**MEDIA INTERACTION POLICY**

**PURPOSE**

This policy ensures consistent and high-quality communication with media outlets to support the company’s goals, such as building its brand, launching products, hosting events, and promoting corporate activities.

This policy outlines the rules and guidelines for responding to media inquiries about company-related topics. For non-media inquiries, employees should refer to the company’s [External Communications Policy/[POLICY NAME]]. This policy also identifies individuals authorized to speak with the media on behalf of the company.

This policy applies to all employees, including officers and managers and complies with all Alabama and federal laws and regulations governing employment and workplace practices.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The company frequently receives media inquiries through various channels, including phone, email, letters, or even casual conversations at events. Regardless of the inquiry's form, all employees must follow established procedures to ensure accurate and consistent responses that reflect the company's views.

Communications department

The [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] serves as the primary contact for media inquiries and media-related matters. Its responsibilities include:

* Planning, coordinating, and managing all media relations efforts, in collaboration with the Legal Department and relevant business units as needed.
* Developing a media strategy to promote effective communication through print, online, and broadcast media, while seeking collaborations with appropriate channels.
* Producing and distributing key news releases and media advisories.
* Generating publicity for the company's products, services, activities, and accomplishments.
* Managing media responses during crises that may negatively impact the company’s reputation.
* Monitoring public information about the company and advising senior management on issues that affect public perception.
* Coordinating media access to company employees for interviews or comment on relevant issues.
* Advising employees on best practices for sharing news and responding to media inquiries.

Authorized spokespersons

The company's authorized spokespersons include:

* [Chief Executive Officer.]
* [Chief Financial Officer.]
* [Chair of the Board.]
* [TITLE.]
* [TITLE.]

Authorized spokespersons:

* Are the only individuals authorized to speak with the media on behalf of the company.
* Must consult with the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] before responding to any media inquiries or participating in media interviews to avoid negative coverage.
* Will receive media training before serving in this role.

**EMPLOYEES WITH LIMITED AUTHORIZATIONS**

In certain situations, an authorized spokesperson or the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] may designate specific employees to speak on behalf of the company within their areas of expertise or when an authorized spokesperson is unavailable. These employees must adhere to the following guidelines:

* Written authorization: Employees must receive written, limited authorization from the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] before speaking on the company’s behalf.
* Scope of topics: They may only address media inquiries directly related to their area of expertise or issues explicitly authorized by an authorized spokesperson or the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]].
* Topic limitations: They are not permitted to respond to media inquiries on unrelated topics or issues outside their authorization.
* Media training: Designated employees must complete appropriate media training before engaging in this role.

**MEDIA INQUIRIES**

[EMPLOYER’S NAME] aims to maintain transparent and constructive relationships with the media. It will respond promptly to legitimate media inquiries while proactively sharing relevant information when management determines it aligns with the company’s business interests.

**HANDLING MEDIA INQUIRIES**

If you are contacted by the media for company-related information, follow these steps to ensure accurate and professional communication:

Avoid unscripted responses

* Do not answer questions on the spot, even if you know the answer.
* Avoid saying "no comment," as it may be misinterpreted as an official position or used against the company.

Refer the inquiry

* Direct all media inquiries to the [Director/[TITLE]] of the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] at [CONTACT INFORMATION].
* If the [Director/[TITLE]] is unavailable, refer the inquiry to [TITLE] at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

Record details accurately

* Note the reporter’s name, title, media outlet, and contact information.
* Document the nature of the inquiry or story.
* Record the reporter's deadline for a response.

Provide a polite response

* Politely inform the reporter that a company representative will respond promptly.
* Ensure that a response is provided before the stated deadline.

**RESPONDING TO MEDIA INQUIRIES**

The [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] manages the preparation and coordination of responses to media inquiries across various company-related topics. Upon receiving a media inquiry, the department will:

Engage internal stakeholders

Collaborate with the Legal Department and other key stakeholders to:

* Review the issues behind the inquiry.
* Determine the most appropriate information to share.
* Draft a media statement and supporting materials for approval by the Legal Department and [TITLE], as needed.

Ensure consistency and impact

* Verify that the response aligns with previous media statements on the same or related issues.
* Evaluate the potential impact of the response on public perceptions of the company.

Coordinate the response email

* Deliver the information either verbally or in writing, as appropriate.
* Arrange interviews or public appearances with an authorized spokesperson, if necessary.

Support the spokesperson

* Provide context for the inquiry, along with:
  + A media statement or key talking points.
  + Training on how to navigate the interview or engagement effectively.

