

Axios: A Corporate-Sponsored Anti-Trump Website In Disguise As “Honest Media”

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A new media project has recently taken shape on the internet, describing itself as “the cleanest, smartest, most efficient and trust-worthy experience for readers and advertisers alike”, but peeling back the layers of what’s inside reveals the truth behind Axios Media and its motivations.

Axios is a digital publication that has sprung up seemingly out of nowhere in the last eight months, and has quickly become an accepted “news source” by media outlets everywhere. Indeed, their [own manifesto](#) leads off with the following:

All of us left cool, safe jobs to start a new company with this shared belief: Media is broken — and too often a scam.

And yet, everything about Axios indicates that it is even worse than the “[broken media](#)” it claims to have separated from. From its inception, to its founding members, employees, sponsors, and even the launch date of the website – everything about Axios points to it being a corporate-sponsored platform aimed at subverting President Trump, and anything but the “honest media” they claim to be founded as.

Start with its inception; Axios was officially “unveiled” on November 30th, 2016 in a [Vanity Fair article](#), just weeks after President Trump won the election. The timing is about as convenient for an anti-Trump publication as one could expect – announced shortly after Trump won, and properly timed to have the operation up and ready before Trump took his oath of office. Even the \$10 million in

financing Axios secured in the summer of 2016 is suspicious; if it was secured at that time, why wasn't the project announced then, *before* Trump won?

At best, it appears to be a "[hedge bet](#)" by anti-Trump interests in case Hillary lost. At worst, it could be alleged that it was a back-dated payment that occurred *after* Trump won, all to make it appear that Axios was in the making no matter what the election outcome was.

So, who exactly *were* the "anti-Trump interests" in question? The \$10 million in financing came from [Lerer Hippeau Ventures](#), a venture capital firm founded by father Ken Lerer and his son Ben. Notably, Ken Lerer is a co-founder of [The Huffington Post](#), and a Managing Director of [BuzzFeed](#) – the exact outlets which embody anti-Trump sentiment. His son Ben is the co-founder of Thrillist, another site notable for its heavy anti-Trump leanings. The backers of the Lerer Hippeau Ventures investment in Axios included NBC News, Atlantic Media owners David and Katherine Bradley, and Emerson Collective – the company which [recently purchased The Atlantic](#) and Atlantic Media from the aforementioned Bradley family.

You couldn't stack a more anti-Trump lineup into \$10 million worth of investment capital unless Hillary Clinton dipped into the Clinton Foundation for the funds. And if you think that's bad, just wait till you see the "initial launch partners" of Axios:

Thank you to our launch partners

JPMORGAN
CHASE & CO.

PhRMA
RESEARCH • PROGRESS • HOPE

BOEING



Bank of America

KOCH

S&P Global

UNITEDHEALTH GROUP

Walmart

PEPSICO

Cooley

Axios' initial launch partners are JP Morgan & Chase Co., PhRma, Boeing, BP, Bank of America, Koch Industries, S&P Global, United Health Group, Walmart, PepsiCo and Cooley LLP.

This is a lineup stacked with some of the heaviest-hitting anti-Trump corporate donors you could assemble. On the banking side, JP Morgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon is [about as anti-Trump as you can get](#), and Bank of America only shuttered funding for the “Julius Caesar” reenactment that [re-imaged Caesar](#) as President Trump (who, spoiler alert, gets stabbed to death) after [vociferous protest](#). Trump himself has [personally attacked](#) Boeing’s military expenditures and cost overruns, and Walmart’s Walton family [donated heavily](#) against him. UnitedHealth Group has seen its [share price soar](#) over 400% since Obamacare was passed (in spite of the fact that it [no longer participates](#) in the exchanges), and PhRMA represents the pharmaceutical industry which is responsible for the prescription drug prices so [commonly attacked](#) by Trump. Even the Koch brothers, in spite of the [left constantly reminding us](#) how right-wing they are, exposed their [anti-Trump resistance ambitions](#) shortly after Trump took office.

Not exactly the corporate sponsors you would expect from an “unbiased” media source, now is it?

Even worse than the money behind Axios is the group of partners who founded the media conglomerate – three former partners of Politico, one of [the most vocal](#) anti-Trump media outlets in existence. Politico CRO Roy Schwartz teamed up with Politico veteran and former [WaPo](#) correspondent Jim VandeHei and Politico lifer Mike Allen to found Axios. The list of heavily liberal and establishment motivations of the trio of Axios co-founders is enough to fill a novel, but Allen in particular stands out as perhaps the most nefarious of the three.



