



Four Years

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on March 22, 2009 - 11:00am

Topic: [Site news](#)

Dear readers, today marks the 4th full of year of the existence of The Oil Drum.

Our durability is because of you, the readers. We wouldn't—couldn't—do this if we didn't think people were listening, helping us spread the word, and participating in and advancing the conversation. So, I offer you, our readers, a sincere thank you from all of our staff.

A summary and some thoughts lay below the fold.

In our fourth year, we've almost doubled our historical number of visits from 9.7M to 17.2M and historical unique views from 23.6M to 39.7M. While the traffic to TOD has waned a bit of late with the decline in the price of oil, the upward traffic trend line still holds.

Much more importantly than traffic, while we have no easy way to measure the quality of those readers' impacts on policy or their own communities, we cannot but hope that we are a part of positive change.

At TOD, we have always tried to be the bridge between the doomers, the technopians and the cornucopians, to present as many sides of the myriad arguments as we can, so that we do not become too rooted in any mode of thought. This allows us to test raw ideas through your eyes and critical thinking in a way that doesn't happen most places. We don't tell you what to think, we just ask that you actually do so—and do so critically and empirically. As [Nate's post prior to this one](#) points out so eloquently, WE DON'T KNOW, but we can learn. I remain proud of this site for its perspective and willingness to take on these immense topics.

Even with that lack of certitude girding us, most days, it feels to me like we are walking an ever-narrowing knife-edge with icy gusting winds blowing across a shrinking and very loosely anchored tightrope. This is not easy to do, folks. It is not easy at all. I have made mistakes, but in that I am only reassured by the fact that no one gets them all right; in the end, all we can do is try to do what we think is best as our inner spirit dictates. If one thinks about it, SO much has changed since we started: the oil run-up, hurricanes, the economic debacle, the dynamic climate debate all have added even greater complexity to an already overwhelming topic. It is hard to take it all in and digest to any comprehensive conclusion.

These are just some of the many reasons I am thankful for and care deeply for every single person on this staff--they are an amazing collection of people: diverse, intelligent beyond bound, hard-working, personable and engaged. The people of this group may not agree on everything, but we do understand that this site is something special that must be maintained for as long as it can be.

The efforts of Nate, Gail, Leanan, and SuperG should be especially noted, as they are the folks

who are here most days, slogging it out, making it work. Without them, this site would not have persevered over the past months.

On a personal note, some may have noted that I have been relatively absent of late. I have been taking a bit of a break, trying to recover from a pretty severe burn out. I still work some behind the scenes, coordinating, helping publicize the site, and a few other things that you'll be hearing more about in the future. I can't blame that burnout on any single situation or any single issue—however, I don't think many understand the cumulative toll that these people pay each day to keep this unique space running--and they do so with only the compensation of attempting to do the right thing. So, I am thankful that there have been wonderful people there to pick up the ball when I just couldn't run with it for a while. We are all fortunate for this. The Oil Drum remains by far the best thing I have contributed to in my life, and it is still something I believe in and hope to contribute more to in the coming days.

On another note, well, there are some cleavages that have developed inside our little energy coven. They are diverse, cross-cutting, and while at one time those different perspectives would have been regarded as an available and persistent strength, sometimes, lately, these cleavages manifest themselves as caustic differences. I regard them as normal among a group of people who have explored difficult subjects together for a while--a natural occurrence that reflects independent thought.

With that being said, I care deeply about all of the people who are involved here. Some of them, many of them, I have never shared anything more than an email conversation with, but they have joined together in this fight—all of them for their own reasons, all of them with their own perspectives. When oil was rising in price, it became a signal that conventional thinking could accept as an indicator of scarcity. Despite different skill sets, ultimate goals, pet concerns, etc., our union of purpose was a shared one. In this period where demand for energy is outpacing geologic depletion, our interests, expertise and worldviews have become more disparate. And that's ok.

In this struggle to discuss energy and our future, the issues are likely to grow even more tense, more vitriolic, and tougher to handle, with all of the situations we face in this world, economic, political, energy, and otherwise. I therefore ask that you, our readers, make every effort to treat each other with respect and understanding when these polemic topics arise.

I am compelled to remind you of one of my favorite quotes from someone I think a lot of, [Jerry Michalski](#); he shared a mantra with me a while back, which he learned from Quaker meeting: "Speak only if it will improve upon the silence." *We thank you for continuing to improve upon the silence here at The Oil Drum.*

No one knows what the future holds, no one holds all of the keys. All we can do here is try to help educate and make that future a better one for as many people as we can, for as long as we can. It is a unique model, based on social and community capital, and in turn it is itself a social experiment of the highest order—and one we need your help in perpetuating its norms, its impact, and its existence.

I hope that you will continue to join us in that purpose.



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