

January 17, 2017
Community Comment

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I've been thinking about what it means to have the last word. The power of having the last word and the social rules of having the last word.

What brought it to mind is the way in which President-elect Trump continues to use Twitter. He uses it to have the last word. (Please note—this is not a tirade for or against Trump, this is not about policy.)

He used it after debates to get in one last thought and therefore could not be questioned. Lately he uses it to have the last word against someone who has criticized him. I've heard people say it's as if he can't help himself.

So I thought about my own desires to have the last word in an argument. Because, I hate to admit it, I love having the last word. When I was doing some research on the subject, there were articles calling it a case of "egotism," a "syndrome," and even a "disease."

I've been actively working on not needing to be the last voice heard. Which sometimes leads me to use silence or a shrug—with a tilt of the head, pursed lips, eyes at a slit with forearms raised up—that sometimes resonates as loudly as if I had spoken the words. In my head I'm saying to myself, don't have the last word, don't have the last word. In other words, it doesn't come naturally.

I've worked most of my life in service positions—public relations and Chamber of Commerce roles. By virtue of the job, people who have worked in those professions rarely take the opportunity to have the last word. Nor should we. At least with the client.

The last word is so important, we have set up rules that apply to the very use of the last word.

In a trial, it is clearly laid out who gets the opening statement and who gets the final word. There have to be rules or it would be a free-for-all.

There's more than one style of debate. In the debates we often see, a flip of the coin determines who goes first. Whomever goes first then has to allow for a rebuttal. But sometimes that rebuttal gets a rebuttal—shorter than the first rebuttal, but the person who starts can sometimes have the last word.

This Community Comment could be considered a way to have the last word. Yes, you can comment on and disagree with what I say, but it's not nearly as powerful as the original opinion. That's why Trump's tweets fulfill his ego—even if people talk back to his tweet, the comments won't be seen by nearly the number of people who saw the original tweet. It's why Facebook doesn't work well for that—too much opportunity for uncontrolled comments connected to the post.

I'm off to watch “The Last Word” with Bill Maher. That's really the way to do it—have your very own show where you control the timing and the content.

This has been Erin Dunn with the last word—or Community Comment.