

Network and communicate with external contacts

Overview

This Standard is about developing a wide range of contacts as a journalist. Contacts can alert you to opportunities, provide background information, help you to develop ideas, and check the accuracy of information.

It involves dealing with a wide range of people, including people you are in regular contact with, and those that are needed for a particular assignment. It is about understanding your organisation's policy on dealing with approaches from people you have not sought out – and striking the correct balance between courtesy and efficiency. It is also about dealing with queries and complaints and responding appropriately.

You must also know and understand how current data protection acts and regulations affect the information that can be kept regarding contacts.

This Standard is for anyone who works as a journalist.

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. identify and establish links with people who are relevant, or potentially relevant, to your work and to the requirements for particular assignments
2. keep contact information complete, up-to-date and in line with current data protection legislation
3. provide colleagues with appropriate access to contact information in line with current data protection legislation
4. approach your contacts at appropriate times to obtain the relevant information
5. ensure that the contacts you make cover the required range of information and opinion
6. use information from appropriate sources to check the credibility and integrity of your contacts, and the value of the information they provide
7. make arrangements for possible future approaches to contacts at appropriate times
8. respond to unexpected approaches from people without delay
9. make full and accurate records of the reasons for unexpected approaches and other relevant details
10. keep contact details and information confidential when requested by contacts
11. take appropriate steps to stay safe on-line when using social media
12. communicate with contacts and other people in line with current legislation and codes of practice relating to individual privacy data protection
13. deal with contacts in an efficient and courteous way that meets your organisation's policy
14. refer issues with contacts that you cannot resolve or which are beyond the limits of your authority to the appropriate people

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the requirements of your organisation, for particular assignments
2. the different reasons why people may contact you, and your organisation's policy on dealing with them, including enquiries, comments, complaints, and offers of information, both on and off the record
3. the range of contacts relevant to your journalistic activities and how to research information about potential contacts
4. how current data protection acts and regulations govern what information about individuals can be kept, and how it can be used
5. the required information to acquire and retain about contacts, including their name, contact details, and reasons for inclusion
6. how to protect sources and contacts
7. how to check the credibility and integrity of your contacts, and the relevance and currency of the information they provide
8. how to treat and deal with contacts so that you get the most from them
9. effective ways to deal with contacts and other people who are polite, friendly, aggressive, or abusive,
10. different approaches to use to maintain effective working relationships with contacts on line and in person
11. the risks of social media usage and how much information you should reveal on-line
12. the support available to you from your organisation
13. the organisation's complaints procedure
14. the legal requirements and industry codes that relate to communicating with contacts and the general public

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