

Fellow SpinSpotters:

Thank you for caring enough to spend some time at SpinSpotter. I hope this means we share a love of courageously objective journalism, or perhaps an extreme distaste for spin. I hope you are already teaching our algorithm; when you find spin and mark it up, you are teaching SpinSpotter the nuances of spin.

I've always been a news junkie. As a radio talk show host I made no bones about my sometimes insane opinions, and I expected others to be as honest about their own. That's why, when a politician tried to spin me, I'd ask, "Do you want to continue to evade my questions, or would you like to have an honest discussion?"

I subscribe to the idea that free democracies and freedom of the press are mutually dependent. If the people no longer trust that Free Press—as is now the case for the majority of Americans—what happens to a Free Democracy? We cannot have real honest debates on important issues until we can agree on a set of facts. A free and trusted press is key to that.

I've had the idea for SpinSpotter™ for ten years. Then, in 2007, I watched my mother listen to a news story that was demonstrably wrong. One that refused to address the key fact of the story. That was the final straw. I decided to leave a great job at Microsoft to do something about news spin. My mother is a smart woman, but spin is pervasive, unrelenting, and sneaky.

As a technology executive with a background in opinion radio—which is not journalism or anything close to that—I knew enough to envision a set of rules for objectivity. I also knew a brilliant coder and mathematician, Christopher Taylor, who could begin to tell me what I didn't know—just how hard this was going to be. Our rules started with a premise: If a news provider claims to be objective and unbiased, it should make every effort to see that its product lives up to that description.

Based upon that premise, we researched journalism style books, internalized The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, and, most important, we created a Journalism Advisory Board. The distinguished members of our Journalism Advisory Board are the people who will help SpinSpotter get at the much harder elements of spin, such as why some stories are selected over others, and how to tell if corporate interests drive positive coverage. An important note on our rules: There is only one set. Conservatives, liberals, pro-business, and anti-business groups are all rated by one common rule set.

If journalism has become spin-heavy, it might be because some journalists operate in an echo chamber; I know I am susceptible to that as my non-technical friends remind me in no uncertain terms. Closeness of groups can drive closeness of opinion and a consensus thought. Aware of my own susceptibility to echo chambers, I asked my dear friend, former board member and all around heroic guy, John Atcheson, to run my company and be my boss. John is my political opposite—really, my opposite.

Thank you again for caring enough to read this far. If you haven't done so yet, please install your Spinoculars™. And let's take back the truth.

Todd Herman
Founder and Chief Creative Officer
SpinSpotter™
Seattle, Washington

TAKE BACK THE TRUTH™

SpinSpotter.com