

## Agreeing to Disagree Still Works

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“Let’s agree to disagree” is sometimes heard when people find themselves disagreeing with others with whom they really want to maintain a friendship or maintain their working relationships. When the phrase “let’s agree to disagree” is spoken, the request being made is really one of “let’s keep working together here because I respect your opinion although I don’t agree with it and I’m asking you to respect my opinion even though I know you don’t agree.”

As adults we have the capacity to think through situations, to reason, to communicate as clearly as possible, and to recognize when differences of opinion and even outright disagreements are standing in the way of accomplishing the work at hand. When disagreements arise, have a one-on-one conversation with the person or team involved to seek more information and to discover whether there is a middle ground approach to solving the problem or to addressing the expressed concerns. Often, once a respect-filled conversation has taken place about the differences of opinion, people can acknowledge the differences with respect, reach a new working conclusion, or even agree to disagree and then still be able to work together.

However, sometimes disagreements lead to the discovery that people are no longer able to work together and that moving on to another job is the best option. In fact, over the years, I’ve heard from several people who decided to leave their places of employment because of disagreements in approaches to conducting business. Each employee talked to their employer about their concerns and in each case the expressed concerns were not addressed. The option to agree to disagree and keep working together simply didn’t exist, so, the employees quit and moved on to work for other companies.

In the end, it is all about respect. Respect for each other’s opinions even when there is disagreement. Respect for each other as people who sometimes arrive at different conclusions. And respect for and accomplishment of the work to be done because it still needs to be done.

Action Item: Listen intently to learn whether you might actually be in agreement. When not in agreement, determine whether you can agree to disagree and go on. If going on together, despite the disagreement isn’t working, then it is time to change your situation and move on.

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