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Opinion: If Trump starts requiring fake data, it will be a disaster for businesses



Sean Spicer briefs the press at the White House. (Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

By **FRANK PATITUCCI** |

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Press Secretary Sean Spicer has told journalists at a White House press briefing that the president was lying, and laughed about it.

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In reference to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' positive monthly jobs report, Spicer quoted President Trump as saying "They may have been phony in the past, but it's very real now."

In other words, during the campaign Trump claimed that good employment numbers were fake because they were

published by the Obama administration, but now that he's the president the very same numbers are believable.

Apparently it's funny to Spicer that when facts don't favor the president's position they are "phony" or "fake," but when they make him look good they're "real." This approach applies not only to economic data but also crowd sizes, vote counts and opinion polls. It may be funny for him, but the president's loose relationship with facts is deadly serious for the rest of us.

I am CEO of a company that is extremely dependent on the employment marketplace. When the number of new jobs is increasing, we tend to do well. When it is decreasing, we can suffer. For this reason, the integrity and consistency of the monthly employment numbers are very important to us. Good or bad, it is never a laughing matter.

The administration's flippant attitude towards factual data is bad enough, but how long until Trump's influence starts to affect the data itself? If the economy slows down and BLS starts publishing negative employment numbers, will Trump just fire staff and abolish the department?

It seems extreme, but his record so far suggests a complete and total attack on any form of media or department that casts a bad light on him or his policies.

The jobs report is one of thousands that the BLS and various branches of government regularly publish about the economy. Historically, such data has been gathered, prepared and published by an independent professional staff according to rules that ensure reliability and accuracy.

Will the Trump administration's approach to data eventually undermine the accuracy and the reliability of this information? This is a critical question both for businesses that depend on such information and for the economy as a whole. Without accurate data, we cannot function properly. Fake data will hurt my business, my workers and the nation's economy.

It is an understatement to say that the success of every business depends on good data. Whether the source is internal or external, every business must have objective and reliable information on which to make sound business decisions and be accountable to stockholders.

There is no defensible reason to make data a political issue. Facts aren't partisan, they're facts. Unfortunately, this is already changing under the current administration.

Let us hope that it goes no further, but let us not become complacent. It is up to every business person and every economist to pay close attention to what is going on and to take action when necessary to protect the data we depend on.

Yes, it would be great if the data always indicated that markets were growing rapidly and that my business was always increasing revenue and profitability. But that's not reality. The real test of a competent business executive, and a president, is not how one performs when the data is good, but rather how one performs when the data is bad

... and real.

Frank Patitucci, a former Executive Director of California Housing Finance Agency, is CEO of NuCompass Mobility Services, an employee relocation company based in Pleasanton. He is Patriotic Millionaire. He wrote this for The Mercury News.



Frank Patitucci

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