Winning A Fight With Tabasco (And Other Diversions)

By Anna Wells, Editor, IMPO

My friends and I like to play a lot of off-the-cuff word games. For example, my friend posed this question to the group last night:

If you were able to ride any animal, real or fictional, into battle, which would it be? The eventual winner, by group vote, was Falkor—the giant flying dog from *The NeverEnding Story*. The games are certainly without limits:

- Refrigerated condiments you'd use in a fight? Ketchup or barbecue sauce? Maybe Tabasco?
- Weapon you'd use when fighting zombies?
- Top 3 athletes you'd banish from professional sports if you could?
- Lifetime access to *only* the radio or *only* your five favorite albums?

Sometimes our games are simply diversions with no outcome other than laughter or breathless defenses on whether or not a crocodile could beat a lion in a duel (on land, of course). Other times, our open-ended question and answer sessions actually digress into something constructive where we generate ideas and share opinions on topics of actual importance to our lives and the greater good. The important part is not where the conversation begins, but where it ends. My friends are a quick-witted talented bunch, and I like witnessing their brains in action.

In my office, the editors have the good fortune of having adjacent offices, meaning we have the opportunity to engage one another in dialogue throughout the day. It's these spur-of-the-moment jam sessions that oftentimes generate the seedlings of future successful endeavors. It's also interesting to see the perspectives of people who don't think the same way as you do.

I have *never* worked for a company where we didn't make fun of the company newsletter. That said, we all read it. Why? Because part of the fun of the work environment is camaraderie and (sorry HR) a mutual scorn for the funny photo contest. But lucky for me, the company I work for is used to our odd-ball digressions—in fact, they encourage us to break out into small discussions throughout the day, and provide feedback on the progress of our own projects, and the projects of others. It stands to reason that if something is working well in one area of the company, it has a shot at working elsewhere. Oftentimes we just need to hammer out the specifics and decide, through our sometimes meandering dialogue,

whether or not it's worth a shot.

I truly believe that it's this type of open forum that breeds initiative. Make sure your team knows the lines of communication are open. Sometimes a manager's "open door policy" is too intimidating; maybe you need something more low key. Raising your hand in a structured meeting, or seeking out your boss behind his or her desk, is not always the easiest way to convey ideas—in fact, it sometimes seems too formal for the "little things." Try anonymous suggestion boxes in the break room. Even better—go into the break room once in a while and ask questions. Does the new layout work well for the folks on the line? Are there hang-ups that seem too small to warrant asking for a formal fix? You might be surprised what you find out.

And if you run out of things to talk about, here's a good one: Would you rather be able to fly, or breathe underwater?

I still haven't made up my mind on this one.

Have you made up your mind? Would Tabasco make for the best condiment weapon? And is communication too often forgotten in the workplace? Let me know your thoughts: anna.wells@advantagemedia.com *[1].*

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