

School Newspaper Editor Needs to Sell Ad Space for School Newspaper

Scenario:

As the newspaper editor, Sun has worked hard with her classmates for the past two months to prepare the most recent edition of the school newspaper. Now, all that is left is to fill the ad space in the back—an important source of revenue for the struggling news class. Usually, the staff will approach business owners near the school to sell advertisements. However, the staff is having particular trouble selling ad space for the upcoming issue.

One day, Sun is approached by a potential advertiser who is happy to buy ad space. She is thrilled until she realizes that the proposed ads are from a weight loss company trying to sell diet pills to students. Sun knows that not only do weight loss fads typically not work, they can also send problematic messages to consumers—especially teenagers. However, she knows that the newspaper might not be able to afford being picky about its ads.

Sun is unsure if she should sell the ad space and compromise her values for the sake of the paper. Are teenagers able to make their own decisions in response to advertisements, or should they be protected from targeted, potentially predatory messaging? What ethical actions should Sun take to keep a decades-old organization alive?

Suggested Questions:

- What ethical issue exists in this scenario?
- Who gets to decide whether an ad is appropriate for a given age group?
- Should media (like newspapers, magazines, TV shows, etc.) be responsible for advertising content found in their publications, especially if it's problematic?
- How can organizations balance ethical advertising with the need to make a profit?
- Should Sun publish the weight loss advertisement in the school newsletter? Why or why not?

Requirements:

When developing your presentation, make sure the following are addressed:

- Why the ethical issue happened.
- How the ethical issue should be resolved.
- What could have prevented the ethical issue.