

# COMMERCIAL RADIO – PRINCIPLES OF EDITORIAL TRUST

## INTRODUCTION

Commercial radio has the attention of nearly 31 million adults every week. That is a significant responsibility. Those listeners trust radio stations to act with integrity and honesty. That trust is a key reason why people choose to listen to the radio when they have many other media choices competing for their time.

If we act in a way that undermines that trust, we damage not only the reputation of our radio station, but of the industry as a whole, and of radio as a medium. We recognise that respecting individual listeners and their trust in our stations is an important part of our appeal to the audience as a whole.

## HONESTY

### **We will not deliberately mislead our audience.**

We recognise that inaccurate or misleading content, even if it causes no direct harm, can undermine listener trust in radio.

We will present factual material accurately and truthfully. We will correct material factual errors as soon as reasonably possible once they are identified.

Where content is fictitious or dramatised, we will ensure that listeners understand the context of the output.

We will take care in how we present our content. For example, we will not describe content as 'live', 'local' or 'exclusive' if those terms are not accurate. If we inadvertently mislead our listeners, we will broadcast a correction as appropriate.

We will address any harm caused by any errors we make.

## COMPETITIONS

### **We will run competitions fairly and honestly.**

Competition rules will be clear and fair, as will the method of selecting winners.

Where some entrants are prohibited from entering competitions, or where entrants with particular skills or profiles have an advantage in entering a competition, we will make this clear up front. Subject to this qualification, we will treat all entrants equally, irrespective of demographics, location or how the entrant sounds on air.

Prizes will be clearly and accurately described, and delivered in reasonable time.

Where competitions have failed to run effectively for whatever reason (e.g. technical faults, human error) we will offer refunds to affected entrants.

Where we have caused any financial loss, however small, to a large number of people, we will apologise on air.

Where we rely on third parties for any activity, we will encourage them to adhere to the standards in this code. We will not accept commercial activity that, in our opinion, undermines listener trust or breaches the regulatory Codes.

### **We will take particular care when listeners pay to interact with us**

This code works in tandem with the Commercial Radio Code of Conduct on Premium Rate Interaction. That code sets out, in detail, how the industry will operate paid-for listener

services in the most fair and transparent way. Members of RadioCentre are expected to comply with it (see below).

When we charge listeners to interact with us, all those who do so will receive what we tell them they will receive. No paid-for communication will be ignored or given less attention than others. We will make the costs of communicating with us clear and prominent.

## COMPLAINTS

**We will treat all complaints fairly and proportionately, whether they come from a listener or a regulator, and will respond as appropriate.**

We will provide accessible methods of communicating with our stations for listeners who wish to complain.

Complaints about breaches of editorial trust will be thoroughly investigated. If they are found to be justified, we will say so, and take further action to correct the mistake and address any harm caused.

In responding to complaints from regulators, we will provide all information that we believe to be relevant, whether or not it has specifically been requested. Where we have been at fault, we will admit it, explain how it happened, and detail the remedial action taken. Where we find we have not been at fault, we will explain why. We will defend ourselves robustly if we believe an adjudication or sanction is unjustified, or where we believe a regulator has acted incorrectly.

We require all breaches of listener trust or potential regulatory breaches that are serious to be notified to senior management.

## COMPLIANCE PROCEDURES

**We will encourage a culture of trust and compliance in our stations**

We will ensure that our staff understand the rules that apply; they will be encouraged to raise any concerns or issues that they identify, and we will operate 'whistle-blower' policies to protect those who do so.

We will treat our staff fairly and will not presume them to have committed an error unless and until we have investigated and found that to be the case. If we believe disciplinary action is warranted, we will apply it consistently and proportionately, irrespective of the seniority of the individual.

We recognise that honest people make honest mistakes. However, we will not tolerate deliberate deception or deliberate concealment of errors by our staff.

## ADHERENCE TO THIS CODE

**Adherence to this code is a requirement of RadioCentre membership**

This code has been approved by the board of RadioCentre in the interests of securing the trust of Commercial Radio's listeners. The board believes that adherence to this code (and the accompanying Commercial Radio Code of Conduct on Premium Rate Interaction) is a reasonable requirement of RadioCentre membership. This code should therefore be integrated within RadioCentre members' own compliance procedures.

Queries about this code, or recommendations for its updating should be directed to the Chief Executive of RadioCentre.

**December 2008**