

Professional judgement requires that stupid application...

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I have been accused in the comments section of this blog of being unprofessional. The basis of the claim is twofold.

First it was said that my claim that we are in recession is wrong because the technical convention for describing a recession is two-quarters of declining GDP and in the last quarter there has, technically, been considerable GDP growth. It was, then said that it was unprofessional for me to suggest that we are in a recession.

Second, it has been said that my suggestion that the person making this claim was 'stupid' for doing so was unprofessional.

I found this interesting. I am aware that I know more about the complainant than I can disclose. Suffice to say that I suspect that their claim suggests that they have some economic training.

And let me concede, that if the conventions of what might be called 'normal times' were to be adhered to then the claim they make about being in recession might make sense. But that is as far as my concession goes.

These are of course, not normal times. The events of March onwards have been unprecedented. To presume that the convention on describing recessions (not rules, I stress, because the description of recession is just a convention and most certainly not a rule) applies in abnormal times is absurd.

It does, of course, require professional judgement to decide when times might be abnormal. A technician (which is what I think my commentator to be) does not apply that judgement. They do as a result get an answer that is absurd. Stupid even, because it is very clearly wrong to apply a convention in a circumstance for which it was not intended.

To decide when rules do not apply is what being professional is, in this sense. It's what differentiates a doctor from a nurse: the doctor can decide when to break a protocol, and a nurse cannot. It similarly should divide an accountant from a bookkeeper; a

lawyer from a legal clerk and even a judge from a police officer. Rules exist for reasons. Professionals have to use their judgement as to when they cannot apply, which is most often when they would result in stupid outcomes.

I would argue that my comments were in that case exactly what a professional person should do: I disapplied the rules. Professionals should almost certainly do that more often. We would not, for example, have suffered an audit crisis if they had done so.

And to say someone is stupid for continually claiming the rule applies is no more than to say what Einstein once did when he was supposed to have said "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

We are in a deep recession and are heading for a depression. I will absolutely reserve my professional right to say so, and to say it's stupid to claim otherwise.