In 2015, Allen was [exposed by](#) Gawker for allegedly offering to allow Chelsea Clinton to screen questions for a scheduled interview in January of 2013. Notably, he [only apologized](#) for his grotesque and overt misconduct [after Breitbart exposed WaPo](#) covering for Allen, ostensibly because their former cohort and fellow co-founder Jim VandeHei once worked there.

Surprise, surprise; Hillary was *not* the first Clinton to have questions spoon-fed to her beforehand so responses could be prepared.

And yet, this is anything but the most significant of Allen's indiscretions. In late 2013, Allen was exposed as pivotal to a "payola" scandal at Politico, which involved the media outlet trading advertising dollars for favorable coverage. Even the liberal outlets so often slammed by this site, including [WaPo](#), [NY Mag](#), and Salon (which as any Free Market Shooter reader already know, this author [refuses to link to](#)) piled on Allen for facilitating this pay-to-play scandal, allowing his advertisers to effectively purchase access for corporate sponsored content. To date, Allen has never publicly commented on the affair, though his conduct has almost certainly not been forgotten by the previously detailed Axios corporate sponsors.

So what *are* the corporate sponsors and investors getting in return for funding Axios? Anti-Trump coverage, of course, and lots of it. And what is the [preferred](#) Axios delivery system of said anti-Trump news? The always trustworthy "anonymous sources" so often vilified by Trump himself, which in the case of Axios, often turn out to be completely incorrect and/or completely rooted in fiction.

While all agree the U. S. President has the complete power to pardon, why think of that when only crime so far is LEAKS against us.FAKE NEWS

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [July 22, 2017](#)

[//platform.twitter.com/widgets.js](https://platform.twitter.com/widgets.js)

Just last month, Allen himself posted a report that Trump was [considering firing](#) AG Jeff Sessions and replacing him with Rudy Giuliani. Of course, Allen cited "West Wing confidants" as his source:

President Trump is so unhappy with Attorney General Jeff Sessions that he has raised the possibility of bringing back Rudolph Giuliani to head the Justice Department, according to West Wing confidants.

While this author is [no fan of Sessions](#), there is even less affection for those whose articles cite "anonymous source" predictions that turn out to be false, which is exactly what happened when Axios reported that Trump adviser Gary Cohn said that the White House [does not support](#) the border adjustment tax:

Gary Cohn, chief economic advisor to President Trump, told a group of CEOs this morning that the White House does not support the House GOP version of a border adjustment tax, according to an attendee.

To their credit, at least Axios published an update retracting their story, which is more than can be said about [some news outlets](#). However, they only published said retraction *after* the White House [denied the Axios report...](#)

"There is no daylight between Gary Cohn and the President. His comment was taken out of context as it was part of a broader conversation about the proposals that are connected to border adjustability. At no point during this conversation did Gary make a statement of support or opposition to the House border adjustability plan."

...which makes you wonder if they would have bothered retracting their statement had the White House not specifically denied it. However, it's surely a safe bet that Axios won't be retracting this claim about this "[scoop](#)" on Uber:

Multiple individuals close to Uber's board of directors have reached out to **Bank of America vice chairman Anne Finucane** about the company's CEO position, which has been vacant since Travis Kalanick resigned in June, Axios has learned.

As a reminder, Bank of America is one of Axios's many corporate sponsors. One of the many perks of Axios corporate sponsorship appears to be promoting executive sponsors as "in line" to land a prestigious, high-paying CEO gig.

This is not all to say that Axios is always inaccurate; they certainly [get it right](#) sometimes, which gives some backing to the notion that they do indeed have the inside track to a White House leaker (or leakers). **But their agenda is always the same; shill for their corporate sponsors, aim to sew chaos, and provide content that subverts the Trump administration at every turn.**

Just [take a look](#) Amy Harder, Axios's "energy reporter":



Amy Harder

ENERGY REPORTER

I cover energy and climate change for Axios, and I write a weekly column called Harder Line. In my column and elsewhere, I report on big trends and exclusive scoops as well as analyze the news driving the debate about energy and climate change.

What a surprise; Harder's [entire platform](#) revolves around opposing Trump's resistance to "climate change" and the [taxes](#) that come along with it...

To be clear: Trump's planned decision to withdraw from the deal will set the world back on an environmental issue nearly every other country realizes and acknowledges is a real problem in need of a global solution. The U.S. is now joining just two other countries, Syria and Nicaragua, not supporting the deal.

