

Coffelt Ethics Code

Preamble

A journalist is a liaison of truth to the public. If a journalist does not respect that, then there is not a necessity for journalists in the world. Truth should always be inherent.

Accuracy:

Truth and accuracy go hand-in-hand. Truth is a result of what happened and accuracy is a result of the journalist giving a story its due and spending the proper amount of time to accumulate all the necessary sources and angles of the story.

- The industry standard of a three-source minimum is a great example of accuracy in journalism at work.
- Keeping record of all interviews and notes is a good way to maintain accuracy.
- If accuracy is maintained, the truth will come out inherently; there will be no question of dishonesty.

Separation:

Journalists are in a unique position. They are not the public but they are not the newsmakers. They are the middlemen. It is key that journalists separate themselves from all potential biases. No matter the money or other benefits from spinning a story.

- It is best that you do not take gifts from those that may be a part of the news. Whether that be memorabilia given in a press box at a sporting event, or a table to a fundraising dinner by a political candidate. Do not even appear to be bought.
- Perception is reality. Remember that in all that you do as a journalist. This will allow you to have the separation you need to do the best job you can.
- Keep opinions to yourself. There are proper avenues to give opinions but they can present bias if taken the wrong way.

Precision:

Though many will believe that accuracy and precision is the same thing, they are not. Being a precise journalist is knowing your story through research and knowing your audience and being able to convey a precise story to them. This again is creating a scenario where truth becomes inherent.

- Not just any source will do. Research is necessary to craft a complete and precise story.
- One can be accurate and not be precise or vice versa. These two things need to work together so that the journalist can put out his best article, package or broadcast he or she can.
- Lazy journalism can destroy credibility just as much as outright dishonesty.

Responsibility:

Journalists are people, they are capable of making mistakes just like any other person in a different profession. What journalists are called to do, is be transparent in a moment of weakness.

- If a mistake is made, run a timely retraction and make sure that nothing is up for interpretation. Make it clear a mistake was made and move on.
- Make sure that all codes of ethics are taken seriously and followed by your colleagues and yourself. Keep each other accountable.
- Make sure that if you are assigning someone to a task that they are not being put in a position to make an unethical decision that will reflect poorly on your publication