



Stanford eCorner

Agree and Commit, Disagree and Commit

Greg Ballard, *Glu Mobile*

November 15, 2006

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1642/Agree-and-Commit-Disagree-and-Commit>

Greg states that the most corrosive thing that can happen in a company is to have a debate continue after the decision has been made. He suggests that people who are supportive of decisions which they were against are very valuable to an organization.



Transcript

This is a phrase, agree and commit, disagree and commit, that actually comes from Scott McNealy. At least that's where I was told it was from. I have adopted it and stolen it and probably should be paying royalties for it but I'm not going to. It's probably the single best business phrase that I've ever seen for building a culture of a company. We have a company right now, Glu Mobile that has epic battles. I mean we have people who disagree with each other all the time. We have ways that that happens. It happens in business meetings. It happens in hallways. It happens in my office.

But then we make a decision and if you're the person who was in favor of that decision then you stop the discussion because you won. If you're the person who disagree with that, you also stop the discussion because you lost. The most corrosive thing that can happen in any company is to have the debate continue after a decision has been made. Any time that happens in a company, you find decisions being remade and remade and remade and a culture that starts becoming quite corrosive. I have a friend who I once thought was going to be one of the most successful people that I knew. He's had a very successful career but not as successful as I thought it might be. I think as I think about what was wrong with his career that the mistake that he made was that he has never been a disagree and commit person. He's been a disagree and keep disagreeing and keep disagreeing person and in fact, it's made him sort of a disagreeable person. He radiates that disagreement as he walks through the. He's a competitive guy.

He played a lot of sports. He's bright. He's energetic. He's a terrific guy except he can't get over the fact that somebody made a decision that he thinks in mind was stupid. You know what? It might have been stupid but the fact that he can't get over it starts to degrade in everybody. If you're the CEO in the company and you have a person who's constantly dissatisfied with your decision-making, ultimately you have to cut that person lose because you can't have that sort of constant dissension. It's one thing to argue beforehand but afterwards, you got to get over it and move on. So the phrase that I will forever remember because it works is agree and commit and disagree and commit. One of the best things that somebody can say about somebody in our company, and I had my people describe people this way, is he's a disagree and commit kind of person because that's the perfect person, somebody who can actually give you an argument as to why you're wrong, say it to your face but then support you when you make the other decision. If you can be that kind of a person, you're going to be successful in business almost no matter whether you were right or wrong on the discussion.