

Thank you very much.

Ten people have been arrested, including top, famous, powerful and connected editors, as their story-gathering methods were exposed as immoral and possibly illegal. Britain's top policeman has resigned, as his renowned Scotland Yard became implicated in a lack-lustre investigation of the all-powerful tabloid press. The UK's prime minister has been forced on the defensive, as his own ties to the now disgraced newspaper and its editors became an embarrassment. One of the world's most powerful media moguls is under the gravest threat of his career as his empire appears built on a shaky ethical foundation..

As we watch the phone-hacking scandal in the UK unfold, with significant implications for Rupert Murdoch's world-wide media holdings, it is clear that the "News of the World"'s actions have thrown the role and responsibility of the press in society into disrepute and sharp focus.

The media's foremost role should be to help the public –

To help by making society transparent

... by telling stories

... by holding powerful people to account

...by providing insight and analysis

It does this as a service, as a calling. It does this because it is the right and good thing to do.

It does this because the media is a business, and there is money and profit in providing useful important content.

It does this because it can get power and position from its role as storyteller. Senior officials and top business people talk to the press, even if they don't really want to, because they want to influence the coverage or to protect and enhance their own positions.

But if the media's motives become impure – if the lust for money and power outstrip the desire to illuminate facts and aid the public – then the media has failed society and tarnished its role and reputation.

We have seen the press at its worst: arrogant, lusting after power, revelling in its ability to expose secrets (regardless of what those secrets are), uncaring about the rules, oblivious to the damage its actions could have on others.

This was not about bending the rules in order to do good. There can be no arguing that the end justified the means.

The actions that caused the most outrage were those that had the least to do with serving the public good – tampering with a murdered girl's mobile phone, for example.

The allegations that are potentially the most damaging are those that are about blatantly illegal acts – corrupting the police, for example.

Neither of these have anything to do with the true craft, profession and calling of journalism.

These are purely about profit and power.

They are not about truth, or light, or transparency.

Now, of course, there are hundreds of dedicated, honest and excellent journalists who work for News Corporation who make the profession proud every single day. There are publications within that organization

that are among the best in the world – The Wall Street Journal and the Times of London, to name just two.

But the actions of some people have cast a huge shadow on a whole company, and, indeed, on our whole profession.

So let's leave the sordid mess of the News International story for a moment and talk instead of the best of journalism to raise our spirits again.

The best occurs when the goal is to improve the position of the public.

The best occurs when power is called to account – when politicians or powerful businessmen realise they can't simply do what they want, but they will, instead, have their actions and words exposed to the public for the public to talk about and judge.

And that is the point – the best journalism gives power to the people. It does not reserve power to the media organisation.

The media is simply a conduit, allowing information to flow freely, easily, clearly and without encumbrance to those who need it to make decisions.

The best political journalism explains the inner working of government, allowing citizens to participate more knowledgeably in the debate.

The best financial journalism explains the people and processes of companies, making obscure decisions clear and allowing investors to participate more knowledgeably in the affairs of the market.

The best social journalism explains the dynamics of culture, illuminating how society is evolving and allowing people to find their place in the changes.

The best muckraking journalism exposes scandal and corruption, giving comfort that wrong doers will be called to account.

Uniting both good and bad journalism are information and narrative.
Separating good from bad journalism are standards, ethics and intent.

When I was editor-in-chief of Reuters news and we revised our Handbook of Journalism, we began with 10 simple absolutes of our journalism that we were sure would keep us on the right side of the profession.

Here are our fundamental ten:

- Always hold accuracy sacrosanct
- Always correct an error openly
- Always strive for balance and freedom from bias
- Always reveal a conflict of interest to a manager
- Always respect privileged information
- Always protect sources from the authorities
- Always guard against putting opinion in a news story
- Never fabricate or plagiarise
- Never alter a still or moving image beyond the requirements of normal image enhancement
- Never pay for a story and never accept a bribe

It all begins with accuracy – know the facts, check the facts, get it right.

If you are wrong, correct cleanly, openly and quickly. Never hide your mistakes.

Ensure your readers know all sides of the story; never let your own views or background colour your presentation.

Ensure that the transparency you insist on for society extends to yourself – be open about potential conflicts; ensure they are known to your readers.

