

# THE WAL-MART ~~F~~BLOG

## WAL-MART CROSSES ETHICAL BOUNDARIES WITH FAKE BLOG

Edelman Worldwide came under harsh criticism last month after posting a **fake blog**, or “flog,” for its client **Wal-Mart**. The flog, entitled “Wal-Marting Across America,” was shut down after Wal-Mart Watch exposed the site as an Edelman-funded front.

“**Wal-Marting Across America**” purportedly told the story of an anonymous couple named “Laura” and “Jim” who were driving across the United States, stopping to talk to Wal-Mart employees along the way. These employees gave glowing reviews of working at Wal-Mart without fail. The hitch? The project was being **paid for by Wal-Mart**: Laura and Jim were hired to create the stories, and Jim was a staff photographer for the *Washington Post*.



WAL-MART'S NOW-DEFUNCT FLOG 'WAL-MARTING ACROSS AMERICA'

The bloggers claimed to be supported by a group called “**Working Families For Wal-Mart.**” Far from an independent alliance of Wal-Mart employees (as their website would have you believe), “Working Families for Wal-Mart” is nothing more than **another public relations fabrication** and a **sock-puppet** for Edelman. “Working Families for Wal-Mart” not only allows Edelman to put a friendly face on one of the world’s most worker-unfriendly companies, it also provided a way to obscure the funding for “astro-turf” projects like “Wal-Marting Across America.” Edelman is now **on probation** from the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) for its dishonest use of social media. Actions like Edelman’s damage the reputations of bloggers everywhere, and corporations like Wal-Mart must be held accountable when they violate the public trust.

**Wal-Mart Watch** is a true grassroots organization fighting to **hold Wal-Mart accountable** for their actions. To learn the real facts about how Wal-Mart treats its working families, please visit our website:

[www.workingfamiliesforwalmart.com](http://www.workingfamiliesforwalmart.com)



WAL★MARTWATCH

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# FROM THE WOMMA CODE OF ETHICS, CO-WRITTEN BY EDELMAN WORLDIDE.

## ***“Honesty of Relationship”***

- We practice openness about the relationship between consumers, advocates, and marketers. We encourage word of mouth advocates to disclose their relationship with marketers in their communications with other consumers. We don't tell them specifically what to say, but we do instruct them to be open and honest about any relationship with a marketer and about any products or incentives that they may have received.
- We stand against shill and undercover marketing, whereby people are paid to make recommendations without disclosing their relationship with the marketer.
- We comply with FTC regulations that state: “When there exists a connection between the endorser and the seller of the advertised product which might materially affect the weight or credibility of the endorsement (i.e., the connection is not reasonably expected by the audience) such connection must be fully disclosed.”

## ***“Honesty of Opinion”***

- We never tell consumers what to say. People form their own honest opinions, and they decide what to tell others. We provide information, we empower them to share, and we facilitate the process -- but the fundamental communication must be based on the consumers' personal beliefs.
- We comply with FTC regulations regarding testimonials and endorsements, specifically: “Endorsements must always reflect the honest opinions, findings, beliefs, or experience of the endorser. Furthermore, they may not contain any representations which would be deceptive, or could not be substantiated if made directly by the advertiser.”

## ***“Honesty of Identity”***

- Clear disclosure of identity is vital to establishing trust and credibility. We do not blur identification in a manner that might confuse or mislead consumers as to the true identity of the individual with whom they are communicating, or instruct or imply that others should do so.
- Campaign organizers should monitor and enforce disclosure of identity. Manner of disclosure can be flexible, based on the context of the communication. Explicit disclosure is not required for an obviously fictional character, but would be required for an artificial identity or corporate representative that could be mistaken for an average consumer.
- We comply with FTC regulations regarding identity in endorsements that state: “Advertisements presenting endorsements by what are represented, directly or by implication, to be “actual consumers” should utilize actual consumers, in both the audio and video or clearly and conspicuously disclose that the persons in such advertisements are not actual consumers of the advertised product.”
- Campaign organizers will disclose their involvement in a campaign when asked by consumers or the media. We will provide contact information upon request.

