

Belo Guidelines re News Sponsorships : : : Effective 3-1-00

Introduction: Many Belo stations are exploring how to take advantage of new revenue opportunities such as non-traditional news sponsorships, on-screen sponsor logos, and expanded use of advertiser-targeted special programming, inserts, and franchises. Any best-practices guidelines addressing these issues must find a creative balance between our stations' search for additional revenue, and our responsibilities as broadcaster-journalists to protect the objectivity and editorial independence of our core news product. Also, as smart broadcasters, we need to be very cautious in taking any action that results in the over-commercialization of our products to the point where information content becomes secondary to on-screen *Nascar-esque* logos and sponsor identifications.

The following guidelines constitute acceptable Belo news practices for traditional over-the-air broadcasts, but do not include the Company's 24-hour cable networks. They address:

- I. Placement of sponsor logos on-screen in news, and non-news programming.
- II. Sponsorship of segments within newscasts.
- III. Sponsored special program segments or franchises within newscasts.
- IV. Sponsored programs produced by news personnel but airing outside newscasts.
- V. Sponsorship of station tower-cams and weather networks.
- VI. Use of station news equipment to produce live commercials, and/or paid-remotes
- VII. Selling "naming" rights to station newsgathering equipment.

Ultimately, individual stations are responsible for their "look" and how they represent themselves to their local audiences. General managers should consult their respective group supervisors on general policy questions. If there is a specific issue concerning news product, that question should be directed to Marty Haag and his team for consideration and deliberation. Marty will also be responsible for sharing the results of those discussions to the group as a whole.

If a general manager determines that any current practice does not conform with these guidelines, the GM should alert the his/her group head so discussions may occur to allow future consistency with Belo guidelines.

I. On-screen sponsor logos

Stations are exploring various options for selling sponsor logos on news tickers that crawl news, weather, sports or other information over programming.

Our general rule is to avoid placement of a sponsor logo on-screen in a news program if the logo could suggest that the objectivity of the content could be affected by the "sponsorship." In other words, no reasonable person would infer that the presence of a sponsor logo on a weather "ticker" could affect the accuracy of the temperatures being displayed. The temps are what they are. However, having an Alaskan Airlines sponsor

logo on the screen while presenting a story about maintenance problems with MD-90's could call into question the point-of-view of the story.

Sponsor logos are acceptable on "tickers" that run in weather and sports segments of news programming. These are acceptable because it's unlikely a reasonable person would infer that the sponsor could influence the information being presented. "Tickers" that air over other news programming should not include logos for same the reasons.

- 1.) Sponsor logos are not permissible on newscast opens or on graphics containing news, weather or sports information content that airs within the body of the news program.
- 2.) Sponsor logos are permissible on special graphics like school closing information and sports scoreboards which run outside the newscasts, or inside newscasts adjacent to, or as part of commercial breaks.
- 3.) Sponsor logos are permissible on any "ticker" that airs over entertainment or other non-news programming.
- 4.) No sponsor logos may be placed or superimposed on any portion of the news set, nor displayed by news personnel as part of their attire. This includes using sponsor logos in over-the shoulder graphics, unless the logo is used for news coverage purposes.
- 5.) No sponsor logos may be placed or superimposed on weather graphics or sports scoreboards used inside the newscast.

Examples of sponsor logos that are permissible under this policy:

#1: A station sells a sponsor logo on their sports ticker that constantly updates sports scores throughout their sportscast.

#2 A sponsor logo airs on a weather ticker that updates forecasts or other weather information during the weather segments of newscasts, or over other non-news programming.

#3 A sponsor logo is sold to appear on special school closing graphics that run outside newscasts.

#4 Sponsor logos that appear on billboards.

Examples of sponsor logos that are not allowed:

#1: A sponsor logo appears on a station's weather maps or other weather graphics inside the weathercast, or on sports scoreboards used in the body of the sportscast, and not adjacent, or part of a commercial break.

#2 A sponsor logo on an OTS graphic that is used as part of a news update.

#3 Sponsor logos on tickers running over news segments of newscasts.

