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ABC Business Magazines Reporting Standards

This document details a change that has been agreed to the Reporting Standards for Business Magazines. You can view the updated ABC Reporting Standards on our [website](#).

Have a suggestion or a query about a rule?

As an ABC member you can ask us to look at any aspect of the information we publish or the rules behind them. If you have any suggestions or comments please contact your ABC Account Manager, Charlotte Brown (charlotte.brown@abc.org.uk) or Lynn Kendrick (lynn.kendrick@abc.org.uk), or any member of the ABC team.

Controlled Free Circulation – supporting evidence

[effective from periods ending December 2023]

Summary of the change

- **Previously:** The Reporting Standards stipulate that information provided by publishers in support of Controlled Free Circulation (for example the addressee's name, address, demographic criteria etc.) must be supported by 'third-party evidence'.
- **New:** 'Third party evidence' is replaced with 'identifiable and verifiable evidence'.

Detail of the change

The purpose of the change is to recognise that publishers can have well-researched and good-quality first-party data, and that this can be used to support their controlled circulation. *For example, a publisher will be able to use information collected through registrations for one of their own events, as they could with event registration data acquired from a third party.*

For ABC purposes:

- You will need to be able to identify when and from where the data was obtained; and
- We must be able to verify to our satisfaction that the relevant information has been obtained either directly from the individual, a colleague or other organisation/operation, and can be relied upon in support of the claim.

The key wording changes to the Reporting Standards are shown below.

Amendment

Shading denotes new text, strike-through deleted text

Controlled Free Circulation [extract]

...

3. Individual's details supported by identifiable and verifiable ~~third-party~~ evidence that is less than five years old

- a) At the date you distribute a copy you must have identifiable and verifiable ~~third-party~~ evidence* that:
- i) supports the individual's name, job title/function (as appropriate) and address details.
 - ii) proves explicitly that the individual meets the Terms of Control.
 - iii) is less than five years old. Please refer to the guidance for dating evidence.

***Identifiable and verifiable**

You must be able to **identify** (for any particular individual or information relevant to the claim) when and from where the information was obtained. *For example: The date plus whether it was obtained:*

- From a direct communication with the individual or a colleague (e.g. online form, event registration, telephone call); or
- From another organisation/operation, such as a Data Broker, Event Organiser or list specialist.

We must be able to **verify** to our satisfaction that the relevant information has been obtained either directly from the individual or from a colleague or other organisation/operation and can be relied upon in support of the claim. *This may require us to contact some individuals/colleagues and/or examine relevant records, such as campaign instructions, orders, invoices and/or payments as we consider appropriate.*

~~*b) A related party (as defined in the General Principles section) is NOT a third party. Therefore evidence provided by a related party is not acceptable for ABC purposes except in the following circumstances where at least one of the following applies:~~

- ~~i) ABC has audited and verified the data at audit to be compliant with all the requirements necessary for the circulation claim in question. *For example: ABC has already audited the data from included on an attendance list as part of an event audit.*~~
- ~~ii) You have purchased the data from the related party and:
 - ~~— You have paid a purchase invoice (money must have changed hands – an inter-company accounting transaction is not sufficient).~~
 - ~~— The data purchased is sold as part of an established data rental/sale business. The onus is on you to provide suitable proof of this fact. Examples of suitable proof include promotional material and data rental/sale invoices.~~~~

4. Copies reported either as requested or non-requested

The following additional requirements apply to copies claimed in these categories:

Requested (individual)

- a) The copy must be addressed to the individual by name.
- b) You must have identifiable and verifiable ~~third-party~~ evidence* that the individual has, within the last five years, made a clear request to receive the publication before you send it to them.
- c) The date of the request must be recorded so that it can be analysed by age.

Requested (colleague)

- a) The copy must be addressed to the individual, either by name or job title/function.
- b) At the date you distribute the copy you must have identifiable and verifiable ~~third-party~~ evidence* that another employee or colleague from the individual's company or organisation has, within the last five years, made a clear request to receive the publication on the individual's behalf.
- c) The date of the request must be recorded so that it can be analysed by age.

Non-requested (either by name or by job title/function)

- a) The copy must be addressed to the individual, either by name or job title/function, depending on the circulation category in which it is claimed.
- b) For by job title/function copies you may add a stylized/generic job title/job function to the address of an organisation for which you have identifiable and verifiable ~~third-party~~ evidence* of the organisation's name and address providing:
 - i) The job title/ job function could reasonably be expected to relate to an individual in that organisation.
 - ii) Multiple or similar job titles/ job functions at the same organisation are not used in a way that might result in copies being distributed to the same individual.