

# **Speaking Different Languages?**

Corporate Communications and  
Wikipedia

**“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.”**

-- Jimmy Wales

“...No one in the PR industry has ever put forward a cogent argument...why it is important that they take the potentially... reputation damaging step of directly editing entries where they are acting as paid advocates. What I have found - and the evidence for this is pretty comprehensive - is that people who are acting as **paid advocates do not make good editors.** They insert puffery and spin. That's what they do because that it is what paid advocates do.”

–Jimmy Wales, in 2012 responding to Phil Gomes

“People shouldn't do it, including me...I wish I hadn't done it. It's in poor taste.... People have a lot of information about themselves but **staying objective is difficult**. That's the trade-off in editing entries about yourself.... If you see a blatant error or misconception about yourself, **you really want to set it straight.**”

--Jimmy Wales, in 2005 on editing his own article

Who am I?

- Jake Orlowitz
- **Volunteer** Editor
- Go by **Ocaasi**
- **3** years
- **20,000** edits
- **15** articles created with over **150,000** views
- **Monitor Group, Occidental Petroleum, US Gov.**
- Plain and simple **conflict of interest** guide
- **The Wikipedia Adventure**

Wikipedia is **important**.

- **8 billion** words in **19 million** articles
- **283** language editions
- 4 editions over **1 million** articles each
- 6 editions over **700,000** articles
- 40 editions **100,000** articles,
- 109 editions over **10,000 articles**

## English Wikipedia

- **3,875,474** articles, **26,301,442** pages
- **50 times larger** than Microsoft Encarta's 2002 Deluxe edition
- **517,319,601** edits, **250,000** per day
- **794,530** uploaded files
- **16,284,081** registered users
- **147,203** active in the last 30 days
- **1,507** administrators.

**Why you should care.**

- Alexa rank: **#6** in the world
- **88,824,929** unique visitors
- **8,314,393** in a year
- **1,565,841** in a month
- **#1 most influential** website in blog mentions
- **First page, top 3, or #1** Google result on thousands of searches

## In January 2012 **alone**

- Krispy Kreme: viewed **25,119** times
- BP: **75,014** times
- Pepsi: **105,766** times
- Walmart: **155,171** times
- Lady Gaga: **1,101,475** times

Wikipedia is **trusted**.

2005 *Nature* study: **close to the level of accuracy** in Encyclopædia Britannica.

2008 – 2010: studies **compared** Wikipedia to **professional and peer-reviewed sources** and found that Wikipedia's depth and coverage were of a **high standard**.

How Wikipedia **works**.

"I call this Revolution 2.0. Revolution 2.0 is, is — I say that our revolution is **like Wikipedia**.

**Everyone is contributing content.** You don't know the names of the people contributing the content.

Everyone was contributing **small pieces, bits and pieces**.

We drew this whole picture. We drew this whole picture of a revolution. And that picture — **no one is the hero** in that picture."

--Wael Ghonim on the overthrow of Mubarak.

“The problem with Wikipedia is that  
it only works **in practice**.

**In theory**, it can never work.”

**What Wikipedia is.**

The encyclopedia that **anyone can edit**, whose mission is to **summarize published reliable sources**.

What Wikipedia **is not**.

- a **dictionary**
- a publisher of **original thought**
- a **soapbox** or means of **promotion**
- a **mirror** or a repository of links, images, or media files
- a **blog**, webspace provider, **social network**, or **memorial** site
- a **directory**
- a **manual**, guidebook, textbook, or scientific journal
- a **crystal ball**
- a **newspaper**
- an **indiscriminate collection** of information
- **censored**

What the Wikipedia **community**  
is not.

- an **anarchy**
- a **democracy**
- a **bureaucracy**
- a **battleground**
- **compulsory**

# **The Core Policies.**

# Neutral Point of View **(NPOV)**

Articles **mustn't take sides**, but should **explain the sides**, fairly, proportionately and without bias.

Verifiability

(V)

Cite **reliable** sources

**Verifiability**, not truth

Any material **challenged** or likely to be challenged

Original Research  
**(OR)**

Facts, allegations, and ideas—for which **no reliable, published sources exist**

Analysis or synthesis of published material that serves to **advance a position** not advanced by the sources

Civility  
**(CIVIL)**

**Always** treat each other with **consideration and respect**

Keep the focus on improving the encyclopedia

Behave **politely, calmly and reasonably**, even during heated debates

Do not **ignore** the positions and conclusions of **others**

**What is Public Relations?**

“Public relations is a **strategic** communication process that builds **mutually beneficial** relationships between organizations and their publics.”

--PRSA definition of PR

**Anticipating**, analyzing and interpreting **public opinion**

**Counseling** management

**Researching** to achieve **the informed public understanding** necessary to the **success** of an organization's aims

Planning efforts to **influence or change public** policy--in short, **managing the resources** needed to perform all of the above

What does **ethical** public relations entail?

