

12 Tips For More Successful Negotiations

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Whether you are working on a joint business venture, a new job, the price of an auto or your child's new curfew, negotiation is a key success skill. So how can you improve your negotiation skills? Here are a dozen techniques I try to practice in every negotiation.

1. Be Prepared

This is not just the motto of the Boy Scouts. Preparation is the single most important element in successful negotiations. In negotiations, information is power. The more relevant information you have, the better your position is. Preparation for your negotiations can not be overdone. Allow yourself adequate time to prepare prior entering any negotiation.

2. Understand The Needs Of Your "Adversary"

Your "adversary" in this context is the other party in the negotiation. Your relationship with this party may not normally be described as adversarial, for the purposes of this discussion we will view the negotiation as an adversarial relationship.

Put yourself in your adversary's shoes. What would they like to gain from the negotiation? Write down as many possible goals as you can think of. Prioritize your list in the order that you believe your adversary would. Identify the items you are willing to negotiate and those items which are nonnegotiable.

3. Know What Your Needs Are

What do you need out of the negotiations? More money? More flexibility? Better opportunities? Access to broader markets? Make a list of those things you would like to receive as a result of the negotiations. Refine and prioritize your list before starting the negotiation. Identify the items you are willing to negotiate and those items which are nonnegotiable. This list and the one created above will allow you to know what your true "bottom line" is.

4. Most Negotiations Involve On Going Relationships

With the exception of large purchases, most negotiations involve parties involved in a long term relationship. Whether the relationship is family, friends or business associates, it will be necessary to continue to deal with your "adversary" outside the context of the negotiation. Always be sensitive to the potential impact of your negotiations on these relationships.

5. Every Negotiation Is Different

Negotiating with a loved one is different than buying an automobile. Buying an automobile is different from negotiating with a new employer. The key difference is the relationship you wish to have with your adversary once the negotiations are complete. When negotiating with a loved one, you may be willing to make more concessions in the interest of harmony. When buying an automobile harmony may be less important than paying a fair price. Keep these intangibles in mind when creating and prioritizing your lists.

6. Understand The Situational Dynamics

In order to negotiate successfully, you must understand the dynamics of the situation. Identify your role and the role of your adversary. Know what are the "power positions" of each role. The dynamics of negotiating in a parent/child relationship are significantly different than the dynamics of an employer/employee negotiation. Be certain your desires are appropriate and achievable in terms of the situation.

7. Never Lie

Very few negotiations are a single contact event. With the possible exception of making large purchases, most parties involved in a negotiation have continued contact after the negotiations are completed. When you are caught in a lie, and it is inevitable that you will be, your future credibility will be lost.

It is possible to prepare to handle those areas where the need to lie may be felt. Examine the areas where your case is weak. Work to strengthen your case. In those areas that remain vulnerable, prepare how you wish to handle them should they arise.

8. Be Fair

Negotiation is not an "I win, you lose" proposition. Webster's dictionary defines negotiate as "to bring about by mutual agreement". The best negotiators I know seek to create "win - win" situations in every negotiation.

9. Don't Tip Your Hand

Uncertainty is your key advantage in most negotiations. If your adversary knows what you desire most, your negotiating position is not as strong. Play it close to the vest.

10. Be Flexible

Understand that negotiation frequently involves compromise. Look for creative solutions to the problems presented in the negotiation. Make tradeoffs in order to gain those elements you most desire.

11. Winning Isn't Everything

It is easy to get caught up in the competitive spirit of a negotiation. Remember that the point of negotiation is to reach a common agreement on how to move forward. While it may be possible to bludgeon your adversary into agreeing to your terms, this does not create the "mutual agreement" that makes for a truly successful negotiation.

12. Quit While You Are Ahead

Too many people have to see just how far they can push a negotiation. They have to try to get just one more concession. This attitude can be a deal breaker. The best negotiations are brief and to the point. Get agreement on your major points and stop. Additional items can be addressed in subsequent negotiations.

Tony L. Callahan is president of his own Internet marketing company, Link-Promote <http://www.link-promote.com> . He also publishes Web-Links Monthly, a newsletter full of tips, tricks, tools and techniques for successful web site promotions. To subscribe, send e-mail: <mailto:Web-Links-subscribe@topica.com>

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