assume it is because you have not taken an ad.

This may come as a surprise to many of you, but journalists remain so only by ensuring their credibility and integrity is above reproach. Any hint that my credibility or integrity are compromised and I'm on a downhill r to the end of my career. Now I don't know about the rest of you, but I love what I do, take it very seriously, and have no urge to give it up just yet.

So the next time you have the urge to ask me if you can approve copy, or tell my sales team that you will n take an ad unless you are guaranteed editorial, remember the above and think about what you are actually doing. You are asking me to compromise my ethics, credibility, reputation, integrity and – ultimately – my career and I will not do that – for you or anyone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samantha Perry has been a journalist for some 10 years now, working predominantly in the ICT arena. She is currently the features editor for Brainstorm magazine and has previously worked for the likes of Computing SA (Editor), Computerweek and CRN.

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