II. Sponsorship of newscast segments

Sponsorship of news, weather and sports segments is permissible as long as sponsor identification occurs only in billboards inside, or adjacent to commercial breaks. Sponsorships should be limited to no more than three sponsorship/billboards per 30-minute newscast.

III. Special sponsored segments or franchises inside newscasts

Sponsorships of news segments, franchises or "inserts" which air within regular station news programs are permissible, subject to the following guidelines:

1. Sponsor identification appears only in billboards and/or spots that run inside, or adjacent to standard commercial breaks. No sponsor identification should be placed over news content. "Content" includes but is not limited to OTS graphics, franchise opens, or supers. Aural identification of sponsorships, if included, should be made with non-news talent voices.
2. The news department and the station retain editorial control of the content of the franchise.
3. Sponsorship grants no special or favored editorial treatment for the sponsor. Being a sponsor does not confer the power to determine topic or content, or to specify that only a sponsor's designated spokespeople be used in the segments. (For example, a hospital insisting as a condition of the deal that only its doctors are used as "experts.")
4. News managers may take part in planning meetings that include potential sponsors only with the explicit, prior approval of the station's news director.

Examples of sponsored newscast segments & franchises that are permissible under this policy:

#1. A hospital agrees to sponsor a segment focusing on women's health issues fronted by the station's medical reporter to air inside a station's 11 p.m. newscast. The station has sole discretion to decide on topic and content. The hospital may suggest the availability of spokespersons but may not insist on their spokespeople being used exclusively. The sponsor is identified only in a billboard that runs in or adjacent to a commercial break.

#2 A station sells a sponsorship to a "Scholar Athlete of the Week" franchise fronted by the station's sportscaster, which airs inside a commercial break.

Examples of sponsored newscast segments not permissible under this policy.

#1 Same scenario as #1 above except that the sponsoring hospital mandates as part of the deal that only its doctors and medical personnel appear in the franchise.

#2. Any franchise or insert that includes use of the sponsor's name in the content portion of a regular newscast, such as the "Coca-Cola Classic" play-of-the-week.

IV. Sponsored programs produced by news and/or fronted by news talent but airing outside newscasts.

Generally, such special news programs (including Sports-special type programs) should adhere to the same standards as news segments or franchises airing inside traditional newscasts. However, sponsor identification can be included in the content of the program as long as there is no direct on-screen association with news talent.

Entertainment-type programs, such as morning programs not produced by the station's news department, are not subject to these guidelines.

V. Sponsorship of tower-cams and weather networks

Some stations are seeking sponsorship dollars for tower-cams or weather sensor networks. Therefore:

1. Sponsor identification of tower-cams should be generally limited to on-screen visual logos. On-air anchor mentions of commercial sponsorship should be limited.
2. On-air mention of specific "Weather-net"-type sensor locations are permissible if the location is a well-known local landmark or geographic location, even though it may also be a commercial entity, i.e. saying "our NowNet site at Lynnhaven Mall is showing 24 degrees," is OK. But saying: "Our NowNet site at the Tony's Pizza in Newport News..." should be limited.)

3. No sponsorship agreement should be made that binds the station to any minimum on-air usage of the equipment, or any minimum number of sponsorship mentions.

VI. Use of station news equipment to produce commercials

Use of station-owned news equipment (live trucks, remote trucks, etc.) to originate "live" commercials, or to produce other kinds of paid content is a decision to be made by the management of that station. If vehicles with news department logos must be used, station may want to "un-mark" the equipment by removing the logos to avoid associating the station's news brand with commercial production.

Any scheduled use of equipment routinely used for breaking news coverage (live trucks, etc.) for commercial or production purposes must be approved in advance by the news director and general manager. Consideration must be given to the time of the proposed use (Saturday morning vs. the half-hour before the late news) and the possible impact on news coverage. The news department retains the right to "re-capture" the equipment in case of major breaking news.

VII. Naming rights to news equipment

Stations will not sell the "naming rights" to their news coverage equipment such as helicopters or SNG trucks. To do so risks the appearance of a dramatic conflict-of-interest should the equipment be used in coverage of a story in which the sponsor could be assumed to have an interest. (The "Coors Lite" Chopper 5 hovering over the scene of a fatal DWI accident.)