



**Steel Media Ltd**

The House, Kelston Park, Kelston, Bath, BA1 9AE, United Kingdom

Registration number: 04352070 (England & Wales)

## **Steel Media Sponsorship & Editorial Independence Policy**

Now and again Steel Media produces a variety of online articles with funding provided by outside companies and organisations on topics that we hope are of interest to our audience, more often via our Steel Media Preferred Partners Scheme.

Obviously it's important to be completely honest about the nature of those articles.

This starts with the visual presentation of the articles, which should inform readers as to Steel Media's relationship with the sponsor. By making it clear how the content has been commissioned and produced, by whom it has been funded, and under what rules is also key. The guidelines set out here are to ensure the principles which maintain editorial integrity and transparency for the entire process – from initial conceptualisation to sign-off. They apply to commercially driven supplements and articles published by Steel Media, not to advertorials (see Additional notes).

Commercially driven articles originate from an approach by the sponsor or an idea from Steel Media's commercial divisions. This type of publication aims to stimulate interest and/or debate around a subject defined by the sponsor, while satisfying our editorial values and reader expectations.

Articles are edited and written by Steel Media staff, or those approved by Steel Media, to the standards expected for the regular sections of our websites and in collaboration with the sponsor. They are often produced by Steel Media's editorial department.

Prior to a sponsored feature being agreed with a client, Steel Media's sales team presents the proposal to the editorial team of the website in which the article will appear. The site's editor may accept, refuse, or request that extra conditions (not contrary to these guidelines) be attached to the article.

The sales team is responsible for ensuring the client is aware of these guidelines.

### **Process**

Once a feature is agreed, Steel Media appoints a writer from its approved list of trusted contributors.

Steel Media's editorial representative is responsible for producing a credible and accurate article. Typically the writer will have a briefing with the sponsor after which they will produce a synopsis that takes into account the client's brief but satisfies Steel Media's editorial standards, including tone and balance. If applicable, a range of views may be included in order to achieve this balance.

The synopsis is then sent to the client for feedback. If necessary a revised version is produced, incorporating any suggestions that Steel Media thinks appropriate and consistent with its editorial values. Questions of fairness and balance should be addressed and finalised at this stage.

Once the brief is agreed, the writer may rely on a sponsor's expertise in the subject area but will not be subject to pressure to revise content. Steel Media has no obligation to share article copy with the sponsor until the proof stage, at which point the sponsor may check for factual errors and to ensure the brief has been correctly executed. Steel Media is under no obligation to agree to any other requests for changes to text, photos, or layout unless it agrees that on editorial grounds the suggestions will improve reader comprehension.

Where an article is published under the Preferred Partners Scheme it must always be accompanied with a clear indicator that it is such.

### **Editorial responsibilities**

Everyone asked to write a feature will be told what they're contributing to and who is sponsoring it. As this is not an advertorial piece (see Additional notes), it will be emphasised that their reporting should be unchanged by the fact that a third party is sponsoring the supplement.

Members of Steel Media's editorial production team should approach their work in exactly the same way as they would for any article for our websites, and in the clear understanding that the sponsor cannot interfere with the tone or content of their work. Writers should be directed to these guidelines before they begin work.

## **Sponsors**

A sponsor is a company or organisation funding a Steel Media article in which they are partner. This is not the same as paying for an advertising banner.

The sponsor may have input into the planning of the feature; they will be able to suggest appropriate themes, angles, and information for inclusion, as well as recommend experts for interview. Steel Media's editorial team will consider all such suggestions but is not obliged to accept any.

A sponsor cannot dictate which writers should or should not be commissioned to write for the feature.

Sponsors are free to discuss and negotiate a synopsis with Steel Media in order to arrive at an outline with which both parties are happy. If the sponsor and Steel Media cannot agree, the supplement cannot go ahead. In cases of dispute, the final decision rests with the Senior Editor(s) of Steel Media.

The activities and views of sponsors may be featured in the editorial content because they are genuinely relevant to the subject matter. Steel Media can not provide guarantees about the level or position of references to the sponsor within the feature but naturally seeks to strike a balance between mutual objectives.

Sponsors are asked to respect the inclusion in the feature of dissenting voices (commenting) or competitor activities such as adverts on the website. Balance is not only an editorial requirement but produces a more satisfying and informative read. Debate within the feature should be seen as a positive opportunity for the sponsor, their critics, and the audience.

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

### **Advertorials**

An advertorial is an advertisement (feature, page, or supplement) that uses text or design elements to resemble editorial content. This material is controlled by the advertiser rather than the publisher and is subject to regulation by the Advertising Standards Authority. Advertorials will normally be produced by the client, their nature clearly labelled, and not involve Steel Media's editorial team.

**For the avoidance of any doubt we do not offer reviews as part of the Preferred Partners Scheme.**

## **CONTACT US**

If you have any questions regarding this policy, you can contact the Steel Media legal team at:

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**Email:** [legal@steelmedia.co.uk](mailto:legal@steelmedia.co.uk).