

EDITORIAL STANDARDS

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Hi there.

Today Digital has the opportunity to help shape a new set of standards for the latest generation of media. We are offering these standards to our writers and to our readers as a first attempt at articulating the goal of merging the best of traditional media's values with deep shifts in the forms of media and communication.

Our intent with this document is to provide context and support for Today Digital writers in making smart, responsible, and ethical choices as we tell the most honest and accurate stories we can.

These standards were shaped in conversations with our Today Digital team and editors and colleagues in the industry, and we expect them to evolve as they're tested. Today Digital is still growing up too, and these are aimed at helping us on our way, and at reflecting the kind of media company we want to be. We are making this document public to keep Today Digital, reporters, and editors accountable to our readers.

The document is separated into five sections:

- 1)** Writing Editorial Posts
- 2)** Sponsored Posts
- 3)** Sourcing
- 4)** Corrections, Updates, Deletions, and Errors
- 5)** Legal and Ethics

The guidelines in this document apply to Today Digital's global news operation B2B technology news.

Finally, this guide is intended to provide principles rather than offer specific answers to every possible ethical question that arises. Today Digital and editors make challenging editorial decisions every day, and the hardest and most important calls rarely have obvious answers.

If you have any questions relating to this document, please contact the Managing Editor or Editor in Chief for assistance.

WRITING EDITORIAL POSTS



POST TITLE

Post titles need to be short and catchy. If the writer is targeting a keyword or phrases then it's recommended for maximum performance that the keyword is in the title. Keep to 50 characters or less with spaces.



Yes - Talkdesk vs RingCentral: Choosing Your CCaaS



No - Talkdesk vs RingCentral: Choosing Your Contact Centre as a Service Solution



SUBTITLES

A good subtitle should offer a key takeaway or top reason to read the post. Keep to 50 characters or less with spaces.



BODY

Editorial posts should be a minimum of 500 words. Editorial posts come in various types, they are:

- ➔ **News story** - news pieces aim to convey information quickly. They are therefore usually quite short and direct, although they do not have to be. A news story can end anywhere after you've described the most important facts.
- ➔ **Feature** - features are often written after an event, they are aimed at readers who want to know more and broaden their understanding. A feature story ends with readers feeling satisfied that they gained some value from reading the story.
- ➔ **Opinion piece/blog** - an opinion piece is an article, usually published in a newspaper or magazine, that mainly reflects the author's opinion about a subject.
- ➔ **Thought leadership** - e.g. strategy, insights - a thought leadership article is an opportunity for the speaker to leverage their position within an industry to demonstrate their expertise and credibility, to share their insights and to provide the audience with real value.
- ➔ **Analysis** - e.g. reviews, comparisons – an analysis post is often an under-the-bonnet look into a given product or topic. The aim of analysis posts is to give the reader an in-depth understanding of the topic area in order to make a fair evaluation.



TAXONOMIES

A taxonomy within WordPress is a way of grouping posts together based on a select number of relationships. By default, a standard post will have two taxonomy types called Categories and Tags which are a handy way of ensuring related content on your website is easy for visitors to find.

However, we also use custom taxonomies which allows us to further group types of posts, examples include:

- ➔ **Editorial Type**
 - ➔ **Geo**
 - ➔ **Brand**
-



QUOTES

Adding quotes can help you highlight comments and quotes. In WordPress, you can add a quote block to your page from the 'add Blockquote' button. Once you have added the blockquote feature, the quote will appear in a stylised format when you preview the post or make the post live. We recommend, all posts have at least one block quote added, when quotes are available.



INTERNAL LINKS

Internal links must always be authentic and relevant and have the user experience in mind before anything else. We recommend you add 1-2 internal links to keywords or phrases in your post. Internal links are great for user experience and also give Google an idea of the structure of the website. We recommend internal links point to the following types of resources:

- **Related posts**
- **Cornerstone content (our best content)**
- **Trending topics/tags**
- **Categories**
- **Brand pages**
- **Events**
- **Videos**
- **Downloadable resources**



EXTERNAL LINKS

As a general rule we do not allow external links on editorial posts. This is a premium feature that we reserve for sponsored content only. All external links must be verified and trustworthy, it is the responsibility of the content creator or writer to ensure the external destination URL is trustworthy and relevant to the overall experience.

