

Defusing the debater and promoting dialogue

A Practical Tool to Support Collaboration

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Within every organization, there are those individuals, for whom “being positional” is a chronic pattern. Simply put, these are people who tend to argue for their position and have trouble hearing and/or considering other people’s ideas. Those people can not only be hard to deal with, they can erode team chemistry and prevent optimal collaboration. The following tool offers a constructive means of interacting with people who are caught in this pattern.

Before we offer this powerful little tool to help you when confronted with someone who wants to debate, we need to briefly discuss “mindset”. We want to suggest that maintaining the proper mindset, when confronted by a person who wants to debate, is the most important factor in moving through the challenge and generating collaboration.

For us, at Group to TEAM Leadership Solutions, team is a mindset where leaders look to include ideas and draw out different perspectives. In a team mindset, leaders are always looking for a win/win. It is never about controlling the person wanting to debate, it is about channeling their energy in a constructive way. A person operating out of a team mindset is always committed to dialogue, even if the other person wants to debate.

Use the “ABC tool” to allow for differences, promote ideas, stay in dialogue and out of “debate”. Here is the ABC tool:

1. STEP A: Agree/Affirm

- As you listen to the other person express their opinion, seek to uncover and discover what you can agree on and/or what your common cause or shared interest is.
- At the very least affirm that the other person’s opinion matters to you.
- Use questions to learn more about the other person’s opinion and look to find commonality.
- Here is an example of how this might sound: “We both agree that” “You feel strongly that (affirm that their idea is valid)”

2. STEP B: Bridge

- Use the conjunction “and” to bridge other ideas and/or perspectives into the conversation. Using the conjunction “and” bridges their ideas with other ideas and promotes dialogue.
- AVOID the conjunction “but” because it discredits the other person’s opinion, creates resistance/defensiveness and keeps you stuck in debate.
- Here is an example of how this might sound: “The solution you’re suggesting definitely has some merit and I’d

like to offer some adjustments that might work to improve the process.” “I think your idea is very valid and I see a couple of other solutions we can consider as well.”

3. STEP C: Consider/Convince (Contain)

- Use “ownership language” — in other words, speak in the first person and talk about your personal thoughts, ideas and opinion. Be very clear about the difference between fact and opinion.
- For example, you might say “I feel...”, or “From my perspective...”, or “The way I see it”..., etc. If you are stating a fact, you still want to soften it by saying something such as, “I’ve read that....” Or “I’m aware of some studies that suggest....”
- Offer the other person “something to consider” (an alternative perspective that you find valid or compelling).
- The key to truly convincing someone involves “creating the space” for them to recognize the value of another idea, opinion, and/or option.
- It can often really help to give the other person time to think about the issue

NOTE: if someone is truly stuck on their position(s), you may need to contain them (agree to disagree and work around them when dealing with this particular issue). Also, if someone chooses to believe in alternative facts, such as “the world is flat,” you will likely need to contain their “position” rather than try to move them off of that position.

Consider everything the other person says — never dismiss anything. If the person says something that seems crazy, try repeating it back to them (“so are you saying...?”) then ask more questions, really seeking to understand their position. As you repeat and probe, the other person may recognize the faults in their position. If not, allow them to have a different opinion (“well, clearly we have different opinions about this”), then circle back to what you do agree on. Remind people that you are on the same team.

We have found the ABC Tool very valuable, we hope that you find it to be valuable, as well, as you foster a truly terrific TEAM.

Read and watch more at www.GrouptoTEAM.com/business-management-daily-blogs.

Group to TEAM Leadership Solutions is a global training and consulting organization that was founded by Certified Professional Speaker, Susan Leahy MA, CSP and business coach Freeman Michaels MA. Through keynotes, customized live trainings, webinars, on-line training products and consulting services, Group to TEAM Leadership Solutions initiates a deeper conversation about what it takes to build viable, self-sustaining, teams. To learn more visit www.GrouptoTEAM.com.