**ADVOCACY**

**HONESTY**

**INDEPENDENCE**

**LOYALTY**

**FAIRNESS**

**Be honest and accurate** in all communications

Act in the **best interest of clients** or employers

**Disclose financial interests** in a client's organization

Safeguard **confidences and privacy rights**

Avoid **conflicts** between **personal and professional** interests

Preserve the **integrity** of the process of **communication**

Avoid **deceptive** practices

**Avoid** actions that appear to **compromise** good business judgment

**Disclose** any existing or potential **conflict of interest**

Investigate the **truthfulness and accuracy of information** released on behalf of those represented.

**Require that subordinates** adhere to the **ethical requirements** of the Code.

# The **History** of Paid Editing.

As an industry we've done **terrible** things to Wikipedia.

We **didn't know** about Wikipedia's **rules**.

Being a **good** Wikipedian is **hard**.

Pushing for broader editing **privileges** we **haven't earned**.

--**David King**, Marketer

**Who** has edited with a **COI**?

MyWikiBiz, **Microsoft**, the Vatican, **the CIA**, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the US Democratic Party's Congressional Campaign Committee, the **US Republican Party**, Britain's Labour Party, Britain's Conservative Party, the Canadian government, **Industry Canada**, the Department of Prime Minister, Cabinet, and Defence in Australia, the United Nations, **the US Senate**, the US Department of Homeland Security, the US Environmental Protection Agency, Montana Senator Conrad Burns, Ohio Governor Bob Taft, **the Israeli government**, Exxon Mobil, Walmart, AstraZeneca, Diebold, **Dow Chemical**, Disney, Dell, **Anheuser-Busch**, Nestle, Pepsi, Boeing, Sony Computer Entertainment, EA, SCO Group, **MySpace**, Pfizer, Raytheon, **DuPont**, Anglican and Catholic churches, the Church of Scientology, the World Harvest Church, Amnesty International, the Discovery Channel, **Fox News**, CBS, the **Washington Post**, the National Rifle Association, News International, Al Jazeera, Bob Jones University, Ohio State University, **Bell Pottinger**, Portland Communications, Anheuser-Busch InBev, Stella Artois, **Newt Gingrich**, United Kingdom Parliament...

Those are **only** the ones that made  
the **news**.

**The Consequences.**

**Significant public backlash**

**Embarrassing PR**

**Risk of alienating clients**

**Taints Wikipedia's reputation**

# Conflict of Interest Policy (COI)

"It is **difficult** to get a man to understand something, when his **salary** depends upon his **not** understanding it."

--Upton Sinclair

What is a **COI**?

An **incompatibility** between the aim of Wikipedia, which is to produce a **neutral, reliably sourced encyclopedia**, and the aims of an individual editor.

Do not **promote your own interests** or those of other individuals, companies, or groups.

Do not write about these things unless you are **certain that a neutral editor would agree** that your edits improve Wikipedia.

## Warning signs

Adding material that **appears to promote interests or visibility**

A characteristic **lack of connection** to anything the general reader might want to consult as a reference

Can you **edit** with a COI?

COI editing is **strongly discouraged**.

Why COI editing **matters.**

Anything you say and do on Wikipedia can have **real world consequences**

Extreme media **embarrassment**

Wikipedia is a very **public forum**

Attempts to improperly influence Wikipedia are **frequently reported** in the media

You don't **own** articles and have **no right to delete** content outside normal channels

If there is anything publicly available on a topic that you would not want included in an article, it will probably **find its way there**

Do **not** create **promotional** or articles lightly, especially on subjects you **care about**

Arguments in favor of COI editing.

“You can **destroy** someone's  
reputation in **one minute** and it will  
take **years to rebuild.**”

-- Lord Bell, head of Bell Pottinger

Wikipedia has a **responsibility to be accurate**

Inaccuracies **can do real harm**

PR professionals have **time, access, and competence**

PR professionals bring a **different point of view**

Arguments against COI editing.

## History of non-neutral edits

Ultimately **accountable** to their **employers**, who have a responsibility **to make profit** for their company

Strong incentive to **whitewash negative and promote positive** information

**Neutrality is difficult**

Saying **who you are** and **what you do**  
is to your **benefit.**

Editors with COIs are strongly encouraged—but not actually required—to **declare their interests**

Editors who **disguise** their COIs are often **exposed**

Assume **transparent** COI editors are trying to **do the right thing**

Do **not** use a voluntarily disclosed conflict of interest as a **weapon against** the editor

Reasons to **declare** a conflict of interest.

Assumption of **good faith**

Most editors will appreciate your honesty and **try to help** you

Professional public relations firms may be **required** to abide by a **code of ethics**

COI editing done **right**.

## **Register with an unrelated username.**

Your username should represent you as an **individual**, and not your company or client

**Multiple** people may **not** ever use the **same account**

**Read the notability guideline.**

**Not every** company, person, artist, artwork, event, or website can **have a Wikipedia article**

Subjects require **in-depth, significant coverage** from **published, reliable, third-party sources**

**Disclose your conflict of interest on your talk page and the article's talk page.**

Being **transparent** about who you are and who you're working for is the easiest way to **gain the community's trust**, get help, and **avoid embarrassing revelations** of misconduct.