Do not link to gated content. All external links must open the document without the need to fill in a form.

However, there are some exceptions to this rule, you can link to external sites if they are the following types:

- **Event pages**
 - **Vendor-neutral resources e.g. reports, white papers**
 - **Social media pages**
 - **Source sites**
-



FEATURED IMAGES

Featured images are essential to engaging readers on our website, our newsletters and through our social media channels. They help tell the story of your post. We recommend all featured images are relevant to the user experience.

Our standard size for WordPress featured images is 850x425 (2x1).

Content creators are encouraged to keep the size of the image under 100KB and in a JPG format. We do not support GIF images.



PERSONAL STYLE

We encourage all content creators to write and present in a style that's authentic and true to their personality. For more information read our Content Style Guide.



EMOJIS

emojis set us apart and reflect our personality - we're colourful, friendly and expressive. We would like you to use them, but please bear in mind a few things:

- **Emojis add context, they don't replace words**
- **Add one to the end of a sentence, not the middle**
- **Emojis help you to clarify things with a little extra flavour**
- **Not everyone knows what they mean, try not to confuse people**
- **Be careful, the wrong emoji can provoke a strong reaction**
- **Limit your use of emojis to one per page or piece of writing**

And most of all, let your personality shine through.



KEYWORD TARGETING & SEO

We prefer to write for people, not just the search engines. Whilst it's important you apply basic SEO to your post, we don't use annoying strategies like keyword stuffing. Though we want to make our articles easy to find, they need to be simple to read too. Optimise for people and SEO by:

- ➔ **Focusing a page on a single topic**
- ➔ **Using descriptive headings and titles (H1, H2)**
- ➔ **Giving every image the right alt text and file name**

Here's a recommended list of 200 SEO basics rules to achieve a quality SEO score. We have created a shortlist of recommended SEO techniques for you to adhere to:

1. **Unique content**
2. **Content length is 500 words minimum (some news stories may be less)**
3. **Regular content**
4. **Keyword in H1 title**
5. **URL contains keyword**
6. **Image optimisation**
7. **Post tags**
8. **Quality internal and external links**
9. **Organic backlinks from brands**
10. **Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP)**
11. **Grammar and spelling**
12. **Mobile responsive**
13. **Server architecture, reliability and speed**
14. **Domain authority and age**
15. **100% organic backlinks (not paid for)**
16. **White hat SEO always**



SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION

We encourage all content creators to post and promote their own stories and content on social media. The editorial or marketing team will post on the company pages.

If you post company content on your personal social media channels, please adhere to the company's social media policy (available on request).



PROOFREADING

Simply put, proofreading is the final stage of the editing process, focusing on surface errors such as misspellings and mistakes in grammar and punctuation. Proofreading is important to ensure that there are no grammatical errors, capitalisation errors, numbering errors or spelling errors. We expect all freelancers to thoroughly proofread their work before submitting.

If you're unsure and need help, reach out to our Managing Editor.



SENDING YOUR STORY IN FOR POSTING

When your story is ready, please send it to the nominated team or person for posting. You will be advised who to send it to. If you're unsure, reach out to our Managing Editor for help and support.

SPONSORED POSTS

What is sponsored content (AKA branded content)? Sponsored content is premium content that a sponsor pays a publisher to create and promote. It's a type of native advertising that is consistent with the surrounding content on a webpage.

In other words, sponsored content is an ad that looks like it's supposed to be there – it feels like a natural fit for a platform, instead of an invasive advertisement.

Sponsored content is the lifeblood of the Today Digital business, it's what our customers value the most and it's what pays the bills :). Therefore, if you're working with customers to create sponsored content it's important that you adhere to the following guidelines, because they are different to how you might approach an editorial piece of content.



