

Read the extract from a meeting in a household products company. Antoine (A), Brigitte (B) and Chris (C) are discussing their company's marketing strategy.

- 5 A: We need to do something radical to develop our brands. The retailers are becoming more and more powerful – they buy from us for whatever price they want, and sell to the public for whatever price they want.
- 10 B: Absolutely. Our profit margins are getting thinner and thinner.
- 15 C: I totally agree with you about the power of the retailers. And it's not just their pricing power – it's also their own-label products. Why should people pay more for branded items like ours?
- 20 A: Basically, we have to look at branding in a whole new way. In my opinion, we have to go beyond market research, beyond talking about quality, and beyond clever advertising slogans. What I'm trying to say is we need to make an emotional connection with consumers. We need consumers to love us, not just to need us.
- 25 B: I'm not so sure about that. We sell detergents and things for the home. How emotional are cleaning products? We're not a company like Apple or Nike who make exciting, lifestyle products. What do you think, Chris?
- 30 C: It seems to me that we have to do something – we can't just carry on as we are. It may be true that our products aren't very exciting, but we also have to consider that household products are an important part of family life, and families are near the centre of our emotions. Actually, I do think our advertising could appeal more to people's emotions.
- 35 B: OK, OK. You're probably right. But what did you have in mind, Antoine?
- 40 A: We need a new 'face' for our brands. A celebrity. Someone who the public loves. To put it simply, we need the most famous football player in the world to appear on screen, using our products.
- 45 B: Really? Do you think so? You think that if a famous footballer cleans their teeth and washes the floor, using our products, the public will love us? I think they will laugh at us, and at the footballer.
- C: Obviously it would have to be done carefully, and a footballer may not be the best choice. Perhaps a film star from romantic comedy movies would be better. But in general I like Antoine's idea.
- B: OK, I can see what you mean, but don't you think this is all going to be very expensive?
- A: That's true. It will be. But from my point of view it's worth it. An emotional connection is the only way to justify a premium price.

The phrases you need

Asking for opinions

What do you think, Chris?
Chris, what's your opinion?
What did you have in mind?

Giving an opinion

What I'm trying to say is ... / The point is ...
In my opinion ... / The way I see it ...
Basically ... / Essentially ...
Actually ... / As a matter of fact ...
Obviously ... / Clearly ...
In general ... / Overall ...
To put it simply ... / In short ...

Giving an opinion (more carefully)

It seems to me that ...
I tend to feel that ...
From my point of view ...

Agreeing

That's true.
I totally agree with you. / Absolutely.
It's not just ... , it's also ...
You're probably right.

Agreeing partially

I agree up to a point, but ...
OK, I can see what you mean, but don't you think ... ?
It may be true that ... , but we also have to consider ...

Disagreeing

Really? Do you think so?
I'm not so sure about that.
I'm sorry, that's not how I see it.
I really can't agree with you there.

- Notice the different ways to give an opinion in the box above. Many of these phrases appear in the extract.
- Notice the different ways to agree and disagree above. Many of these phrases appear in the extract.



Exercises

57.1 Underline the correct words in italics.

- Chris, *what / how* is your opinion?
- What did you have *in mind / in your mind*?
- It *seems me / seems to me* that we have to do something – we can't just carry on as we are.
- From *my view / my point of view*, it's worth it.
- I am agree / I agree* with you.
- You're right / You have reason*.
- I agree *to a point / up to a point*, but ...
- I can see what *you mean / you're meaning*, but don't you think this is going to be very expensive?
- It *may / can* be true that our products aren't very exciting, but we also have to consider ...
- I'm not so sure *with / about* that.

57.2 Look at the extracts from meetings below. Write a phrase from the box next to a phrase in italics with the same meaning. Be careful!

Actually Basically By the way However In general
In my opinion Luckily Obviously The point is In short

- On the other hand /* _____, there are some serious issues that we still haven't discussed.
- As a matter of fact /* _____, the project is three weeks behind schedule, not two.
- Fortunately /* _____, we have enough time.
- Clearly /* _____, they're not as cheap as other suppliers, but their quality and reliability is much better.
- Overall /* _____, it's a very positive proposal, but there are some important details that still need clarifying.
- What I'm trying to say is /* _____, June is a much better time to launch this product than April.
- Essentially /* _____, it's a good idea as long as it's not too expensive.
- While we're on the subject /* _____, did you get a chance to read that report I sent you?
- The way I see it /* _____, the whole thing is a complete waste of time.
- To put it simply /* _____, profits are falling and costs are rising and we have to do something – fast.

57.3 Write one of these next to each sentence below: *Polite disagreement, Strong disagreement, Not grammatically possible.*

- I really can't agree with you. _____
- I can't really agree with you. _____
- I can't agree really with you. _____

57.4 Put the phrases below into order: 1 is the most polite disagreement, and 4 is the strongest disagreement.

- I'm sorry, that's not how I see it.
 Really? Do you think so?
 I'm not so sure about that.
 I really can't agree with you there.

57.5 'I think we need to make an emotional connection with consumers.' Study the different replies a–g and then do the exercise below.

- a Yes, just like Apple or Nike.
 → b Yes, you're right.
 → c Yes, they should love our products, not just need them.
 → d Maybe, but how can a household products company do that?
 → e Isn't that idea too abstract? Wouldn't it be better to focus on something more practical?
 → f Do you think so?
 → g I'm sorry, I don't agree with you.

Now match each reply with a technique for agreeing and disagreeing below.

Agreeing

- Using a standard phrase
- Saying the same thing again using different words
- Giving an example

Disagreeing

- Using a standard phrase
- Yes, but ...
- Asking an open question to show doubt
- Asking a negative question (where your own answer is clearly 'yes')

57.6 🎧 9 Speaking practice: listen and repeat. Repeat each phrase you hear and then listen to check.

