

MTD Quick Tips

How To Avoid Arguments

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About 2 weeks ago I was in London helping some managers with their communication skills.

As we all know effective communication skills are critical to all that we do as we normally have to get results or help through others.

I was asked a really interesting question by one of the delegates that I would like to share with you.

"Sean, I can get drawn into an argument very easily at work – are there any exercises that I can do to help me overcome this?"

My reply:

When people have a difference of opinion they immediately go on the defensive and would rather be proved right than have the correct course of action agreed!

A lot of people cannot stand to be proven wrong and to save face they will fight their corner to the bitter end rather than to be seen to have given in - even if it is to the detriment of the company!

Weird hey?

So how can you combat this?

Well, have you ever observed a difference of opinion at close quarters?

What did you see?

Well, if it's like the ones I have witnessed you get a lot of verbal tennis being played where the conversation is going backwards and forwards with neither party listening to the other person's opinion!

In fact you can say that they are taking it in turns to talk rather than communicating.

You hear:

"blah blah blag blah BUT....."

then the other person talks..

"yes BUT blah blah blah blah"

Have you ever heard the saying that "Everything before a BUT is B******T?"

When someone replies with BUT it's as though they haven't listened to a word you have said!

It makes you feel hurt and unheard but let's face it we have all done this haven't we?

So what can you do about it?

Well, in order to practice your listening and communication skills I'd like you to try out the following exercise in your next team meeting or with a colleague!

Pair up with someone.

Take any topical issue doing the rounds at work and one person has to argue the case FOR the issue and the other AGAINST.

If you can't think of a topic, discuss either of the following:

* For and against going to war with IRAQ
* For and against banning smoking in bars
* For and against nuclear weapons
* For and against fox hunting

Sounds easy enough hey?

Well, you did say you liked an argument!

....but that would be just too easy! ;-)

Here is the kicker!

Whilst you debate your issue neither of you are allowed to use the word BUT!

The person who says the fewest "BUTS" wins and the loser has to buy the cream cakes!

Afterwards, I'd like you to ask all of your team members how they found the exercise and how they can learn from it?

You will notice that you will listen more attentively and ask questions about the other person's point of view rather than steamroller into an argument.

You will communicate more effectively without getting angry.

In fact, you will learn an awesome skill for avoiding arguments altogether!

Try this exercise out - you will be amazed at what you find out.

Add this technique to your tool box of skills and bring it out whenever you need it!

To your success,

Sean

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About Sean McPheat



Sean McPheat

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Founder and MD of international management development firm MTD Training, Sean McPheat is widely regarded as a leading authority on modern day management and leadership.

Sean is a bestselling author, and has been recognised for his own business building skills through the **British Business Awards** and has been featured in the **Who's Who Of Britain's Business Elite**.

He has been a regular judge for the UK's Young Enterprise Programme but was not as horrible as Simon Cowell (well almost!)



Sean has been featured on **CNN International, the BBC, SKY, ITV, The Guardian, Forbes, Arena Magazine, Marketing Weekly, Business Zone, Winning Edge** and radio stations such as BBC WM and LBC (London's Big Conversation).

Sean has over **250 media credits** to his name and his weekly email tips go out to over **60,000 people** interested in management and development strategies.

Sean is also a **much sought after media figure and motivational speaker** on all topics related to management, HR, business improvement and entrepreneurialism.