

Avoid Political Pitfalls When Talking, Working and Posting by [Anna Post](#)

With the presidential election just weeks away, it's hard to tune in or log on without being reminded that it's election season. Even though the classic advice is "never discuss politics or religion," people are passionate about the candidates and issues they support and want to share that passion with others. These subjects can stimulate lively conversation; they can also stir deep-seated convictions with enthusiastic proponents on opposing sides. Keeping a conversation from escalating into a disagreement or worse is essential to civil conversation, especially in the workplace. Here are my tips for polite, constructive political dialogue at work:

1. Decide on the goal of the conversation.

Consider the setting and audience before wading into the water cooler fray about new health care legislation. Think about the purpose of the conversation and whether you should even be having it at work. Are you seeking information? Hoping to change minds? Venting frustration?

2. Watch your feed. Whether it's a personal blog, your Facebook page, Twitter feed or LinkedIn, any social media that connects you to business colleagues or prospects isn't the place to post diatribes that attack one political party or an individual candidate. According to a recent [Intel study](#)

on mobile etiquette and digital sharing, 24 percent of U.S. adults share political opinions online and 34 percent of U.S. adults share information online about current events. More importantly, 39 percent of U.S. adults say they choose not to associate with people whose opinions they disagree with online.

3. Beware of the "overshare."

When you post political opinions or information online, there's a good chance that part of your audience is cringing. The Intel Mobile Etiquette survey also found that 90 percent of U.S. adults think others share too much information online, and 23 percent say that their top "overshare" pet peeve is reading information about touchy subjects, such as politics, on others' social media posts.

4. Assume nothing.

No matter how perceptive you think you are, you can't possibly know someone else's personal beliefs. Don't presume that someone agrees with you--or disagrees, for that matter. One-word responses are a sign of polite disinterest.

5. Know when to "agree to disagree." If you do find yourself in a political debate with a project manager from down the hall and it's getting heated, you can say, "Well, we obviously don't agree on this one and we may not change each other's minds. Let's move on to something else." And then change the subject.

The best political conversation is one where the participants can gain deeper or broader knowledge while enjoying the thrust and parry of a lively exchange. For more from Anna Post on how to talk politics, check out [this article](#).