

REPUBLICANS UNITED

Stand Together. Stay Together. Win Together.

By Rachel Woods

March 2010 Edition

The millions of people who watched the Super Bowl recently demonstrate just how much our society values sport. We cannot get enough of it. The truth is we are socialized from a very young age to value and reward winners. And this is not always a bad thing. As Republicans, we recognize that competition makes our market and our election system great. However, there are times to compete and there are times to collaborate. Unfortunately, we often compete when we should collaborate. Sometimes Republicans forget that we are on the same team.

DREADED REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES. February and March are particularly tough months for Republicans in contested races during a primary election cycle. The fire of conflict within the party blazes strongest just before Election Day. When that moment finally comes and the results are in, the fire blazes still. Suddenly, Republican candidates for the general election are certain, and they are not always the candidates of our choice. Undoubtedly, this can be a tough transition time for many.

But, we are living in a crucial time in which the future of our country weighs in the balance. We must remain united to effectively fight for an America that we recognize at the end of the day. So what can we do? We can choose to focus on those interests we have in common. It is a choice – a choice we all *can* and *must* make.

THE STORY OF THE ORANGE. The “Story of the Orange” is a simple and classic negotiation tale from which Republicans can take lessons. The story has been told many ways. This is the version I was told....Two sisters were in a kitchen arguing over the last orange in the refrigerator. Their father entered to see what the commotion was all about. He discovered that his daughters both wanted the last orange, so he took out a knife and SLICE! Problem solved. He handed each daughter one half of the orange. Later, he found one of the girls squeezing the juice from the orange into a glass to drink. Her sister was grating her half of the orange, because she needed the peel for a dish she was baking.

LESSONS FOR REPUBLICANS. What’s wrong with this scenario? Dad assumed that the girls’ interests were incompatible, just because they were in a dispute and it seemed impossible to agree. Usually, conflicts can appear this way until parties communicate with each other and discover underlying interests. Each party could have been 100% satisfied instead of 50% satisfied if someone would have just asked the question, “Why do you need it?” We assume the other side’s interests our incompatible with our

own, and unfortunately our results usually reflect our expectations.

A REPUBLICAN CHALLENGE. How can we make sure we do not overlook compatible interests among our fellow Republicans? First, we should beware of our own assumptions about what is possible among Republicans. We should never assume we understand the intentions of other people or organizations. We should instead ask more questions. Seek to genuinely learn about and to understand others. As we enter the month of March, remember the simple story of the orange. When you find yourself dug down deep in a position, stop and ask the other side questions such as, “Why? Why not? What specifically do you need?” Someone has to break the cycle. Seek to understand the needs, desires, concerns and/or fears of other Republicans and share yours, in order to discover the underlying interests that you share.

Brainstorm opportunities that you have in your own sphere of influence to bring Republicans together in your organization or community and then take action! If you are in a position to talk with leaders of other organizations, share your mission statements and annual goals. An increase in communication and a free flow of information typically builds trust. Take them an orange! You may end up with joint teams tackling voter registration, block walking or phone calling. Why duplicate efforts? Be creative! Maybe you could create a common motto, such as, “Remember Massachusetts!” After all, if the Republicans of Massachusetts could find common ground and work together to elect a Republican U.S. Senator after the state’s beloved Ted Kennedy served 47 years, *anything* is possible if we work together in Texas.

And what if your candidate does not win? Choose grace. Pay a visit to the winner’s camp and say, “Congratulations. Where do I sign up?” You may have to drag a few of your friends along kicking and screaming, but they will be glad you did. After all, if this seems like too much of a switch, too soon, then just imagine the kind of quick switch Obama has planned for our country. This image will remind you that even Republicans, with whom you have subtle differences, are thankfully on the same team and are even worth fighting for.

Attorney-Mediator and President of Leadership Trek Corporation (LTrek), Rachel Woods, currently serves as the TFRW Chairman of Leadership Development. Rachel has helped executive teams to enhance individual and group negotiation and conflict management performance as a trainer, consultant and executive coach. She has served as a Lecturer of Negotiation and Conflict Resolution for the Baylor Business School MBA Program. Rachel has been a mediator since 1999 and was trained to teach negotiation in organizations at the Harvard Law School Project on Negotiation in Cambridge, MA. Email: GOPUnited@aol.com