

Contrary Opinions – Your Most Valuable Resource

“Learn from the mistakes of others, you can’t possibly live long enough to make them all yourself.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

How do you react when someone disagrees with you? Are you defensive? Are your feelings hurt? Probably, but think about it, if people agree with you, what have you learned? I was having dinner one evening with my friend Robert Elsner, a brilliant engineer. I mentioned an idea I had for my book. Robert looked me in the eye and said “Roy, I don’t agree with you.” He then explained his rationale. Internally, my first reaction was defensive. I thought I had a pretty good idea, and he was telling me it was not good. Instead of arguing my position I listened to his perspective and tucked it away in the back of my brain. Over the next few days I thought about what he had said and tried to think of some logical reason why my idea was a good one. Eventually I modified the idea and it fit much better. By disagreeing with me, Robert forced me to think and re-evaluate. Had he had simply agreed with me, I would have learned nothing. I trust Robert. He was not disagreeing with me to criticize me personally. He simply had a different opinion, and he voiced it diplomatically out of friendship.



When someone agrees with you, you learn nothing

Small businesses are started by those who think that because they like a product or service, everyone will like it. Just because people need something doesn’t necessarily mean they want it. If you “bounce” your business idea off of friends and family, too often they will tell you it’s great even if they think it isn’t so great. Why; because they don’t want to discourage you or hurt your feelings.

If you are planning to go into a new business, or make significant changes in your existing business, find a friend who will lovingly and caringly disagree with you. Just because someone disagrees with you doesn’t make them right, but it should force you to think and re-evaluate your position. If you do not have a positive logical argument why you are right then, you need to make a change. I’m not talking about getting alternative

opinions from negative people who don't have your best interest at heart. You don't need negative people in your life or your business. Robert's candor helped me to refine my idea and improve it.

When you find someone whom you can trust and respect and who will offer up divergent opinions and contrasting views, you have found a valuable ally.



Find Someone Who Disagrees With Your Idea