GENERAL GUIDELINES

- We will always aim to impress paying customers with an excellent service
- We expect all of our journalists to represent Today Digital in a professional and friendly manner. This is true via email, phone, or video content
- The customer has the ability to guide the topic. For example, they may choose to align the story to a new product or campaign they are running

- ➔ The customer has the final say. A key sponsored content privilege is that the customer gets to sign off on the content before it's made live
- ➔ Sponsored content will be included in the next appropriate newsletter, this is a feature of the package
- ➔ All sponsored posts get promoted on social media, this is a feature of the package
- ➔ We allow up to TWO external links in the post. The destination can be gated
- ➔ The assigned journalist is expected to follow up with the client on a monthly basis to arrange the next article
- ➔ It's important that clients use all of their sponsored content credits before the agreement period ends. If you're having trouble getting in touch, inform our Customer Success team by emailing customer.success@todaydigital.com
- ➔ If you have a leave of absence, let the Today Digital customer success team know, and set up an 'Out of Office' redirect on your inbox to customer.success@todaydigital.com – ask for guidance is needed

- If a customer provides feedback about their experience, share it with the Customer Success team
- You'll receive a live working document that lists the sponsored workload assigned to you. Make sure that you keep this up to date
- Track the progress you're making with each customer. This allows the team to refer to a live update when necessary
- Remember to follow our timescales too. We expect all responses to be prompt. Check your inbox daily if you're a Today Digital journalist and give responses within 48 hours (excluding weekends)
- If you've had an interview and received a full brief for an article, you should submit the first draft to the customer within 1 week. If you cannot meet this timescale, make sure you inform the customer and provide them with a realistic timescale
- Note, we do not offer a content syndication service



TYPES OF SPONSORED CONTENT

We create different types of sponsored content for our customers; however, they typically fall into one of the following types:

- **Company news**
- **Product announcements**
- **Thought-leadership**
- **Event primers**

Our sponsored content annual packages come with article credits for pieces written by our team of journalists. Customers can spread their credits out across the period of their package to match the needs of their marketing and promotional campaigns. However, the customer must use their credits before your agreement ends. If you have any questions related to sponsored content credits, contact our Customer Success team.



SPONSORED CONTENT FORMATS

We create written, audio and video sponsored posts. Depending on the package the customer has taken, the deliverables may vary. If you have any questions related to sponsored content credits, contact our Customer Success team.



EDITORIAL VS SPONSORED CONTENT

It's a common question.

- ➔ **What is the difference between editorial and sponsored posts?**
- ➔ **How does Today Digital process each type?**
- ➔ **What's the advantages and disadvantages of each?**

First of all it's important to know the difference between 'earned media' and 'paid media' and why companies invest in both types of marketing strategy.

EARNED MEDIA

The term 'earned media' is easily described as editorial coverage that's earned and not paid for. For example, a press release sent into our news desk from a PR agency. Product reviews are another example.

Generally speaking, earned media doesn't make for an effective marketing campaign on its own. It's usually supported by owned or paid media types to ensure the best results.

The big benefit of earned media as part of your marketing strategy is it's like free advertising. Your business shows up in front of your audience at no cost to you.

The downside to this is you don't own or control what's being put out there – which also means, you guessed it, there's always a chance it can be negative media.

PAID MEDIA

Most people think of paid media as paid advertising i.e. it's not free to execute. Sponsored content, display advertising, email marketing, sponsored social media ads and PPC are popular types of paid media.

The main advantage of paid media is the guaranteed placement and often the metrics you can gain from the platform in order to measure success and return on investment.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDITORIAL AND SPONSORED CONTENT

In short, editorial is earned media and sponsored content is paid media. The main differences are as follows:

- Sponsored posts receive a greater level of strategic planning and execution, for example the content might be linked to a customer campaign or nurturing series
- Sponsored posts receive an advanced SEO review before posting, editorial get a basic level review
- Sponsored posts can be scheduled by the customer for a specific time and date
- Editorial and Sponsored post images are selected at the sole discretion of the editor. Customers are welcome to make suggestions regarding images, but will not have final approval.
- Sponsored content is paid for, editorial coverage is free
- Sponsored content guarantees the coverage, editorial is at the editor's discretion
- The customer can influence sponsored content, editorial posts are controlled by the journalist
- Customers get to approve sponsored content, editorial posts do not require approval before posting

→ We allow backlinks in sponsored content, this privilege is not available to editorial posts

→ We embed the customer's display advert in sponsored content. Editorial posts receive a dynamic advert placement that's relevant to the category or topic of the post

