



Timely Information for Personal Success

Polarizing Politics: Respect is Key

By Mike Jacquart

It's lunchtime and you're taking a work break by logging onto Facebook. Only instead of relaxing, you get perturbed when you see yet another post from your colleague "Jane" that criticizes politician John Doe's approval of XYZ Pipeline. *"That's the third time she slammed him this week!"* you angrily think to yourself. *"Doesn't she have anything else to do but dwell on his faults?"*

12:30 quickly rolls around, and it's time to get back to work. *Except* you're finding it hard to concentrate because you are still upset about what Jane posted.

Sound familiar? If so, you're hardly alone. As reported by author Dave Crenshaw, a recent study by Better Works researched political polarization and its effects on productivity, and it revealed some disturbing trends. According to the survey of 500 companies, **87%** of workers reported reading and getting involved in highly charged social media discussions. Further, **50%** of employees reported witnessing a political conversation turn into a verbal jousting match on company time.

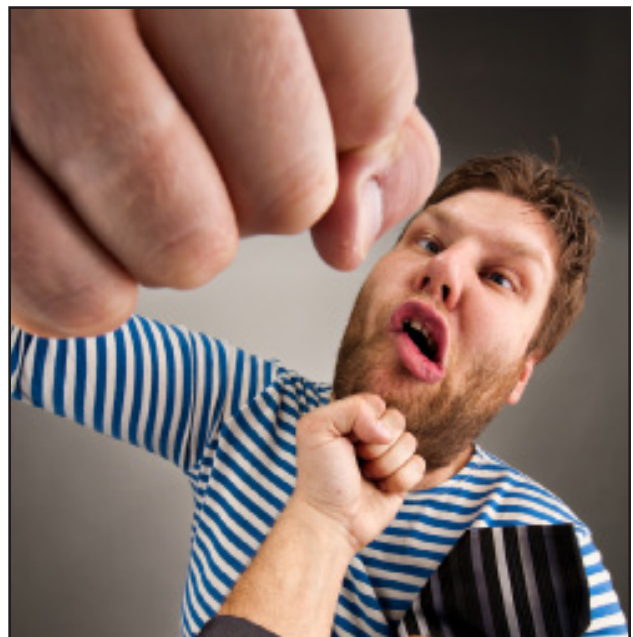
What to do? I have a few suggestions:

❖ **Get over the idea that you won't talk politics, so be prepared.** It's been said many times that it isn't a good idea to talk religion or politics in various social settings. The problem is, this is much easier said than done! One approach is to

never assume you know how your co-workers feel about a certain candidate, politician, or issue. For instance, it isn't a good idea to stroll up to the water cooler and launch into, *"Did you see what that dumbbell GOP.... said yesterday! I mean, how stupid can he be?"* ...

....Instead, try a more neutral stance such as... *"Boy that was sure some controversy that candidate....was involved in yesterday!"* In this way, you introduce a topic that you know is likely on other people's minds, but you discover what THEY think first. Now, you can decide if you want to join in a conversation, or play it safe and just listen to what

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Healthy Recipe: Summer Fruit Sizzle

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ teaspoon butter
- ½ cup blueberries
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- Dash of nutmeg

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Calories per serving: 134
- Carbohydrates: 32 g.
- Sodium: 6 mg.
- Fat: 1 g.
- Saturated fat: 1 g.
- Fiber: 1 g.

DIRECTIONS:

❶ In a small skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the fruit and cook until it begins to soften lightly, about 2 to 3 minutes.

❷ Add the maple syrup and nutmeg. Bring to a boil and then remove from heat.

❸ Serve over waffles, pancakes, ice cream or frozen yogurt.

Serving size: About ¼ cup.

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Questions and Answers

Becoming More Organized

Q: *I am not a planner or an organized person. I think the process of writing things down will help. Any other tips or suggestions?*

A: Try paper *and* electronic notes and reminders. Always carry a pen and small notebook with you during your workday, as you never know when you might want to jot something down. Otherwise, trying to recall an inspirational moment later might prove to be an exercise in futility! It's also good to have a written daily planner in case a computer system crashes.

Do you have a laptop? If so, the notepad function can work wonders. This all being said, prioritizing your day is probably much more important than the specific platform that you prefer. Plan your day the night or afternoon before. It saves valuable time in the morning, which is a high productivity period for most of us. You will get more done in a shorter time. Also, take the items you didn't complete from today's "to-do" list and re-write them on tomorrow's list. This way you won't forget your "to-do" items and, the procrastination items will get to be annoying due to you continually being forced to re-write them. Don't be afraid to experiment, the key is to use the system that works best for you.

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they say. If someone wants YOUR opinion, you might note: *"Sorry, I really haven't given this enough thought to offer a really solid opinion."*

❖ **Above all, show respect for other people's opinions.** Whatever you do, don't put the other person on the defensive by attacking their beliefs. Calling someone names or challenging things they hold dear is not likely to go well. Maybe Jane was upset over the pipeline being approved, but don't call her a "tree hugger."...

... If you are on the other side of the issue, you might say something like, *"Jane, I read your post on Facebook about XYZ Pipeline, and I never quite thought of it from that point of view. You have given me something to think about."* This way, you are paving the road for more civil discourse or simply to "agree to disagree." Hopefully, you will both leave feeling like you are both a little more open to "listening" to the other point of view.... *A very important quality in the business world....*

Moral of the story: Political discussion isn't going away any time soon, even at work, but be careful: If you want someone to respect your opinion on a given issue, you have to respect theirs. ■

Mike Jacquart is the editor of "Employee Assistance Report" and a frequent blogger and LinkedIn contributor.