

Cultivating Culture: How Board Members Can Promote Civility in the Boardroom

We have all heard the reports of rancor in public board meetings, but what can you do to bring a positive culture to the board room?

Creating a culture in the boardroom is a deliberate act. Civil boardrooms may lead to a more civil and productive community. Here are the tools you need to cultivate a civil culture in your boardroom:



1. Slow down and be present in your own life

Coming to the board meeting in a relaxed frame of mind fosters more positive communication.



5. Disagree graciously and refrain from arguing

Disagreements are inevitable in a boardroom; extending grace to other speakers and stating your position based on data or facts helps others hear your argument.



2. Listen to the voice of empathy

Putting yourself in someone else's shoes may help you respond positively rather than in anger.



6. Get to know the people around you

Public meetings allow for little conversation outside of the business of the board, but taking time to learn about your fellow board members can ease tensions and result in better discussion about business topics.



3. Keep a positive attitude

It's important to assume positive intent. Other board members want the best for the district even if you disagree on what that is; finding common ground is helpful.



7. Pay attention to the small things

Politeness counts. Thanking speakers for their presentations, attending to civility and kindnesses is the foundation of a positive board culture.



4. Respect others and grant them plenty of validation

Always be respectful in your comments and conversation. To encourage civility, thank the speaker for their thoughtful comments or tone. Build on the positive.



8. Demands are not productive

When speaking to administrators, fellow board members, or a stakeholder, it is best to frame needs as a request rather than a demand.

Impacting the culture of a board is a slow process, but it can be done. As educational and community leaders it is incumbent on boards to set the example for politeness and respect.

It may seem futile to try to create a culture when elections change the makeup of the board yearly; using a board portal, such as [Diligent Community](#), to codify decisions and procedures creates a foundation for the board to always be moving forward.

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