

The Media Must Stop Playing Armchair CEO

A friend recently confided to me his concern that Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos is going to “rule the world. We need to cap his compensation.” I confess; this doesn’t worry me, and it never has.

It bothers social justice warriors though, and when they get agitated, the press seems to take notice. What’s unclear is if the latter knows they’re assisting efforts to sow dissatisfaction, or if they’re merely pawns of the former.

Steven Clifford is one of those activists who [believes the president should use](#) “blunt policy instruments” to flatten the pay range between CEOs and “typical workers.”

This pressure campaign starts with knowledge of executive compensation. Companies with publicly traded securities are [required to disclose](#) this data, and thanks to the internet, it’s not difficult to obtain.

For those who are too busy working and raising their kids to be worried about this information, the media is there to raise the alarm. Headlines are all the more fetching if they state “[pay raises](#)” are occurring at a “[troubled](#)” company. That’s how Randy Diamond put it recently in the *San Antonio Express-News*.

Companies raise compensation regardless of industry health, not only to “reward good performance,” but also to disincentivize employees from seeking greener pastures. Furthermore, avoiding liquidation during down times requires skilled management, while also retaining the best staff to do it. That is a success in and of itself, especially in an industry manipulated by government policy.

However, this type of detailed account won’t attract as many

readers as the biting headlines do.

If the intent is an impartial story, it may be insufficient to consult someone who believes “straight white males” [should be banned](#) from voting, [and](#) an outfit that believes the [economy is dependent](#) upon what the Fed does. Speaking purely as a reader, one might reasonably question the objectivity of this reporting.

Alas, the confidentiality of non-executive compensation is now itself a target for exploitation by inequality authorities. Diamond’s colleague Michael Taylor has been [promoting this policy](#) as of late.

This is misguided for many reasons.

First, I’m not sure what I want less: my coworkers knowing what I earn, or being exposed to what they earn. The former is personal information, and I simply don’t care about the latter. I have more important things with which to concern myself, like teaching my daughters not to covet what’s not theirs.

Second, it’s more important to know the going rate for similar roles in your local job market. If an employee believes he is insufficiently compensated, salary surveys are readily available at [Robert Half](#), [Indeed](#), [CareerBuilder](#), and other sites. Armed with that knowledge, he can petition his employer for a bump in pay.

Third, human resources departments regularly do similar studies in-house to ensure fairness of compensation.

Finally, making such a case based on the viewpoint of a “software engineer,” or any non-management staff for that matter, hints at a current movement to give employees more say in how the companies they work for are run. This is emblematic of a [general disrespect](#) towards employers.

It's easier, and certainly less time-consuming, to pontificate on how a company should be run, than it is to put in the required time and resources to actually step up and do it. It's a large responsibility, especially if you're striking out on your own.

In addition to satisfying customers, part of maintaining a successful enterprise is treating workers fairly and respectfully. People who have experienced this firsthand already know this. People who have not are content to call themselves economics and/or business correspondents.

Besides, Taylor's implication that salary transparency is the only recourse labor has to break free from "chains" (presumably held by employers) and his vague citation of "[The Communist Manifesto](#)" shows where the writer's heart really is.

NOTE TO READERS: The original article incorrectly declared that "single white males" should be banned from voting. We regret the error.

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[Image Credit: Pixabay]