

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 65

If we quash valid discussion in the workplace, we run the risk of making sub-standard decisions. ...

Encourage All Perspectives...

"A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Dale Carnegie, US Philanthropist



"Talk to the hand"

Are you encouraging full discussion in your organisation?

I love a good discussion. Recently, someone started talking to me about global warming and the impact people are having on the climate. I listened quietly to them and when they had finished I mentioned, quite light heartedly, that although I see great merit in recycling and reducing emissions, I am an agnostic on the topic of human affect on the climate, having read a lot of arguments both for and against. I waited for their response, instead their face set quite hard and not wishing to escalate discussion to argument, I quickly changed the subject.

It struck me afterwards that in the "debate" about global warming there is a tendency for the

opposing sides to try to stifle the debate. They ridicule commentators with opposing viewpoints or focus on their "hidden agendas" rather than the merits of their arguments; supporters of global warming theories are "scientists seeking more research funding" and detractors are "paid lackeys of the oil companies". The only affect such criticism has is to stifle useful debate. [To see examples of arguments for and against, please refer to: [here](#) and [here](#).

I was more convinced by the evidence in the latter, but please make your own mind up.

SO

So what is your team or organisation's equivalent of "global warming"? Are individual viewpoints stifled because they question the company's strategy, policies or decisions or because the person has little political influence? Does argument descend into ridicule of the individual?

I agree that at some point discussion must stop and action happen. But if the argument has been won by stifling opposing opinion, reducing time for discussion or ridiculing opponents, is the strategy, policy or decision truly the best it could be?

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What are some things you can do to encourage better discussion? Here are several suggestions:

- Use the Disney Technique; please see [here](#)
- Use the Six Hats Technique, see [here](#)
- Hold a debate, see [here](#)
- Hold a facilitated workshop, rather than a meeting. If you are in a traditional meeting, one of the best ways I have seen to promote discussion is to have each person give their viewpoint for one minute, uninterrupted.
- Listen, rather than constructing arguments to defeat their case.

All of these can enrich understanding of different viewpoints.

ACTION

Think about where valid criticism might be stifled in your organisation. Think about that person everyone calls “the moaner”; could they have some valid points? How might you encourage discussion rather than dismissal? Remember, scientific opinion once advocated that the Earth was flat. I’m not agnostic on that any more.

TO CLOSE

As many of you know, in my work I use Solutions Focus as a process to resolve problems. Sitting on the train from Suffolk and pondering this article led me to consider that we have a worldwide movement of people focussing on the

problem of global warming and there is much heated argument.

Wouldn't it be more productive to focus on global cooling if that is what we want to happen? The same goes for fighting global poverty. Wouldn't it be more constructive and inspiring to focus on building global enrichment? Just a thought...

May you have rich discussion this week.

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