...which are ironically [backed by BP](#), one of those previously-mentioned "sponsors" who appears to have been well aware of exactly *what* they were paying for in their contribution to Axios – Amy Harder's "hard" shilling for [their cause](#):

A strange bedfellows coalition, including four of the world's biggest oil and natural gas producers, environmental groups and political leaders, are announcing a unified push urging Congress to enact a carbon tax **to address climate change** on Wednesday.

Surely her readers would be interested to know if Harder's own contributions to the "climate change" movement include [ownership of a Tesla](#), or [traveling via](#) first-class and/or private aircraft, or if she is content to simply take corporate dollars to stump for "climate change" solutions that [do nothing](#) to actually address carbon emissions while only enriching the corporate interests that push for them.

She is hardly the only reporter at Axios who proudly advertises the "for sale" sign around their necks; This author has [previously exposed](#) Axios "health care reporter" Caitlin Owens as an Obamacare advocate last year when she cited a "study" from the Urban Institute which claimed Obamacare premiums were lower than employer-sponsored premiums:



Caitlin Owens

HEALTH CARE REPORTER

A new analysis from the Urban Institute found that the average unsubsidized premiums in the Affordable Care Act exchanges, commonly known as Obamacare, are actually 10% lower than the full premiums in the average employer plan nationally in 2016.

Forbes already did an excellent job of refuting this study; I suggest you give their bit a read. Notably, the study does not account for differences in health plans, health plan availability, differences in copays and deductibles, tax incentives in employer-sponsored plans, and many other variables. **Forbes made a note that since Obamacare was rolled out, insurance claims in the cheaper policies with supposedly “high” deductibles skyrocketed.**

It’s probably safe to say that the odds that Owens has eschewed the likely top-tier medical coverage at Axios in lieu of [an Obamacare plan](#) are extremely low, at absolute best. Of course, we here at Free Market Shooter welcome Owens to stand by her words (and the words of the Urban Institute she cited), and sign up for one of [the Obamacare exchange plans](#) she claims are such an incredible value.

Indeed, before Trump even took office, Owens ([somehow](#)) stated that Republicans now “own” Obamacare:

As of Nov. 9, Republicans now own Obamacare, and they know it. Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina put it this way: **“We’ve got our chance to repeal and replace Obamacare. If we screw it up, then we’re going to get blamed.”**

Yes, she thinks that Republicans will somehow now own the monstrous failure that is Obamacare, ignoring [the man](#) who the law was *named for and was instrumental in its passage*. The only one that appears to be getting “blamed” by Lindsey Graham is ([surprise, surprise](#)) Trump; he’s broken with the President time and time again recently.

Notice that although Owens went out of her way to [call out](#) flip-flopping by Republican Senators, while doing nothing of the sort for Democrats:

But while the confusion has escalated this week, it’s not new. Lawmakers have made a lot of contradictory statements throughout the process, sometimes asking for entirely different things at various points in this hectic eight-month journey. We’ve compiled some of the biggest about-faces.

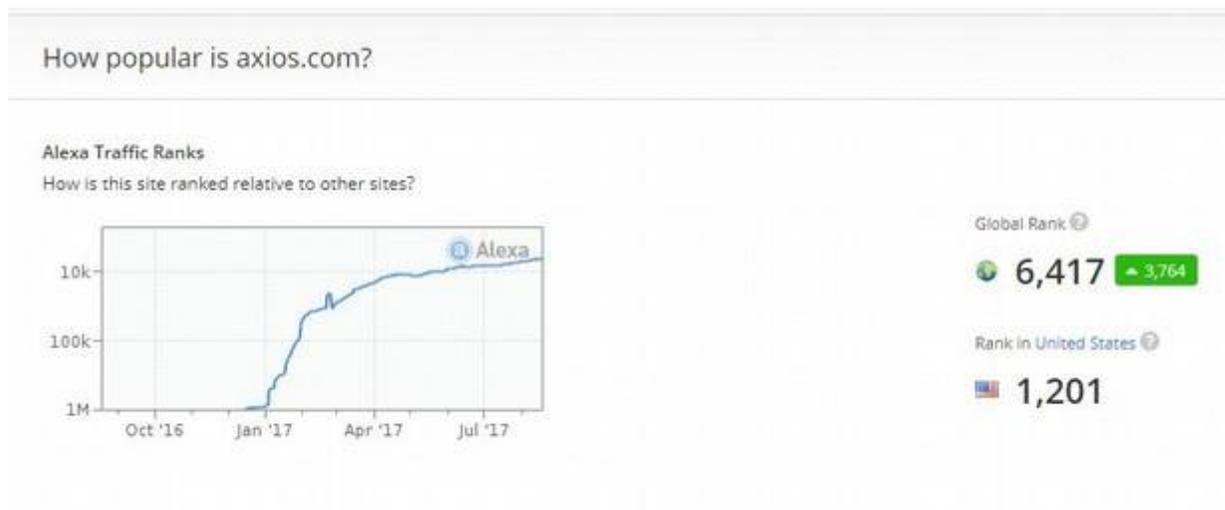
Of course, even in Owens’ proverbial “tip-of-the-cap” to Republican Senator Susan Collins for her consistent stance against Obamacare repeal...