→ Sponsored posts receive additional promotion, depending on the package purchased by the customer

To recap, here's a table to compare the two types:

	EDITORIAL	SPONSORED
Strategic Planning	X	Y
SEO Review	BASIC	PREMIUM
Customer Scheduling	X	Y
Custom Featured Image	X	X
Cost Per Post	FREE	PAID
Guaranteed Coverage	X	Y
Customer Controlled	X	Y
Customer Approval	X	Y
Backlinks	X	Y
Display Advertising	3 RD PARTY	CUSTOMER ADVERT
Premium Promotion (newsletter, social media, sidebar, sticky home page)	X	Y

SOURCING



EMBEDS

We often embed YouTube videos and tweets in our news posts. Today Digital Editors are encouraged to review all embeds before the post is published to ensure they are relevant and appropriate for our audience.



FACT-CHECKING

Fact-checking can be provided for deep narrative features and investigative projects. Reporters are expected to be accurate, and editors are expected to flag any questions before publishing. Additional accurate information can always be added after publishing — removing bad information is more difficult (see Corrections and Updates for more information).



INFORMATION AND FACTS

Information — excluding common knowledge — should come from a verified source. Wikipedia and other websites that anyone can edit should never be used as sources in a story. Acceptable verified sources include interviews, whitepapers, research by experts, and stories from trusted news organisations.



PLAGIARISM

To plagiarise is wrong on every level. Nothing may be copied, pasted, and passed off as one's own work, including press releases.



POLLS AND OTHER STUDIES

When considering reporting on a study or poll, ask these questions:

- ➔ **Have the authors included a detailed methodology?**
 - ➔ **How many people did they study?** (for most studies, be sceptical of anything below 100; for polls, anything below 1,000)
 - ➔ **Do the authors have any conflicts of interest?**
-

For polls:

→ **How, precisely, were the questions worded?** Never take information directly from a press release. Instead, ask the authors for a copy of the actual study or poll.

→ **When you're asking readers to vote for fun, don't suggest that the results reflect a scientific sample.**

The Editor in Chief and Managing Editor are available to assist writers who have questions about data.



PRESS RELEASES

Reporters may quote from press releases and should make the source clear — “said in a press release.” With that said, interviews are always better.



QUOTES

ANONYMOUS QUOTES

Interviews are always on the record until a reporter agrees to go off the record or on background. Anonymous quotes are permitted, though Today Digital should always try to get a source on the record before agreeing to let them be anonymous.

Writers should spell out why their source is anonymous and include an explanatory line in the story that the reader will understand. When possible, Today Digital should share the source's identity with their editor, unless it's a very extreme case, in which case the editor-in-chief should be consulted prior to publication. We don't have an arbitrary number of anonymous sources required to verify a story: one well-placed anonymous source is worth more than four anonymous sources who are all repeating the same rumour.

Today Digital should also take precautions not to reveal the identity of confidential sources, including avoiding putting a source's name in writing on unsecured channels.

ATTRIBUTION

All quotes are to be attributed. Quotes that have been given directly to a Today Digital writer should be noted as such by using the words "told Today Digital" (or in some cases, "UC Today", "CX Today" or "XR Today") at least once in the story.

Quotes from other outlets should be attributed to that outlet: "told the Guardian," etc., with a link to the article.

Quotes that come from the wire services we subscribe to should also be attributed: "told the Associated Press" or "the Associated Press reported."

QUOTE APPROVAL

As a general rule, Today Digital are not permitted to have quotes approved by sources or share story drafts with their subjects for editorial stories. As a courtesy, or to double-check their work, a writer may choose to call or email a source and describe how they are quoted in a story.

A “preview email” is a welcome way of letting sources and subjects know what will be in a story. Sending a note to the subject that includes allegations or a description of what will be published is a reporting tool that also acts as a safeguard for the reporter. There are rare exceptions to the quote-approval rule, particularly in countries where that practice is the norm — but Today Digital should push back as a first response, and discuss with an editor before agreeing.

QUOTE DISPUTES

If a source disputes a quote as published, the writer and their editor may review the writer’s notes and recordings to determine if the complaint is warranted. If warranted, the quote will be updated and a correction issued. If a source disputes the way their position was characterised, rather than a specific quote, an editor should determine whether the complaint is valid.

