

Episode #12: Tips On How To Manage Disagreements With Your Boss

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. In today's episode you will hear tips on how to manage disagreements with your boss. I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode you heard 10 tips to improve every stage of your meetings:

Before the meeting you can:

1. Define the nature of the meeting
2. Limit the agenda to no more than three topics
3. Convey the agenda, your expectations of participants and the key decisions to be made

At the beginning of the meeting you can:

4. Ask all participants to "check-in"
5. Review the agenda, the key outcomes and time allocation for each agenda topic
6. Review your meeting ground-rules

During the meeting you can:

7. Promote a healthy debate
8. Go deep into each topic

And at the end of the meeting you can:

9. Fill out a simple template with three columns labeled what-who-when
10. End on time

Today I will share four tips on how to manage disagreements with your boss.

During a recent coaching engagement, my client, a corporate manager whom I'm going to call Maria, asked for my help on how to manage disagreements with her boss' boss. I'm going to call him David. Her direct manager had delegated several responsibilities to her, which required her alignment with David.

Maria told me that the latest meetings with David had not gone well.

The problems seemed to have been triggered by how she expressed her disagreement to suggestions that had been provided by David. She considered herself the subject-matter expert and honestly believed that his suggestions were not optimal.

Maria shared that David was a direct, strong-willed and forceful executive, the type who did not like to hear people argue or disagree with him.

I asked Maria to try to pinpoint how she had expressed her disagreements. She recalled having often used the words “no” and “but”, and how these words seemed to derail the discussions, to the point where she had been close to losing control of her emotions.

Throughout this and subsequent coaching sessions, Maria and I worked on potential ways to better manage the flow of the discussions with David. Our aim was to achieve the best possible outcomes.

My first tip was to ask her to always manage her emotions and avoid her emotions managing her. “Easier said than done”, she replied. To address this, we agreed to use the old rule of counting to ten before speaking.

The second tip, as you may have already anticipated, was to avoid using the words “no” and “but”. In one situation, David wanted to speed up the execution of a particular project, but Maria thought there were too many risks involved. Instead of a flat-out “no”, I advised her to ask questions, such as which specific elements of the plan David thought could be accelerated, and if there were any precedents where such shortcuts had been successful. We also agreed that it would help to listen truly attentively to David’s arguments.

Likewise, in the case of the word “but”, beyond asking clarification questions, I counseled her to offer other potential alternatives to achieve David’s desired goals. Following the previous example, Maria could jointly work with David on the pros and cons of modifying elements of the original project as part of the decision-making process during the meetings.

One last piece of advice I gave her was that if she still thought a particular suggestion from David was not optimal, she could suggest a limited roll out of the project. Instead of going national, they could run a controlled, small-scale test market, monitor the key variables, then expand it if the test-market results met the success criteria.

Maria committed wholeheartedly to use all these tools in her future meetings with David.

So, what happened in the next meetings? Maria told me that, as agreed, she had used these tools with David and was very happy to report that they had translated into a significant improvement on how they debated when they disagreed. She also said that the more she practiced them, the more comfortable she felt using them.

You can use these same tips to manage disagreements with your boss. Just remember the top three takeaways:

1. Manage your emotions at all times, especially with your boss (or your boss’ boss, as was the case with Maria.)
2. Ask questions, listen more and speak less, and
3. Manage disagreements in a positive and proactive way, building and adding value on top of the boss’ suggestions, rather than trying to prove them wrong.

I want to add a fourth tip: Pick your battles. Ask yourself if you can live with your boss’ decision even though you may not completely agree with it. Go for the 10% rule, where you only challenge

one out of ten decisions from your boss. It may not be a successful practice to become the manager who constantly challenges your boss.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will share tips on how to improve the level of commitment to team decisions.

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This is coach Percy Cannon, working to **help you make the rest of your life...the best of your life®**.

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Percy's BIO

Percy provides corporate managers and leadership teams with customized coaching programs that help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to significantly increase their business results through others and accelerate their career growth.

Percy is an "alumnus" from three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, with whom he spent close to three decades.

Since 2011 he has been helping corporate executives, managers and employees **make the rest of their life...the best of their life®**.

Percy has worked in the United States and across several countries in Latin America as an Executive Coach, Leadership Team Consultant and Keynote Speaker, serving companies such as Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Tiffany & Avianca.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC" and certified as a "Go-Giver" speaker & coach.

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life) and in Spanish (El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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