

AVOID THE ECHO CHAMBER



By Lorin Anderson, *Founder*

Pretty much everything you see online, from search results to your Facebook feed, is generated by algorithms. This invisible code prioritizes information that it thinks you'll like — which can turn your online experience into an echo chamber of identical opinions.

How can you keep algorithms from closing in on your worldview? To start with, think about how dangerous it can be to see only things that you already agree with. Be skeptical of the veracity and comprehensiveness of your internet feeds. Make sure you're reading widely about issues in the world, and deliberately follow a variety of people with views that differ from your own.

By expanding what you read and pay attention to, you'll force the algorithms to broaden their recommendations. And occasionally get off the radar, to see an unfiltered view of the web: Put your browser in private mode, or search anonymously using a search engine that doesn't track you.

Another version of the "echo chamber effect" that can negatively affect your career is when a teacher attends the Proponent Group Summit or the PGA Teaching and Coaching Summit and spends the entire event sitting with the same three or four instructors they sat with last time they attended. Or, when you choose to only go to your PGA or LPGA Section education events because your friend is speaking. Or when you only join social media groups about teaching methods you are certified in or where the moderators share your general beliefs about the swing.

These actions also contribute to an echo chamber effect on your teaching skills. We are all very fortunate to live in a time of unparalleled advancements in technology that are mapping and measuring athletic motion in more ways than could have been dreamed about when I got into the industry 30 years ago. When there is such an explosion of new information available it is important that we all have an open mind as to what it all means.

Look at what has happened in baseball. For 100-plus years managers rarely tried a new strategy or drafted outside of a set of established notions of what a quality baseball player should look like. Sabermetrics — an incredibly detailed statistical system — has changed all that. Today baseball's winning teams make all sorts of adjustments in strategy and personnel that would have been managerial heresy just a few years ago. Times do change. Are you keeping up?

It scares me how little we understand how this echo chamber most of us now live in keeps us from realizing our full potential to learn about and understand both the world around us and the game that we all earn our living from.

The first step to getting outside the golf industry echo chamber is to force yourself to go to education events where the speakers are new to you. And while you're there don't be afraid to sit with some pros you've never met before. Make a couple of new friends and hear a few new points of view.

The results of expanding your information inputs will make you both a more well-rounded individual and a more knowledgeable teacher.

If you want to learn more about the echo chamber effect Harvard Business Review recommends: "How to Think for Yourself When Algorithms Control What You Read," by Marc Zao-Sanders. PG

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