CORRECTIONS, UPDATES, DELETIONS, AND ERRORS



BODY COPY

Changes to body copy may require a notification to the reader via an update or correction. Stories that are ongoing with breaking news can be updated with information as it becomes available — by using either subheads with a manual timestamp or the breaking news template with an automatic timestamp to alert the reader to updates.



CORRECTIONS AND UPDATES

There are a number of ways to add updates for clarity and context to written news articles: using the update option in the CMS, writing through the body copy with the additional information, or adding the latest news to the top of the post. Consult with your editor to choose the best option.



DELETIONS

News items should not be deleted for reasons related to their content, or because a subject or stakeholder has asked you to do so. If a technical issue arises — like a duplicate post or an incorrect URL — email your manager. If a post was published ahead of schedule, remove it from all site promotion and ask the Editor to unpublish it for you.

If some information in a post is incorrect or obsolete, it is acceptable to delete that information and add a brief correction or update explaining what was removed.



IMAGES

For information on updating images, contact the Managing Editor or editorial lead.

LEGAL AND ETHICS



ALLEGATIONS

Legal counsel should review stories with serious or potentially damaging allegations in them; if there is any doubt, do not hesitate to contact them. Today Digital are also encouraged to send a “preview email” to subjects of investigative reports prior to publication, giving them time to comment. Any questions on how to word the letter should be run by your editor. For information on libel or conducting privileged conversations, contact the Editor in Chief or Managing Editor.



COMPENSATING SOURCES

We do not pay sources for interviews. If an interview incurs costs to a source through travel or work compensation lost, we may be able to reimburse them, but check with your editor before agreeing to do so.



CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURE

If you're asking yourself, "is this a conflict of interest?", it likely is. Readers are also a good barometer for this; take a moment to consider whether the reader would see a conflict of interest. Today Digital and editors should disclose if they have a financial or personal stake — is the subject a friend or significant other? Have you disclosed this? — in the issue they are covering. Reporters should not have a financial stake in a company in the industry they cover. Check with your editor about whether disclosure is enough, or whether the story should be reassigned.



DISCLOSING PROVIDED MATERIALS

We should note when items such as software and hardware have been provided to us for review.



GIFTS

Gifts that aren't review material (related software and hardware) or edible, typically should be returned or donated. A rough guide — though imperfect — for determining if you can keep a gift is whether the item costs £25 or less. If it costs more than £25, talk to your editor.



GRAPHIC CONTENT

While it ultimately comes down to the approval of the Managing Editor or Editor in Chief, in the main, we do not post graphic content on our sites.

→ **Profanity:** We speak the language of the internet — which is often hilarious and often profane. As such, profanity is not permitted on Today Digital; but see the Today Digital Content Style Guide for more information on how to style it responsibly.

→ **Sex and nudity:** All nudity or sexual content should be avoided.

→ **Violence:** All violent content should be avoided.

If you have questions about whether you should post something because of its graphic nature, talk to the Managing Editor or Editor in Chief for guidance.



INTERVIEWS

Giving a subject a general sense of the direction of the interview is fine. It's okay to provide questions to subjects in advance of an in-person interview too. Interviews conducted over email, or chat are permitted — but in-person, video, and telephone interviews are often more valuable.



OUTSIDE INCOME

Writers who do outside work related to the field they cover should adhere to the ethical guidelines set forth in this document for their personal work as well. If a writer is making outside income from a specific company, that writer is not permitted to write about that company.

Today Digital writers should not cover any individual, organisation, or service in which they have a financial interest. Writers are not permitted to invest in companies they cover. Staff may not buy, sell, or in any way trade in stocks, funds, or currencies based on stories Today Digital will publish.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Our original photography and image selection should not attempt to deceive the reader in any way. Subjects should be shown in the reality of the moment they are captured in. Materially manipulating images — such as reversing, distorting, or adding/removing people — is not allowed except in the cases of creating a photo illustration, which the caption will note. Minor adjustments to cropping, colour, sharpening, etc., that do not materially change the photograph are permissible.

If you have any questions relating to this document please let us know.

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