

Activist Science

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A short post today: What is the difference between an activist scientist employed by an agency and a commercial employed by a business?

One needs to be amazing to keep their job, the other has to be right to keep their job.

So which science do you trust?

Looking for a nice image to go here, I found [this](#). When 2200 members of the Union of Concerned Scientists Science Network were asked "how often should scientists be politically active in their professional activities?", an astounding 0.9% said "never." 99.1% thought activism should be part of their professional activities. So in my mind, 99.1% of them produced junk science because they are motivated by the wrong thing: changing the world to what they want.

Scientists measure the world as it is; when alternative motivations enter, they measure the world by what they want to be. It explains all the fiddled thermometer data, all the bad graphs, all the nonsensical conclusions. All the junk science.

Activism produces crap. It becomes propaganda for the stupid.

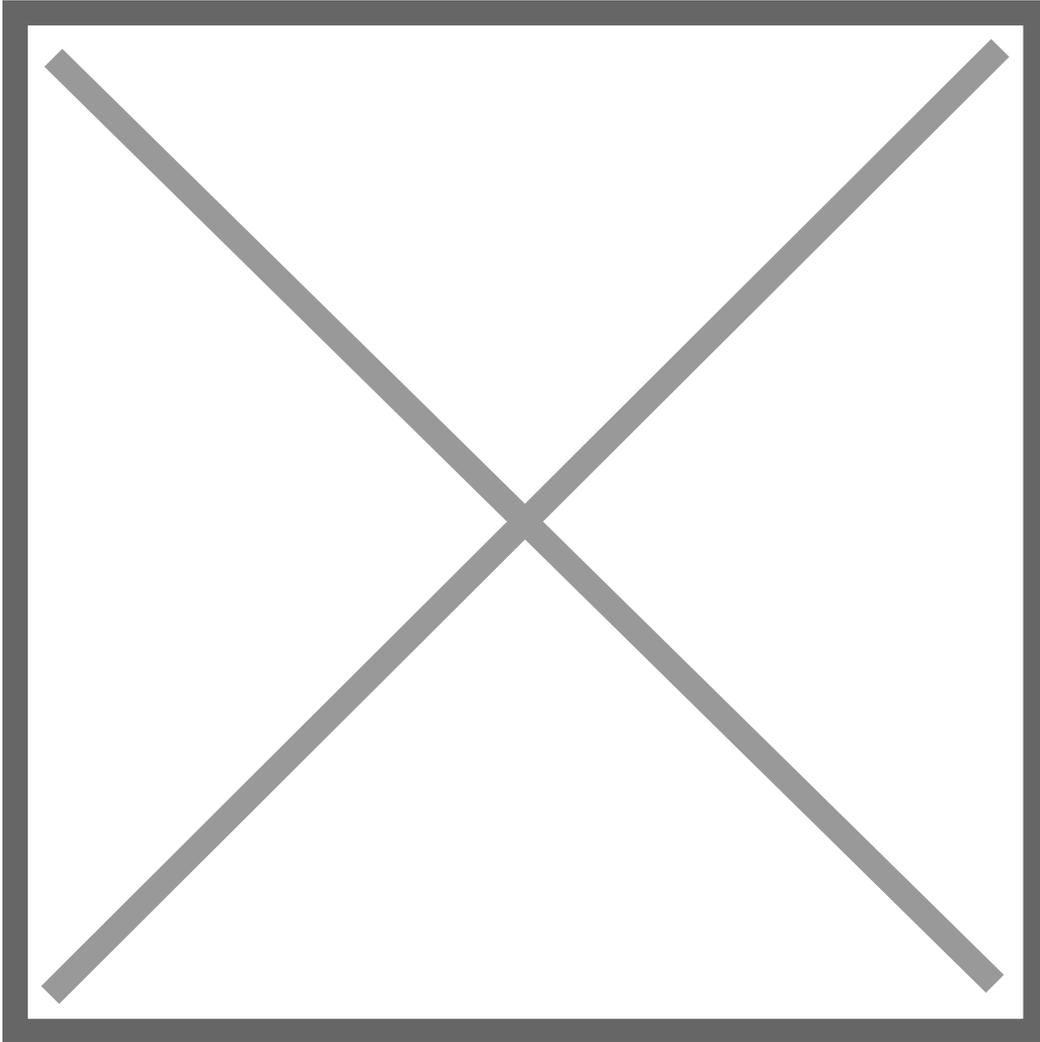
Corporate science is driven by reality: goof up the science and you goof up the company profit margin, and out you go. Corporate scientists need to be firmly anchored in reality. Though there is the possibility that by lying the corporate scientist will support a higher profit margin, few companies will risk the devastating exposure of science fraud. It has been risked, and discovered, and industries hit hard in the aftermath. But I trust corporate science way over all other types of science.

What of academic science? Were it not for the old professors, and the young professors, and the post-doctoral scientists, and the graduate students, and the undergraduates, I'd trust it. Old professors are ossified with old ideas, and don't really develop new science. They concentrate on reinforcing their own early ideas which weren't accepted. Young professors need rank advancement, and the university public relations office needs fodder to brag on, so they'll take any overblown claim as fact. Postdocs and graduate students need a career job, and the more noteworthy they are the better position they'll get. Fraud is blamed on the major professor, so they can get away with fraud, and being highly incentivised to commit fraud, they frequently do. And undergraduate scientists are just clueless.

So who in academia can do good science? I don't know, and good science is rare here.

So who do I trust most: corporate science. By far.

Everyone else, especially the activist scientist, reminds me of this kid, wearing his safety goggles on his forehead. An enthusiastic effort, but doing it wrong.



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