

The McKenzie Mailer

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Bob McKenzie will be speaking at the Executive Transition Assistance Program Class for the Navy Retirees on Monday and Tuesday, April 3 and 4.

The Annual Constangy, Brooks & Smith Labor Law Seminar entitled “Major League HR – No Hits, No Runs, No Errors” will be held on Thursday, April 6, 2006 from 8:30 to 5:00. For more information, click on this link

http://www.constangy.com/FirmSeminar/CBS_LELWS_FL06.pdf

Agreeing to Disagree or Avoiding the Subject

A few weeks ago, a number of executives were holding their regular update meeting and quite often the phrase, “Well, I guess we can just agree to disagree.” was used. This phrase – “agreeing to disagree” ended all conversation regarding issues of great importance to the organization. When the phrase was used, all discussion regarding the disagreement stopped and the executives went on to the next subject. Inevitably, there was quite a bit of debate on the next issue only to have the same result. When the executives had trouble deciding upon the resolution of the problem, they agreed to disagree on that topic as well. Besides agreeing to disagree, nothing was accomplished at this meeting. What a waste of time, energy and a lot of money.

In the spirit of trying to cooperate, many organizations are moving to a more comfortable work environment. The thought process here is by developing more harmonious relationships with co-workers, the entire organization will be more productive. On the other hand, if real issues are discussed without coming to a solution, then the conversation is worthless and moving forward is impossible.

Harmonious relationships with co-workers are VERY important, but so is the resolution of complex issues. These are not mutually exclusive terms. Complex business issues can be resolved without a fight. The issues discussed at the meeting noted above affected the entire business. What happened was that the executives discussing them were more concerned about their own turf than they were about what was best for the business. One of the issues was a matter of conflicting goals between the marketing and operations executives. Another involved the difficulty in finding new employees. A third involved a substantial investment in a new product line. None of the issues were resolved. Instead, the issues were tabled and everyone went away disappointed, but the harmonious relationships were maintained. Or were they?

The marketing executive left with a smile on the outside but frustrated at the lack of progress. The operations executive went back to his work area and complained to his senior staff member about never getting anything accomplished at the regular meetings. The human resources executive went to his office and shut his door to steam for a while. The CFO stayed in the meeting room by herself to ponder her future with the company.

Agreeing to disagree is just another term for avoiding the issue. What this company’s executives did in the example above was agree to do nothing. This is a very disagreeable solution. Make sure your organization has a culture of solving problems before they get out of hand.