Protect your sources; they have entrusted you with their stories and you must respect that.

Know the difference between news and views and be clear about which is what.

Be honest about what is your work and what is that of others.

Never allow the story to run away from the facts; always be truthful about the writing and the images.

And make sure all the stories come honestly and not because someone is bending the truth for money.

It should be obvious that if these rules had been followed within News International, we would not have the scandal we have today.

And yet I am not trying to set Reuters news up as a paragon of virtue. We have had our problems, our faults and our errors. But we have corrected them swiftly and cleanly.

We had a stringer who used Photoshop to alter a photograph. We fired him.

We had a columnist who misread and misunderstood financial details. We withdrew the story and corrected it, explaining exactly what happened.

Rules only work if they are observed.

An organisation is honest only if it has a culture that values that trait.

An ethical culture has to start at the top and go all the way to the freshest and most junior employee.

And it has to be part of every journalism school around the world.

So I'm glad to be here today as we discuss these topics in China.

China's media is at a very exciting turning point. From being tightly controlled to having now great ability to explore important topics in business, economics, and in the way provinces and regions are developing, the media has new freedoms and also new responsibilities.

Of course, it is possible to focus on the restrictions that still exist. And as a journalist, I'd support continued expansion of the media's opportunities to shine the light of transparency everywhere, without restriction.

But it is also important to talk about the vibrant and exciting journalism that can be done today in China, and to emphasise how important it is that it be done to the highest ethical standards.

With social media exploding in China, with a cacophony of voices vying for the attention of the public, it is the organisations with the tightest standards, the clearest rules, and the greatest commitment to transparency that will win the respect and trust of the public. And with that respect and trust will come financial success as well.

At this stage of the development of Chinese media, deviation from this ethical path would be terribly serious and destructive – the media needs to build a strong foundation, and without it the profession will be set back terribly.

I have great confidence that with the proper spirit, training and introspection, the Chinese media will be able to reach the right level. It should aim for that, and not make any compromises along the way.

The prize is great: public trust and respect. It is worth fighting for.

One thing that worries me is that the current UK scandal has stirred up talk of the need for government regulation of the media in the West.

I am fundamentally opposed to answering the very real problems with a remedy that could have destructive consequences.

One of the most important responsibilities the media has to society is to be a watch dog to the authorities: to expose excesses, corruption, and problems.

The media cannot do that effectively if it is regulated by the very organisations it is trying to hold to account.

Fundamentally the media must regulate itself. It must hold itself to the highest of standards, and it must take action against individuals or organisations that fail to live up to its standards.

It should start with the schools and training programs – you should have no fear about failing those who don't share your ethical values.

It then moves to the media organisations – they must have no one on their staff who can't sign up to strict ethics and standards.

Then it is the public's turn – they shouldn't read or buy media which is without true quality.

Remember that we are in an age of great competition – competition between media organisations to be sure, but also competition between the professional media and the teeming social media world.

To be successful, the professionals must add real value.

They can do that in several ways:

First and foremost, is to have authority and expertise.

People will listen to you because you're worth listening to. And they'll stop if you're not.

Second, is to build an audience and to know that audience.

This is the age of community, and there's huge value in the building and maintenance of a group.

Third, is to have consistency.

I've come to believe that the craft nature of journalism is perhaps its strongest virtue and the one that separates the professional from the amateur. The person or organisation who produces valuable material day in and day out is one I'll return to again and again. The one who is brilliant one day but stupid and puerile the next probably isn't worth my time.

Fourth, is to understand the mysterious magnetism of appeal.

Give me style, give me grace, entertain me. Use style and technique as weapons. Whatever you do, don't bore me.

So that's four key parts of the equation – authority, audience, consistency, appeal.

The fifth part is what we have been discussing today – it is to have strong standards, ethics and values. It is about making those a fundamental part of your value proposition, of your newsroom's atmosphere and of your organisation's system of beliefs.

If you do all this, you will be an organisation that has a culture that will be self-policing.

If you do all this, you will be an organisation that will be watched and read.

If you do all this, you will gain the respect of your peers and your audience.

If you do all this, you will have fulfilled and grown your social responsibility.

And if you do all this, you will be successful.

That is something to aim for. Something to strive for. Something to insist on.

Thank you very much.