

# Victory at The Economist Forum

October 22, 2009

I had the honor of participating in my first [Oxford-style debate](#) [1] at [The Economist's Media Convergence Forum](#) [2] in New York City on Wednesday. The proposition before us was: Consumers have more to gain than lose from sharing personal information. Dave Morgan, Chief Executive Officer of Simulmedia joined me on the 'Con' side of the debate. Matthew Wise, President and CEO of Q Interactive and Jeff Jarvis, author of "What would Google do?" and the [Buzz Machine Blog](#) [3] led the pro side.

Before the debate started the audience was polled and voted 75% to 25% in favor of the proposition. I was not surprised considering that many attendees of the conference were new media marketers. Clearly, Dave and I had our work cut out for us. Jeff and Matt gave a spirited argument that sharing information was good for business and good for those consumers who willingly chose to share their data. Dave and I responded that we agree that, if users did control their data today, they might be better off choosing to share it, unfortunately, law, technology and corporate policy are often at odds today with providing users anything resembling control. Obviously, I'm vastly summarizing all arguments here, but this gives you a taste.

In the end, there was a revote that went 42% to 58% opposed to the proposition. A lot of things account for the change of heart of the crowd. First and foremost, Dave Morgan was clearly a good partner as a veteran and well-respected leader in the online behavioral targeting industry who believes that we can have both targeted ads and privacy. Second, I believe that most industry players understand that the Web 2.0 world demands that individuals be granted greater control be given over their information. They know that we have simply outgrown of the 1980s direct marketing world that says that the company owns the consumer's data. When presented a coherent argument that is pro-advertising and pro-privacy, even those who earn their money as advertisers but don't represent the industry in policy debates are willing to support it.

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- [personal information](#)
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## Links:

[1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford\\_Union#Debating](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Union#Debating)

[2] <http://mediaconvergence.economist.com>

[3] <http://www.buzzmachine.com>