The most consistent of them all: Sen. Susan Collins. Congrats, senator!

...Owens still couldn’t [get it right](#); like Collins, Senator Lisa Murkowski also voted against *all* of the Republican efforts to repeal and/or replace Obamacare.

Turns out the one thing Owens *is* good for is vociferously boosting the interests of her corporate sponsors; at first glance, it didn’t appear that there were any occasions in her works for Axios where Owens mentioned Axios healthcare sponsors United Healthcare and PhRMA. Don’t hold your breath waiting for any negative Axios commentary on these or any of its sponsors either – its just one part of the Mike Allen “payola” business model centered around subverting the Trump administration.

Perhaps the most dangerous truth in all of this is the proven efficacy of Allen’s business model, and just how profitable corporate media can be. Take a look at the timeline of the launch and rise in Axios relative to its popularity and traffic:



Since its launch just before Trump took office, the outlet’s traffic has been on an unhindered march higher, constantly buoyed by all the dubious “anonymous” leaks emanating from the White House.

All of which is even more appalling with a look at the very beginning, above Axios's Manifesto, at its [mission statement](#):

At Axios — the Greek word for worthy — we provide only content worthy of people's time, attention and trust.

Seeded with a conspicuous anti-Trump timeline, staffed by leftist employees who provide anything but "honest" reporting, and founded by uber-liberal mainstream media lifers with a track record of selling preferential content to the corporate (and mainstream media) advertisers that are more than eager to pay top dollar for it, the only thing Axios is "worthy" of is being called out for what it is – a platform specifically designed to subvert President Trump and his administration at every turn, financed by the corporate and media interests he is fighting against.



Perhaps it is time that Free Market Shooter adds a second name to its [list of sites](#) that it refuses to hyperlink to?

Author's note: Free Market Shooter's [Jon Hall](#) and [Ben Isaac](#) contributed to this post.

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Author [Duane Norman](#) Posted on Categories [Economy](#)

7 thoughts on “Axios: A Corporate-Sponsored Anti-Trump Website In Disguise As “Honest Media””



1. **BL** says:

So, Vanity Fair “unveiled” Axios and Vanity Fair is owned (I believe) by the billionaire who bankrolled Trump/Bannon into the WH. The article continues to say blah, blah, blah Koch Industries who Mercer was at one time connected. If I am not correct, I’m sure someone will chime in.

Typical.....

[Reply](#)



2. **MarshRabbit** says:

Axios is a for-profit venture; their sole agenda is selling advertising so they can turn a profit for the investors. The articles they post are based on where the advertising dollars are currently flowing (it’s business, not personal, lol)

[Reply](#)



1. **kokoda - AZEK (Deck Boards) doesn't stand behind its product** says:

Rabbit.....again your stupidity shows.

The advertising dollars are just a means for ‘sustainability’ (you do remember that word, don’t you) of the Axios operation to submit anti-Trump vitriol.

[Reply](#)



3. **Stucky** says:

“unidentified sources” = euphemism for we’re-making-shit-up.

We need a Reality Show where ISIS dudes behead lyingfuk journalists.

[Reply](#)



1. **MarshRabbit** says:

Stucky, they’re starting to sounding like Trump with his “many people” source, lol:

“We’re not going. And so many people are saying that.” and “There’s been plenty found.

You can call many people.” and “Many people are saying it was wonderful that Mrs. Obama....” and “and I’ve had many, many people say that to me.”

[Reply](#)



4. **Anonymous** says:

The fact that Axios needs to proclaim that they are “trust-worthy” proves that they are not worthy of that claim.

it is similar to when a used car salesman says “it was only driven on Sundays”