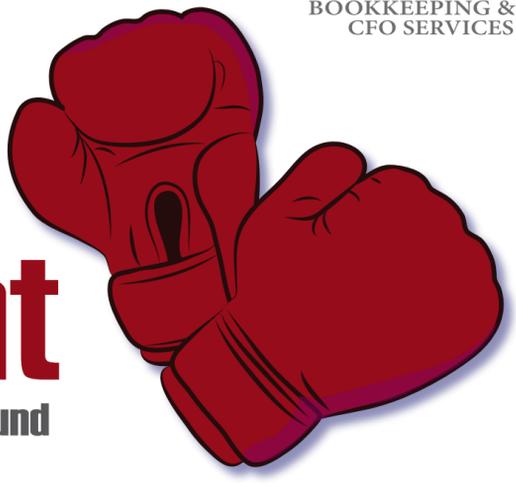


Violent Agreement

Finding a Common Ground



Ah, February. The month of l'amour.

Roses, Chocolate, blah, blah, blah, barf.



(We're kind of over the commercialization of love. Can you tell? Maybe that's why we at Owl always celebrate Halloween, the thematic opposite of Valentine's Day. Though both holidays do emphasize candy, of which we wholeheartedly approve.)

So we're not swooning over Valentine's Day. But we do feel kind of like relationship coaches right now. That's because, this month, we're enamored with the concept of violent agreement.

Isn't that a delicious phrase?

You may not have heard of violent agreement, but you've no doubt experienced it. It's when people are engaged in what seems like a tension-riddled, deadlocked battle, only to discover (sometimes after waging war for a while) that they are actually in agreement, and probably have been the whole time.

This concept is often applied to people in romantic relationships, but we see it All. The. Time. in business.



EXAMPLE:

CEO: We need to stop coddling our vendors. I'm sick of late payments and lackluster responsiveness. This is black and white. Why am I the only one who actually believes in net terms anymore?!

COO: *Ugh. I'm sick of having this argument. It's not black and white. Nothing is. It's about building and maintaining relationships. We just need to open the lines of communication and be more diligent in creating standardized processes for following up when we don't get what we need.*

CEO: Snarl, bark, garumph.

COO: *Hiss.*

INTERN: Uh, ma'am? Sir? Forgive me for overstepping my bounds here, but I think you're saying the same thing. I think you are both saying that we need to keep closer tabs on our vendors, bringing up issues sooner, and making sure they know exactly what's expected of them and what will happen if they don't respond.

COO & CEO: [Awkward silence...]

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?



Violent agreement is most often the result of a communication mix-up or misunderstanding, compounded by strong personalities. Occasionally amplified by stubbornness.

But even easygoing, level-headed people are prone to violent agreement. This is especially true now that so many businesses are run, at least in part, remotely. Context and tone get lost over email and text message, and miscommunication is rampant. So it's easy to fall into violent agreement.

The tricky parts:

- A. Identifying that violent agreement is actually what's happening; and
- B. Being willing to acknowledge it — because that means stepping down.

It's tempting to keep arguing your point just for the sake of being right, even though the greater good is, of course, acknowledging the common ground.

Keep in mind that violent agreement doesn't mean that you're completely on the same page. That common ground may only be enough to stick your toes on, but it's critical to see that common ground for what it is, jump on it, and try to expand it.



This means setting aside egos and focusing on where you're aligned and where you can compromise. **We know, we know** — easier said than done. Especially because you can only control your own ego.

Sometimes violent agreement is a one-and-done, knock-down, drag-out fight. Sometimes it's a long-simmering battle marked by resentment. Either way, it can seriously damage business relationships — and businesses — if left unchecked.

GET SUPPORT

It often helps to have an objective third party step in. It's much easier to see the agreement part of violent agreement when your pride isn't on the line. That doesn't mean you have to let your intern weigh in on vendor relations. But it might mean cooling off and then looping in trusted subject matter experts (maybe even third-party experts) who are only focused on progress, not on winning.



We happen to be third-party experts with our egos in check. Our CFOs, controllers, and bookkeepers can weigh in and bring the numbers to back it up. Let us know if we can help.

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OWL BELIEVES TWO THINGS ABOUT SMALL BUSINESS MONEY:

- > It should be stable and secure.
- > There should be more of it.