**Start with a draft.**

New article **wizard**

**Userspace** draft

**Post drafts** on the article's **talk page**

**Sources, sources, sources.**

**Summarize and synthesize, don't promote**

**Use newspapers, magazines, trades,  
expert websites, and academic journals**

**Avoid self-published blogs, press releases,  
and sources with a direct connection to  
the subject**

**Neutralize your conflict of interest.**

Take extra care to **write without bias**

Write so your **biggest competitor** would think it was **fair and balanced**

Write so it's **impossible** to tell that someone who **works** for the company **wrote** it

## Avoid spam.

Articles should **not** include links to **promotional pages** or content

A simple link to a business' **official website** is allowed and is **sufficient**

**Have other editors review your work.**

Ask for **feedback**

**Live help channel** , Conflict of interest  
noticeboard, **Paid Editor Help**

**{{requested edit}}** for **existing** articles,  
**{{subst:submit}}** for new articles

**Don't use other articles as excuses.**

Do **not** use them as **justification**

Make your **own content better**

Then it will **last**

**Don't rush.**

We operate on the timescale of months, years, and **decades**

Seek the **community's feedback** before making changes to an article directly

With articles about **living people**, urgency takes precedence. **Negative** and **unsourced** information can be **removed** at any time

What does a **COI declaration** look like?

I would like to **disclose** here that these contributions are made on behalf of Monitor Group and in consultation with them, and I intend to **follow all of Wikipedia's guidelines.**

On **any pages** where I look for assistance, I will be sure **to disclose my relationship** to Monitor in the interests of transparency.

--CanalPark (talk) 22:12, 13 April 2011 (UTC)

I work for **Interprose Public Relations**.

While we **do not intend to directly edit** our clients' Wikipedia entries, we are happy to **act as a resource** for the editing community by **providing factual, non-advertorial information** and accompanying third-party citations.

--Mdroszdowski (talk) 15:28, 2 July 2010 (UTC)

What to do if something goes **wrong**.

**If your article was deleted.**

Seek to **understand** why, **fix** the issues

**Talk** to the **administrator**

Request for undeletion, for **uncontroversial** deletions

Deletion Review, for **controversial** deletions

**Userfied** copy

**If your account was blocked.**

**Stay calm**

**Ask the administrator** who blocked you for an explanation

**Appeal the block** , place **{{unblock}}** on your **Talk** page

**Acknowledge** if you made a **mistake**

**Online unblock chat**

**If no good sources exist for your article.**

Do more **research**

**Reference Desk**

Ask good sources to **write about it**

**Wait**

Try **again**

**If there's a mistake in your article.**

**Minor... fix it yourself**

**Major... seek input from other editors, let them do it**

**If someone is editing your article.**

**Nobody**, not even the **subjects** of articles, **owns** them

Accept that others will make changes and engage them in  
**civil and constructive dialogue**

**If someone is vandalizing your article.**

Revert obvious **vandalism** yourself

Only applies to **intentionally destructive changes**, not edits you just **disagree with**

For any significant changes, **discuss** it with other editors **first**

Seek **page protection**

**If you want to make changes to the article.**

Post **requested edits** on the article's talk page using **{{requested edit}}**

Ask for help at WikiProject Cooperation's **Paid Editor Help page** or at the Conflict of interest **noticeboard**

**If you disagree strongly with other editors.**

Stay **civil**

Read the relevant **policies**

Seek the **input** of other uninvolved editors

Use the **dispute resolution** procedures

**If you requested feedback but haven't received a timely response.**

Be **transparent** about your identity and conflict of interest

Use **Talk** pages, **noticeboards**, **WikiProjects**, **Paid Editor Help**, **Jimmy Wales' Talk** page

Email **info@wikipedia.org**, contact the **Arbitration Committee**

**If you're overwhelmed by Wikipedia's interface and policies.**

Take your **time**

Ask for **help**

Ask **questions**

Remember we're here to assist you and we're **not your enemy**

Is there **hope**?

We believe that PR professionals are **responsible and respectful**.

It's wrong for the PR profession to think it can **run roughshod over the established Wikipedia community**.

We must **engage** in a reasonable manner that respects the community's rules and protocols, while also ensuring they are acting in their **clients' best interests**.

But the engagement should be a **two-way street**. At the moment, we do **not believe that to be the case**.

--Gerald Corbett, head of PRSA

What is needed is a **widespread understanding and acceptance.**

We may have to start with an acceptance that Wikipedians **have a problem with our profession** and this reputation has unfortunately **been earned.**

We **can't change this overnight** but by working in partnership through outreach, diplomacy and dialogue, **we can make a difference.**

--Jane Wilson, head of CIPR

Imagine a world in which **every single person** on the planet is given free access to the **sum of all human knowledge**.

That's our **commitment.**

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