

I used to work as a bouncer the summers of my junior and senior years in college. The bar was called Chances Are, and it was in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh. Mixed crowd. There wasn't a whole lot of trouble, a fight here and there that was never too difficult to bust up, and if it got too big, there were always cops with their dogs down on the corner sipping coffee from the Dirty O'.

One night this guy walks up, already trashed. I wouldn't let him in. He stumbles away muttering. About an hour later, this fool comes stumbling back up and pulls out a switchblade. He flips the blade and mutters something to the effect about how he could cut me up. I calmly pointed to the cops and their dogs and suggested that it wouldn't be too wise.

He glanced down the street, reconsidered the situation, gave me the, "Don't you know how much of a hard ass I am" glare, and while trying to stare me down, decided to close the knife with his hand against what turned out to be a very sharp blade, and proceeded to gash his hand. With blood flowing, he turned and stumbled away while I signaled for the cops to come and take him away.

I have been reminded of this event multiple times while reading stories that reference me and The Benefactor in the Dallas Morning News. For those that don't know, The Dallas Morning News is owned by the Belo Corporation. Belo also owns WFAA TV, the ABC TV affiliate in the Dallas market, which shows The Benefactor on Monday nights.

The relationship between the entities suggest that there would be the opportunity for mutually beneficial cross promotion. It could also suggest that there could be the risk of being perceived as being less than journalistically objective if any favoritism was displayed. Call me crazy, but the businessperson in me says that the best way to deal with the situation would be to just convey the facts in any reference used.

You would think that this would be a simple task for writers like Ed Bark at the Morning News. Nope. A little bit out of his range. Seems like the entertainment writers want to make Sam Smith appear to be worthy of a Pulitzer Prize.

It all really comes down to how they are writing about and referring to ratings of The Benefactor. Are our ratings as high as I, or ABC, or anyone involved like them to be. No. Nor are they as bad as Ed and his cohorts at the Morning News want to make them out to be.

First of all, in Dallas, where the Dallas Morning News not surprisingly is published and most widely distributed, The Benefactor has won its time slot every single week. Our numbers have remained very good, taking on all comers and winning going away. In fact, when ABC repeated the first episode, the repeat won its time slot as well and actually showed better numbers than the first running.

Has the Dallas Morning News written about, or even mentioned any of these facts? Not a single time that I have seen.

Instead, their man in the trenches Ed Bark, and several of his peers have chosen to write about our national ratings. Nationally, we have been about the 80th ranked show in the country. That's an easy number to pick on, but it certainly doesn't tell the entire story.

EVERY SINGLE NETWORK program that appears above us in the rankings is shown in every major television market in the US. The Benefactor is not. Because Monday Night Football is a live event, what time the show is on, and whether or not it is even shown on Monday night at all varies by market.

Want to watch The Benefactor on Monday night and you live in Denver? Can't do it. Can't do it anywhere in the Mountain Time Zone either. Want to watch it on Monday in Indianapolis, Nashville, Miami and other cities? Can't do it. Did you want to watch it in DC before the Redskins game? Couldn't do it. These NFL cities pre-empt the show for local football or news shows.

Want to watch the show on the west coast? Good luck. First of all it depends on when Monday Night Football ends. If it goes late, the Benefactor is going to be on late. That is, if its not pre-empted, or joined in progress like it has been in several west coast cities every week. San Diego decided to join the show half way through. Seattle did the same thing.

With the show missing or bumped around in so many large markets, its has had an expected serious impact on the number of viewers for the show. To compare our numbers to any other major network show, as Ed Bark and others have tried to do, is either misleading by design or proves how inept some writers can be.

Had the writers had any interest in providing some semblance of balance in its reporting there would have been some context in the story. Has the Dallas Morning News provided any of this context for its readers? Nope. Not a word. Not only do they not write about our success in Dallas, or other markets for that matter, but they continue to mislead their readers about how well The Benefactor has done with viewers nationally.

So what makes this a self-inflicted wound and not just shoddy reporting? As I told one of their writers, painting the show as a failure could lead to 1 or more Dallasites not watching the show. If one or more of those people is a Nielsen home, that is a ratings hit for the local ABC channel, which just happens to be part of the same company that he works for, that pays him and in which he has profit sharing. And which happened to announce the day after I talked to him that they were laying off 250 people.

I am certainly not suggesting that they write anything positive about the show. I'm going to be more than Ok regardless of what they write. My livelihood will not be impacted one way or the other. I am suggesting, as a businessperson, that whatever they write about The Benefactor, or any show they have a vested interest in, that they make a little bit of effort to get facts and context correct. Misreporting information about a show your employer owns certainly could, and should, impact your ability to get a raise...

Call me crazy, but I am a huge believer in the butterfly effect. I do believe that one customer can make the difference between success and failure. That the one prospective viewer, buyer, seller, that you mislead, ignore or mistreat could have been the difference between layoffs and none, a bonus or none, the stock price going up or down.

The throwaway and misleading comments in the Dallas Morning News aren't going to change my life one way or the other. They could change the lives of the people who wrote them. That's a self-inflicted wound that could have been avoided.