

**Ask A Genius 63 – The News**  
**Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner**  
**January 19, 2017**

**Scott: News has changed, even in the last few decades, drastically. What are some miserable aspects of the public relations industry?**

Rick: The news isn't exactly the public relations industry. The news wrestles with the same issues individual people do and groups of people do, which is how to present information in ways that don't make people stupider or don't introduce further bias, and how do you make a bunch of money doing it.

News used to be, for the major networks from the 40s until the 80s or 90s, a public service that was semi-mandated by the government. The government says, "We're going to give you the broadcast airwaves for really cheap." Radio companies turning into TV companies: NBC, CBS, ABC, Dumont.

Dumont was a network created by TV manufacturing companies to help sell TVs. It was gone by the 60s. These networks get the channels for cheap because they are expected to perform the public service of keeping the public informed via news. Maybe, some other stuff, but that tended to go away.

Nobody cared if the news made money. You threw on a 30-minute or 15-minute show around dinner time to tell people the news. It didn't matter whether it made money or not. Then you have the coming of the, without knowing the total history, morning news shows. They are news plus 3 hours of happy chat, fashion.

These 3-hour blocks make a lot of money, then you have the coming of CNN. The first 24-hour news channel, which is designed to make money. Money starts becoming more and more of an important thing in presenting the news. Now, most news on TV is profit driven, which creates a bunch of bad habits in addition to the bad trends caused by people not being able to figure out what is the right way to try to inform people.

That doesn't F- up the country. The news media performed particularly badly during the 2016 election. Part of it, and as with many aspects of the election, is the news channel's own greed and incompetence, or just the need to keep existing as business entities. Another part of it was there was everyone trying to manipulate the news for their own purposes.

So, the image that popped into my head, which is probably sexist and probably not accurate, is a drunk girl at a fraternity party. People are trying to mess with her. She is doing herself no favors, though it's blaming the victim by being drunk and dressing in party clothes. There are lots of things that are conducive to bad things going on.

Then CNN may be the most guilty party in the election of 2012 among the major news networks. Fox is going to consistently be an evil doer. It is going to consistently misbehave towards the conservative side and then present a biased and manipulative view, but everybody knows that. If

you come to Fox for a fair presentation of the news, then you're stupid or just wanting to give yourself over to manipulation.

Some coverage of the news is biased to the liberal side, such as Rachel Maddow who is super well informed. She is biased towards the liberal perspective, but knows more than most people on TV news. She doesn't hide her liberalism, and tries to get the information out. As opposed to a Hannity, not that I could watch a Hannity, who would present a bunch of manipulative conservative, craven arguments.

But then you have CNN, which is said to lean liberal, but then has a bunch of bad habits that let it get played by Trump and everything associated with Trump. The bad habits often used to be good habits, but through confusion and inability to see a better way of doing things have become exploitable. The idea of journalistic neutrality has been totally exploited by assholes mostly on the conservative side with these dumb interpretations of journalistic neutrality.

For example, if there's an argument, then you need to give another argument, but one argument is clearly better. Like climate change, a huge and growing amount of evidence for climate change with the people who know about it best being convinced about it. 98+% of scientists, and those willing to look at the evidence, believe it is happening.

That there is at least a super high likelihood that climate change is happening. There are really good solid arguments for climate change, but then you have people with a political agenda advancing deceptive and money-driven bullshit arguments. CNN throws up a panel with people on both sides.

To somebody who's not paying attention, who's stupid, or willing to be manipulated, it seems like climate change is a toss-up. So, principle one that is exploitable and terrible is if there is an argument on one side then you put another one on the other side. Another is false equivalence. If one side is doing stuff and you're covering it negatively then you better, to be equivalent, better find stuff on the other side.

It was disastrous for the democrats and frickin' Hillary, who did some small-scale stupid stuff by using her private server, which is still debateable if this actually did harm. Probably not, she used a government server for some of her stuff. It may have been as hackable as her private server. There's really no evidence of any great or dire harm that occurred because she used a private server.

But this becomes evidence of bad judgment, malfeasance, and bringing down America. It gets magnified by the principle of 'if Donald Trump is doing bad stuff then Hillary Clinton has to have her stuff looked at too.' Also, because Wikileaks steadily feeds hacked information to the DNC every day, there's a steady drum beat of 'Hillary did bad stuff' for the last 2 months of the election, even though Trump is much more of an asshole than fucking Hillary is.

But people in the news media cannot effectively argue for this. There is a certain, with CNN being the worst of the channels, aspect of 'could not be bothered' with better ways of covering

the election. Also, there's time pressure. There wasn't any time to consider information from the election. Also, people weren't fully cognizant of the damage being done by the bad coverage.

It pisses me off because we see the same Trump people, same spokespeople, like the cute blond lady. They continue to spread Trump arguments, terrible bullshit arguments, and the panel mode encourages confusion, intentional confusion, and bullshit. Even after this terrible election, CNN continued to do this stuff because people continue to be attracted to it.

They continue to pull, for them, good numbers because they focus-grouped and found that panels and town halls worked, like with Paul Ryan. CNN continues to facilitate bullshit. Without effectively calling it bullshit, without putting it into news context, it is legitimized. If you're going to list the CNN things that are bullshit, the panels, the town halls, putting the clock up to always count down to something, the refusal to authoritatively contextualize goodness and badness.

It's hard and, you can argue, it is not the job of a news channel to judge good or bad, but it kind of becomes their job whereby not judging good or bad you allow bad to flourish. You have to guide people if you're facilitating people thinking bullshit stuff.

## Authors



Scott Douglas Jacobsen  
Editor-in-Chief, In-Sight Publishing  
[Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.Com](mailto:Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.Com)  
[www.in-sightjournal.com](http://www.in-sightjournal.com)



Rick Rosner  
American Television Writer  
[RickRosner@Hotmail.Com](mailto:RickRosner@Hotmail.Com)  
[www.rickrosner.org](http://www.rickrosner.org)

## License and Copyright

### License



*In-Sight Publishing* and *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* by [Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

Based on a work at [www.in-sightjournal.com](http://www.in-sightjournal.com).

### Copyright

© Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner, and *In-Sight Publishing* and *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* 2012-2017. Unauthorized use and/or duplication of this material without express and written permission from this site's author and/or owner is strictly prohibited. Excerpts and links may be used, provided that full and clear credit is given to Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner, and *In-Sight Publishing* and *In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal* with appropriate and specific direction to the original content.