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I Can't Believe You Said That! Dealing with Controversy

By Ron Sathoff

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There's a very fine line that we all have to walk when we want to make an argument about a controversial subject: On one hand, you want to limit the controversy as much as you can, because too much can lead to a lot of problems, ranging from flaring tempers to hurt feelings to broken noses! On the other hand, controversial subjects are usually the most significant and, many times, the most useful to discuss.

Many people try to handle controversy by simply avoiding it. Unfortunately, this often leads to bland, wishy-washy arguments that really have nothing to say.

Other people face controversial subjects by bluntly stating their opinion, regardless of the situation or the reactions of the audience. These people often call themselves "frank," "candid," "upfront" or "in-your-face" — but, they are about as effective as the people who have nothing to say.

Why? Because, for an argument or a persuasive message to work, there has to be COMMUNICATION. This means there has to be at least one person talking and one person listening. If a message is too blunt or controversial, then the audience has a tendency to "tune out" what is said — they are too angry, shocked, or outraged to continue paying attention to what you have to say. As soon as they stop listening, communication is over and your message has failed.

How do you prevent this from happening? Well, I have found that the best way to present a controversial subject is to use a

method called "proof-to-claim." To use this method, you hold the controversial point of your message (your claim) for the end of your argument, after you have had a chance to present all the information (proof) that supports the claim.

For instance, if you were telling your customers that you were going to have to raise your prices (a controversial subject to all of us who have to pinch pennies!), you would want to talk about the increased service you will be providing, or the increased costs you have been facing BEFORE you say that prices are rising. This allows you to communicate your reasons before your audience gets angry, and therefore, harder to reach. In

fact, by holding off on the controversial claim, your audience may even come to be more accepting of your message by the time you actually have to say those dreaded words — lessening the negative effects to an acceptable level.

Right now, I can hear a lot of die-hard English Teachers screaming, "What are you saying? Your thesis has to come at the BEGINNING of your argument, NOT at the end!" Well, if you feel a little uncomfortable leaving your claim until the end, or if you are afraid that your audience is not going to be able to understand what your argument is about, then you can use a technique perfected by politicians through the ages: Be vague in the beginning.

By "vague," I mean that you can choose to tell your audience what you are arguing ABOUT at the beginning of your message, rather than what you are arguing FOR. For example, let's say that you are speaking to a group of gun owners about gun control — if you say, "I think we should ban all handguns," you probably will not be able to get another word out, and even if you did, the audience would probably not be listening.

However, if you started by saying, "I think something needs to be done about gun control" or "Let's talk about the gun control issue," you have let your audience know what your topic is (so they won't be confused) but you have not stated your controversial claim yet (so they won't be upset). By being a little vague at the beginning, you will find you have more of a chance of passing along your information without any "emotional roadblocks" getting in the way.

Remember here that the thinking behind this advice is to

encourage communication, NOT trick your audience! The point is that you should structure your message, whether it is a sales letter, web page, or campaign speech, so that your listeners get the information they need to make an informed decision. By holding your controversial material for the end, you are ensuring that the audience gets this information before they have a chance to talk themselves out of it!

Ron Sathoff is a noted speaker and manager of DrNunley'sInternetWriters.com. Ron works with business speakers andwriters, helping them with their copy–writing, marketing, andInternet promotion. See all Ron's insightful business tips at<http://InternetWriters.com> Reach him at ron@drnunley.com or801–328–9006.

Purpose of Fasting in Islam

By Allama Parvez

Purpose of Fasting in Islam by Allama Parvez

The evening prayer has attracted a larger than usual number of worshippers. Today, the advent of the new moon might herald the start of the holy month of Ramadan – the Muslim month of fasting. In an effort to observe the Sunnah of the Muhammad (PBUH), some worshippers are busy trying to sight the new moon when the call to prayer is made. After the prayer, the Imam is informed that the new moon has been sighted. Members of the council also confirm this news. This prompts worshippers to congratulate each other and the mosque is filled with the chants of Allahu Akbar (God is great).

For this group the holy month of Ramadan has begun. Yet Muslims in many other mosques are still debating whether or not the new moon has been sighted. Sunni Muslims generally look to Saudi Arabia for answers to this, as well as many other religious matters. Although ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) has established for North American Muslims, a Shura (or consultation) council for dealing with controversial religious issues (such as moon sighting), many Imams in local mosques decide such matters on their own.

Year after year, this story is repeated among Muslims in many towns around the world. This pillar of Islam begins with controversy among Muslims and ends with controversy. Shi`as have their own clerical system and their Imams look to Iran in this matter rather than Saudi Arabia. One wonders if this is the way our messenger Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions started and ended the holy month of Ramadan.

Since the Quran prescribed fasting specifically in the month of Ramadan, it is important to know the significance of this special time. A special feature of the Quran is that whenever it gives a command for action, it also provides the wisdom behind it. It tells what the final result of that action will be in this world, if it is successfully carried out. In this way the Quran provides a pragmatic test for people to see whether or not they are moving toward that desired result. Regarding fasting, the Quran says:

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint . [al-Baqarah 2:183] Translation: Yusuf Ali

Regards

Parvez

www.parvez-video.com/insight/islam/ramadan/index.asp

Allama Parwez studied the Quran and the classics of Islam under the sole guidance of his grandfather. His other early teachers were Khateeb Jamia Masjid Batala Maulana Mohammad Ibrahim and his younger brother Maulana Zafrul Haq, two celebrities of the time. He completed his high school studies from "A Lady of England" High School Batala in 1921 and graduated from the Punjab University in 1934



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