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## Embracing the Power of Productive Disagreement



This month, I thought I'd talk a bit about the value of disagreement. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that I prefer the challenges of alternative ideas. In my view, disagreement is not the enemy of progress—disconnection is.

As facilitators, we know that disagreement is not only natural but necessary. It signals that people are engaged, thinking critically, and bringing their lived experiences into the conversation. However, how we navigate disagreement determines whether it becomes a wedge that divides or a bridge that unites.

This month, let's focus on the art of finding common ground—not by forcing agreement, but by surfacing the shared values and interests that often lie beneath the surface of even the most passionate debates. This is the deeper work of facilitation: helping people move from positions to principles, from defensiveness to dialogue, and from ideology to idea exchange.

When disagreement flares up in a group, it can trigger discomfort—for participants and facilitators alike. But within that discomfort lies opportunity. Our role is not to

eliminate tension, but to hold it constructively. We ask the questions that others might avoid. We slow things down when people want to rush to judgment. We listen for what is *not* being said as much as what is.

Finding common ground is *not* about settling for the lowest common denominator. It's about revealing the shared aspirations that people may have forgotten in the heat of the moment. It's about helping teams see that disagreement is *not* disloyalty—and that curiosity can be productive beyond certainty.

Here are a few strategies we've found helpful:

- **Name the disagreement without judgment.** Sometimes just saying, “I’m hearing a few different perspectives here” can ease the emotional charge in the room and allow people to step back from their positions.
- **Shift from “either/or” to “both/and” thinking.** Invite people to consider what’s valid in the perspectives they *don’t* hold. Ask, “What might be true in both of these views?”
- **Use visual tools to map alignment.** Whether it’s a Venn diagram, decision matrix, or sticky-note clustering, visuals can help make points of agreement and divergence visible—and less personal.
- **Return to the shared purpose.** When conversations get stuck, gently remind the group of what brought them together. Ask, “What are we ultimately trying to accomplish here?” Reconnecting to purpose can realign people’s energy.
- **Encourage reflection.** Sometimes, stepping back is more powerful than pushing forward. A brief journaling prompt or moment of silence can shift the emotional tone and re-open a pathway toward empathy.

In polarized environments—whether organizational or societal—these facilitative skills are more essential than ever. Finding common ground does not mean avoiding complexity. It means embracing it with intention, skill, and care.

This month, we invite you to reflect on a recent time you navigated a disagreement. What worked? What challenged you? And where did you find the opening that led the group forward?

As always, thank you for the important work you do. You are not just guiding meetings—you’re shaping cultures, building trust, and creating spaces where understanding can flourish even in the face of difference.

We hope this edition gives you both tools and inspiration to continue standing in that vital space—between differing voices—with clarity, courage, and compassion.

Warmly,  
**Diana Gurwicz**

## April 30th Webinar: *The Certified Master Facilitator® Journey*



Wednesday, April 30 | 🕒 1:00–2:00 PM ET

Are you ready to take your facilitation skills to the next level?

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### Speakers:

- ✦ *Diana Gurwicz*, CMF® and INIFAC Board Member
- ✦ *David Stargel*, CEO of Leadership Strategies

Together, they'll walk you through the certification process, the core competencies evaluated, and how Leadership Strategies' accredited courses can help you prepare.

### What you'll learn:

- What sets the CMF® apart and how to qualify
- The benefits of becoming a CMF®
- How Leadership Strategies supports your journey

- Live Q&A with current Certified Master Facilitators®

**Who should attend?**

- ✓ Experienced facilitators
- ✓ Internal leaders and HR professionals
- ✓ Consultants looking to stand out in a competitive market

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