

Module 2: Video 2

[00:00:12] **Kim Last** Welcome back to our second module. This is video two of going live building live journalism in your newsroom. In this video, we're going to dig into the standards and ethics of like journalism events. So at the crux of it, the most important thing that journalists who work on live journalism events need to protect are the journalistic integrity and editorial oversight of the overall event.

[00:00:40] **Last** So what does that mean?

[00:00:43] **Last** Let's dig into transparency. When a session is sponsored, letting your audience know that it is not organized by the newsroom and is organized on behalf of an advertiser or a brand, we're going to talk about examples of how sponsors are incorporated into a live event, whether that is a physical, in-person event or virtual event. And then we're going to talk about considering government standards and ethics and really how to avoid tricky situations where it may appear that an event may be influencing some sort of power maker in the eyes of the government.

[00:01:26] **Last** So, number one, integrity matters. So there's many moving parts as we discuss to live events and there's cross collaboration of departments. But the North Star for guiding a live event typically sits in the newsroom. And really, that responsibility sits with the editor who is behind the program. And we know this because editors are adept at vetting topics when speakers and sources are great at looking into how folks should participate and can really offer the best assessment from a content perspective around why we're pursuing one topic or one speaker versus another. It's also typical that within most live journalism departments that the editors have the final decision on a given project. So whether that is the agenda, the speakers, the the topics that advertisers may want to discuss during their sessions, all of that is under the watchful guide full eye of an editor who is steering the ship and making sure that the integrity of the newsroom, the integrity of the news brand is connected and protected. So I would say here, you know, journalists who work on these events, you're the custodian of your news brand, you're the custodian of the trust, the value and the importance of maintaining independence with your readers. And that's something the journalists who work for me and the journalists who organize live events regularly, I think take to heart really closely.

[00:03:13] **Last** So let's talk a little bit about a phrase that is always thrown around when it comes to sponsorship of live events and that is thought leadership. If you ever talk to someone in your ad sales department, it is going to be the one phrase that you hear frequently as it relates to live events, sponsorship and activations. It's all about the thought leadership. So what on earth does that actually mean? So thought leadership could include a sponsor panel with executives from the company or executives who are partners with the company. Talking about a given topic that's hopefully of value to the audience that's tuning in and watching. It can also be a set of welcome remarks, welcoming the audience and thanking them for tuning in and talking about why the company is so excited to support the day's program and the news organization. Who's organizing that? It can also be hosting a virtual roundtable discussion where you're digging into questions and topics sort of at a rapid fire, making it interactive for that audience that's also tuning in. It could also be a TED style like talk that an executive produces that is really skillful in bringing in different types of visuals and really feels different from the interviews that are being better taking place on on stage center that are organized by the newsrooms. The norm for many sponsors and advertisers at the event is a moment on stage. So think really deeply about how and where that fits in. Into your overall program, do you want your

advertisers to open up the show at the top? Know one example of how advertisers have typically activated within virtual events is really slick aerial advertising that feels like an ad that you were watching on TV, but is designed specifically for that event. Typically, those ads can run anywhere from as little as 15 seconds all the way up to a minute or even a minute thirty. It'll feel beautifully produced and might have like a docu style kind of look to them, which is a little bit different from the rest of the program. Or should it be in the middle of the program, right during right before a break takes place or right before a program kicks back up again? Should it be at the end of the event? And does that feel beneficial to the audience and beneficial to the advertiser?

[00:06:08] **Last** These are all really open questions that you know anybody who is planning a live event should think about deeply and should have some real conversations about what feels right in terms of the ratios of advertisers to tin news content, for example.

[00:06:28] **Last** Now, another really important factor is thinking about labeling for those sponsored moments. So it's really important to be clear where the newsroom is involved in a in a life journalism project and where the newsroom is not involved in the live journalism project. And there are multiple ways that you can do this. There can be disclaimers that go right at the bottom of sort of the bottom part of the event when you're watching, and you can make them very clear and have people easily sort of pick that up while they're watching. That's a very obvious example. There's also ways that you can do this from a subtle perspective. You could think about different colored backgrounds. So are our journalist sessions with a blue background and should sponsor sessions be with a white background or a black background? That's up to you to decide, and usually that's a great sort of open question for your marketing team as you think about how to build out tablets and brand and where brand gets activated right?

[00:07:40] **Last** Think about the presence of an advertising an advertiser logo. So I love the most obvious examples of where advertisers are incorporated. So disclaimers and then also ad logos, right? Because you would never- in news content, would never have an ad or brand logo just sort of smack in the middle, right? That's really uncommon. And it makes it just very clear to a reader that, yes, this is not news content and is hosted by that brand. And again, a little bit to my point earlier, think about what works in terms of the power of ads on TV, for example. So B-roll can have a really powerful effect, and it's something that we're all pretty conditioned and used to. So thinking about how the same type of B-roll from an advertiser who runs TV ads could be parlayed and repackaged into something that's run during an event on screen in person or virtually to that audience that's tuning in online. Another really important factor here is to be clear about how sponsors are integrated into the experience. So pre-pandemic, what that means is thinking about where sponsors belong. So do they belong hosting and underwriting a cocktail reception? That seems pretty, in a sense, the same thing with a VIP or an interesting dinner that's happening at the conclusion of one of your events. Those are sort of safe spaces where advertisers frequently turn up and it's expected and also sort of a value add, if you will, for attendees. For virtual events, you could think about having sponsors underwrite watch parties, sending cocktail kits, powering the networking experience to get people to connect with one another online and actually facilitate that networking experience, especially if it's a tech company, for example. There's a lot of creative ways to do it, and I suggest for those thinking about how to do this and how to do it right. I think it's a conversation in the newsroom. I think it's a conversation with your standards team. If you have a standards team in the newsroom, it's not, you know, I say, your top editorial leadership is a great place to start to really dig in there. And then it's a conversation with the stakeholders and leaders on the business side that the person who is the top salesperson selling for

advertising, the top audience development and marketing hand and maybe even thinking about and pulling in. If you have somebody who's working on your comms staff and PR bringing them into also make sure that everything feels right sized from a PR and comms perspective as well.

[00:10:47] **Last** So some media organizations go really wide and far around publicizing their code of ethics and how they how they interact with sponsors at live events and also where and how the power around whether or not something is programed or not programed sits with the newsroom team. So, for example, Atlantic media, the publishers of the Atlantic magazine, are very vocal about this. They've actually published their code of Ethics around their live journalism events. That's actually supplemental reading for this for this module, in case you want to check that out in depth. It's a quite an interesting read. Another thing that I think is really important for news organizations to be mindful of is just considering the government ethics in your local area. So there's been examples, the state side and domestically around our off the record events that also that are organized by newsrooms and organized by news organizations that invite elected officials and also advertisers to the table to have discussions that domestically was a is a is a tricky thing to navigate and dance around. And that's why my recommendation whenever events are hosted and organized by the newsroom is to keep things on the record or under Chatham House rule. So that's just something to think about when you were considering hosting events in your region. It's just making sure you don't get into any of those sticky situations where things could be problematic.

[00:12:31] **Last** So this video really dives into all of the standards and ethics to consider with your live event. We've got a lot of additional reading materials on this, so I hope we get a chance to check that out. And I'm looking forward to interacting with everybody to on the forums as they as you all contemplate and navigate how to incorporate this into your upcoming journalism event. That's a wrap on this video, and I hope to catch you later for Module three. Take care.