

PRII GUIDELINES ON ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

When engaging with Influencers, it is **unethical** and **illegal** to pay for space, endorsement or positive comment without that being clearly declared as such. Fundamentally, the principles of engagement with traditional media, also hold true for social media influencers.

UNETHICAL

It is forbidden under the PRII Codes of Ethics to attempt to deceive public opinion or its representatives. News must be provided without charge or hidden reward for its use or publication. Failure to comply with the PRII Codes of Ethics can result in disciplinary action.

ILLEGAL

It is illegal under the Consumer Protection Act 2007, Section 55 (1) (c) for editorial content to be used to promote a product if it is not made clear that the promotion is a paid promotion. Conviction can lead to a penalty of up to a €3,000 fine and six months in prison.

FIVE PRINCIPLE FOR PRII MEMBERS

- **News must be provided without charge or hidden reward for its use or publication.**
- **Provision of goods and services to influencers for trial and review is a normal part of public relations activity.** It is unethical and detrimental to the practice of public relations, to link provisions of such goods and services to a demand for favourable coverage. However there is no obligation to provide goods or services to an Influencer for review.
- **Earned media coverage can never be guaranteed.** If coverage is guaranteed, then it is advertising. It is unethical and a disservice to the profession for a public relations practitioner to enter a contract with a client or employer under which the practitioner guarantees quantified results.
- **Advertising can be part of a public relations campaign,** once it complies with the rules, practices and usages of that field.
- **Advertising or sponsored content must be clearly differentiated from editorial content.** Most of the time this should be very straightforward. However there is no set standard in Ireland. If in doubt, ask the Influencer how they clearly differentiate between advertising and editorial content and satisfy yourself that this is clear and transparent to readers.

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR CLIENTS/EMPLOYERS

- **Make sure your PR professional is a PRII member.** If engaging with a public relations practitioner, make sure they are members of the PRII. Membership of the PRII means that they adhere to our Codes of Ethics and have reached a recognised level of professional experience.
- **Guaranteed controlled editorial coverage is advertising not public relations.** Advertising can form part of a public relations campaign. However, editorial coverage is dependent on the editorial judgement of the Influencer and that must be respected.
- **Not all coverage can be positive.** Sometimes Influencers may not like your product, service or event. That must be respected. If all coverage from an outlet is positive, it has little value for consumers.

QUERIES

If you have any queries in relation to these principles, please contact the PRII at info@prii.ie or **01 661 8004**.