



# The Politics of Hope Ezine

## *“Helping Ordinary Citizens Become Extraordinary Public Leaders”*



### **Do You Want to Convince or Connect?**

By Donna Zajonc  
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I used to think the ability to convince others of my way of thinking was the mark of a great leader. As a young woman in public office, I thought I needed to demonstrate my power and strength by convincing others of my point of view. Let's just say I was very attached to my opinion.

A funny thing happened on the way to growing up. A wise soul once asked me, “Do you want to convince or do you want to connect?” That simple phrase hit me up the side of the head and rearranged my notion of effective leadership in a lasting way.

I soon realized that making a deposit in the “relationship bank account” would get me higher returns in the long run and make me a far more successful leader. More importantly, I became aware of my addictive need to be right. Underneath my need to be right I discovered a deeper insecurity---people might find out I really didn't know what I was doing!

**This is the paradox of the judgmental self. The more we demand that others agree with us, the more we are covering up our own insecurities. Leaders who are secure in their own self-identity and have healthy egos do not need to make others wrong. In fact, they look at those who disagree with them as an opportunity to learn and discover what they don't know.**

When we spend a lot of energy convincing others that we are right and they are wrong, we may not notice how much judging, blaming, resentment and anger might control our life. A leader who is addicted to being right will never be effective in the long run, nor will they be happy in life.

**In today's complex world, isn't it a little arrogant to think that we know best all the time?** How can we possibly have all the answers to deal with all that comes at us in one day? We can't. All the more reason we need to learn the balance between forming an opinion, sharing that opinion and remaining open to other possibilities.

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Many leaders fear they will be accused of being “soft” if they are not decisive so they attempt to convince others that they are right, rarely listen and dominate conversations. This is the quickest way for quality people to leave the organization or the team. No one wants an arrogant leader shutting down their creative ideas and no organization can afford to have only one person thinking for the team.

When we choose to connect with others, we are building trusting personal relationships that will transcend the particular issue at hand. Our ability to listen, build common ground and our ability to learn from each other will expand.

Here are a few tips about how to move from “Convincing” to “Connecting:”

- ◆ Notice how often you judge others and not just their ideas but also how often you judge their dress, or lifestyle or hairstyle or on and on...
- ◆ Avoid being critical of yourself once you begin to notice how often you judge. Better to smile and notice your judgmental habits rather than deny them. Awareness is the key to developing any new habit.
- ◆ “Ask first and tell second.” This is another simple phrase that brings profound results. Your team and others working with you will begin to trust that you actually do want their opinion if you ask first and tell second!
- ◆ When you are in the convincing mode ask yourself, “What am I trying to control?” This will give you a clue to what is driving your need to be right and allow you to face the fear that is controlling you.

**Our society values strong and decisive leaders. This is a by-product of our individualistic society and can fool us into thinking that convincing others that we are right and they are wrong is the path to successful leadership.**

Before you go into the next meeting or next conversation ask yourself, “Do I want to connect, or do I want to convince?” How you answer that question will give you a clue about what you want to accomplish in the conversation. Effective leaders connect more often than convince and dig for diverse perspectives in order to achieve more effective results



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