Document and respond promptly

* Record the details of the inquiry and the response provided.
* Ensure all media inquiries receive a response as quickly as possible, ideally within the media cycle or specified deadline.

Employees should make every effort to meet media deadlines when reasonable notice has been provided.

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS AND VIEWS**

Employees may occasionally receive media inquiries regarding their personal interests or non-work-related activities. Employees are free to discuss these topics with the media.

However, if employees are asked for their personal views on work-related activities or company matters, they must ensure there is no confusion between their personal opinions and the company’s official position.

* When making personal statements to the media:
  + Clearly state that you are speaking on your own behalf and not on behalf of the company.
  + Identify your statements and opinions as personal and not reflective of the company.
  + Refrain from making statements that could be construed as the company’s official position or policy.
  + Avoid any statements or behavior that could be seen as illegal, offensive, or damaging, including discriminatory remarks, profanity, or maliciously false comments, even if you disclaim attribution to the company.

**PRESS RELEASES**

The company uses press releases to enhance its public profile and align stakeholder behavior with its vision, strategies, and objectives. Press releases may also be issued to share information deemed valuable or important by management, regardless of materiality.

Review and approval process

*Drafting*

The [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] collaborates with internal teams (e.g., business, sales, marketing, product development) to draft the press release [using the company’s standard template].

*Initial review*

* Once the first draft is complete, the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]]:
  + Verifies the facts.
  + Ensures the message aligns with company objectives.
  + Confirms trademark usage is compliant.

*Preliminary review by leadership*

* The CEO and Legal Department review the draft to ensure:
  + The content is appropriate for disclosure.
  + The message aligns with strategic goals.
  + Compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

*Third party review (if applicable)*

* If the press release references or is co-authored with customers, end users, or strategic partners, it is shared with these third parties for review after internal preliminary approval.

*Final review and approval*

* Following any third-party feedback, the CEO and Legal Department conduct a final review.
* All press releases require final approval from both the CEO and the Legal Department before distribution to the media.

**OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE**

Employees who wish to generate media coverage for a business project, event, or other activity should reach out to the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]]. This department has access to national [and global] media contacts and will collaborate with the relevant business unit to coordinate publicity and enhance visibility for newsworthy initiatives.

**ADDRESSING MEDIA ERRORS AND CONCERNS**

Employees must notify the [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] promptly if they:

* Identify an error or misinformation about the company in any media coverage. Provide details such as the nature of the mistake, where it appeared, and when.
* Have concerns regarding negative media coverage involving the company.

The [Communications Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] will engage with media representatives to correct errors or address unfavorable coverage. This may include offering additional information to improve understanding and potentially generate subsequent accurate or positive coverage.

**POLICY ENFORCEMENT AND PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION**

Violations of this policy by any employee, regardless of position or title, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

[Choose the appropriate language based on the company's preference:]

* [Mandatory reporting: Employees must report any actual or potential violations of this policy to [your direct supervisor or] [DESIGNATED PERSON] or the [Communications Department/Legal Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] immediately.
* Encouraged reporting: Employees are encouraged to report actual or potential violations of this policy to [DESIGNATED PERSON] or the [Communications Department/Legal Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]]].

The company strictly prohibits any form of discipline, retaliation, intimidation, or reprisal against employees who report policy violations in good faith.

**POLICY ADMINISTRATION**

The company reserves the right to revise, modify, or remove provisions of this policy at any time and without prior notice.

The [Communications Department/Legal Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] is responsible for overseeing and updating this policy as needed. Employees are required to review and adhere to the most current version of the policy.

For any questions not addressed within this policy, please contact the [Communications Department/Legal Department/[DEPARTMENT NAME]] for clarification.

**APPLICABILITY TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS**

The employment terms outlined in this policy are designed to complement, not replace, amend, or supplement the terms and conditions of employment stated in any collective bargaining agreement applicable to unionized employees.

Employees should refer to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement for specific guidance. Where this policy conflicts with the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, the terms of the agreement will take precedence.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT AND REVIEW**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (employee name), acknowledge that on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date), I received and reviewed a copy of [EMPLOYER'S NAME]’s [NAME OF POLICY]. I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the policy and adhere to its terms.

I also acknowledge that this policy is not intended to create an employment contract or alter my at-will employment status, unless otherwise specified in a written agreement signed by an authorized representative of [EMPLOYER'S NAME]. Any delay or failure by [EMPLOYER'S NAME] to enforce the provisions of this policy does not constitute a waiver of its rights to enforce them in the future.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date