

## MEDIA

# It's 'anchors away' at national and Connecticut news outlets

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Ben Bogardus

Quinnipiac University / Hamden  
Assistant Professor

The past few weeks have seen the biggest upheaval in years in morning television. On Nov. 21, CBS This Morning anchor Charlie Rose was fired after the [Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/eight-women-say-charlie-rose-sexually-harassed-them--with-nudity-groping-and-lewd-calls/2017/11/20/9b168de8-caec-11e7-8321-481fd63f174d_story.html?utm_term=.e4ad50aa4dcd) reported on his sexually-oriented behavior [towards at least eight female co-workers](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/eight-women-say-charlie-rose-sexually-harassed-them--with-nudity-groping-and-lewd-calls/2017/11/20/9b168de8-caec-11e7-8321-481fd63f174d_story.html?utm_term=.e4ad50aa4dcd). Then, eight days later, NBC fired long-time Today Show anchor Matt Lauer after a newsroom staffer told similar stories about his behavior behind [closed and locked office doors](http://variety.com/2017/biz/news/matt-lauer-accused-sexual-harassment-multiple-women-1202625959/). NBC political analyst Mark Halperin, Fox News host Bill O'Reilly and former Today Show personality Billy Bush also lost their jobs in the last year or so, because of similar circumstances.

But the firings of these “anchors behaving badly” isn't limited to the networks. Here in Connecticut, local stations have also had to deal with anchors doing things they shouldn't do.

In 2016, New Haven's ABC affiliate WTNH [quickly cut ties with meteorologist Justin Goldstein](http://wtnh.com/2016/07/13/wtnh-meteorologist-arrested-on-child-pornography-charges/) after he was arrested on child pornography charges. And in 2012, Hartford's Fox 61 fired meteorologist Geoff Fox after his [steamy Facebook messages](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2236369/Geoff-Fox-fired-)

[inappropriate-sexting-chats-female-photographer-Facebook-read-bosses.html](http://www.nhregister.com/connecticut/article/Geoff-Fox-s-hope-to-return-to-News-8-full-time-12196015.php)) with a woman leaked to the public. While he later re-appeared as a freelancer on WTNH in 2017, the station ultimately decided not to give him a full-time position (<http://www.nhregister.com/connecticut/article/Geoff-Fox-s-hope-to-return-to-News-8-full-time-12196015.php>).

In all these cases, the firings were the right thing to do, for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, letting high-profile anchors go re-affirms the credibility of the news organization when covering the bad deeds of others. In the past few months, journalists have been at the forefront of investigations into the bad behavior of some well-known celebrities and powerful politicians. The reporting has led to the downfall of movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, actors Kevin Spacey and Louis C.K., and done serious damage to the reputations of U.S. Sen. Al Franken, U.S. Rep. John Conyers and Alabama U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore.

In order to have the moral authority to report on these men, the news organizations have to prove to the public that they hold themselves to the same standards of good behavior. The swift firings of Rose, Lauer and others are designed to re-assure the public that journalists aren't playing favorites and will report the story no matter who is involved. After the events of the past few weeks, no one can accuse CBS or NBC of only caring about sexual harassment when it applies to someone else. Instead, the networks are following the ethical principal of "seeking the truth and reporting it" (<https://www.spi.org/ethicscode.asp>) even when that reporting ends with a self-inflicted wound.

The magnitude of these firings will also hopefully help keep other anchors' egos in check. If Matt Lauer and Charlie Rose's careers can end so suddenly, no journalist is above consequences for his or her actions. The ability to speak to thousands – or even millions – of people each night is a great privilege. But it also tends to stroke the ego of people who already have high opinions of themselves.

High-powered anchors are like celebrities. They get stopped on the street for selfies, interns and other low-level newsroom staffers idolize and flatter them, and they get perks from TV stations that others don't get, like huge salaries, personal drivers, extended meal breaks, personal makeup artists and clothing allowances. Getting special treatment like this day-in and day-out for years can lead even the humblest person to think he or she is "too big to fire." But we now know that they're not.

Finally, the swift firings of journalists who disrespect co-workers also helps ensure that they don't become distractions on-air, keeping the focus on the stories they're telling, not on themselves. Working in television comes with sacrifices, including making sure your private life doesn't interfere with your professional work. Television personalities are usually bound by contracts, which prohibit things like openly campaigning for or against political candidates, using their celebrity status to endorse products or do drunken things at bars that could end up on social media, thus embarrassing them and the station.

TV reporters and anchors have been fired ([http://www.cleveland.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2016/10/good\\_morning\\_cleveland\\_anchors.html](http://www.cleveland.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2016/10/good_morning_cleveland_anchors.html)) for doing these things (<http://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/crime/article3869908.html>) and more (<http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2017/06/07/tv-reporter-fired-after-obscene-tirade-against-police-officer-in-viral-video.html>), because their private actions reflect directly on their ability to be credible reporters.

So in the end, these newsroom harassment scandals may turn out to be a good thing – by forcing journalists to look at themselves as critically as they look at others.

*Ben Bogardus is an assistant professor of journalism at Quinnipiac University's School of Communications.*

*(<https://www.qu.edu/academics/colleges-schools-and-departments/school-of-communications/>)*

