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By Chad Graham

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BUSINESS NEWS THAT GETS PEOPLE TALKING

THE BUSINESS BUZZ

Produced by Chad Graham • chad.graham@arizonarepublic.com • Blog: www.azcentral.com/Members/Blogs/TheBuzz

blog spot

Optimism is to blame

Greed — and its crafty sibling, speculation — are the designated culprits for the ongoing financial crisis, but another, much admired, habit of mind should get its share of the blame: the delusional optimism of mainstream, all-American, positive thinking.

As promoted by Oprah, scores of megachurch pastors and an endless flow of self-help best-sellers, the idea is to firmly believe that you will get what you want. They say it will make you feel better to do so, and because thinking things, “visualizing” them — ardently and with concentration — actually makes them happen.

You will be able to pay that adjustable-rate mortgage or, at the other end of the transaction, turn thousands of bad mortgages into giga-profits, the reasoning goes, if only you truly believe that you can.

— Barbara Ehrenreich

To read the full post, go to ehrenreich.blogs.com.

SOUND OFF

Today's topic: Is it ever a good idea to discuss politics in the workplace? E-mail your response, with your full name and telephone number, to aztalkbiz@azcentral.com.

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THE PROBLEM WITH ...

OFFICE POLITICS



Keith Guion works for a Phoenix advertising agency and loves to talk politics at work.

“I believe people should be educated before they vote, and a lot of people aren’t educated,” he said, adding that it’s important to be respectful about it. “You’ve got to act like a professional adult.”

With a little more than a month before the presidential election, The Buzz imagines plenty of Valley offices are wrapped in political discourse.

Talk about a headache for some human-resources departments and the portion of workers who’d rather eat mud than yap about who they’re voting for.

“I know some people would

say don’t be so uptight about (political debate at work) and let it go, but there’s a lot of passion around people’s political views, so I think it’s a dangerous place to go,” warns Aaron Witsoe, president of Creative Business Resources.

The Phoenix-based company provides HR services to small and medium-sized firms. While the culture of some companies can encourage healthy political debate, Witsoe said workers should think twice before holding a convention in a cubicle.

“When the election is over, the damage is still there because those employees work together,” he said.

Here are Witsoe’s other tips:

» **Keep it quick.** Political

conversations should last less than five minutes. You don’t want to have to explain to a boss why you’ve participated in a half-hour debate and neglected work.

» **Play fair.** Managers must uniformly enforce policies banning political discussions. Disciplining one employee and not another can result in employees thinking the boss sides with a particular political view.

» **Leave posters at home.** Avoid allowing employees to hang political posters on their desks or cubicles. The content on political materials is not always appropriate, and if you allow one employee to display the posters and not another, it could be considered discrimination.



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