

BY MIRA SHENKER, *Editor, ReNew*

WALKING THE TIGHTROPE: HOW B2BS CAN KEEP AD AWAY FROM EDIT

EVERY MAGAZINE STRUGGLES to adhere to advertising-editorial guidelines, but for some it's harder than others. Some consumer books are essentially 65 straight pages of ads—staff recommendations for products are basically unlabelled advertorial. While readers may expect and accept that from *Vogue*, the trades can't get away with that type of flagrant product placement that easily (yet so many of them do it anyways). That's one of the hardest parts of keeping the church-state divide intact: because so many advertisers have been sold editorial, they've now come to expect it. The amount of companies that have sent me what amount to press releases and demanded that I print them as-is astounds me.

ReNew has built a reputation on our refusal to let that line between editorial and advertising blur. It hasn't been easy—partially because of an opposite precedent set by so many other B2B magazines—but our editorial has managed to stay separate from our advertisements.

Here are five rules to live by if you're running a trade magazine and you think your readers deserve straight editorial.

1. No Product Showcases. Most companies send us information about their newest product, including images and contact info for their company, and ask us to include it in our product showcase. A product showcase is basically a series of business card ads when you get right down to it. It doesn't provide value to our readers, so we don't do it.

2. Know When to Use Freelancers. If you're like us, you get about 50 percent of your content from professionals working in the industry you serve. While these contribu-

tors are knowledgeable, and their content is valuable, they also have an agenda to push. Usually the sales speak can be edited out of contributed pieces, but it's important to flag writers who won't submit strong stories and consider having them interviewed by someone objective instead of giving them a byline.

3. Double up. Another way to avoid self-promotional articles is to assign your industry contributor a neutral co-author. For example, if you have someone who owns a car company writing about the latest in electric vehicles, get him or her a co-author from a think-tank like Pembina to keep them honest.

4. Defer. Make sure that only editorial staff talks to potential industry contributors about potential articles. The moment a sales staffer mentions the potential to contribute an article, that company comes away with the understanding that editorial is for sale. Once they see editorial merely as an extension of their ad, they will never take it seriously. If someone asks about editorial, sales staff should immediately direct them to the editorial department. Keep it 100 percent separate and you avoid shady dealings and/or misunderstandings.

5. Manage Expectations. As an editor, when you're talking to a potential contributor and they ask about advertising opportunities, make sure you say your line: "We keep editorial and advertising totally separate, so I'll have to refer you to someone in our sales department." Don't email them a media kit; don't talk to them about advertising deadlines. After a few encounters, they will start to believe what you're saying.

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