

Election Year Etiquette: Five Tips for Peaceful Politics at Work

By Rachel Wagner, October 2008

Since employees today typically spend more time at work than anywhere else, it has become the norm more than ever to talk with co-workers about family, religion, and now—politics. But, is it okay to talk politics at work?

Many offices don't mind a bit of friendly political banter around the water cooler or lunch table. In fact, some employers even provide nonpartisan educational materials and get-out-the-vote information onsite. But the workplace should not become a political battlefield.

According to a recent issue of *Workforce Management*, "Employers ...have wide latitude in the workplace policies they can implement." Some companies have policies on political expression; some do not. If policies are in place, hopefully these are clearly communicated.

But whether a policy exists or not, it's important to know what's appropriate in your company's culture and to use a good dose of common sense.

These five tips are effective ways to create partisan peace at your workplace.

Limit politics to break time. Remember you are at work—to work! Use your break or lunch time for friendly-only political chitchat.

Control discussion time. After 3-5 minutes, you'll know each others' opinions. Change subjects to avoid an intense political diatribe.

Stay respectful. Value the political views of others, even if you don't agree. Don't stir up political divisiveness which can lead to unwelcome heated discussions. It can be detrimental to your career advancement to come across as a political maverick. In addition, expressing political views to clients and customers may negatively affect the company.

Don't pressure others. If workers aren't interested in the discussion, don't insist that they share their point of view. If someone asks your opinion on a candidate, don't ignore the question. Just say you'd rather not comment. Then change the subject.

Use discretion. Keep office and cubicle walls free of campaign paraphernalia and observe email professionalism. Avoid flooding Inboxes with the latest political cartoons or late-night talk show jokes.

With so many voters actively following this year's election coverage, it's hard to leave

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the political bantering at the office door. However, if you follow these tips, you can help ensure partisan peace at work.

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