

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR NEGOTIATING SKILLS

Many people look upon negotiating as an unpleasant, stressful chore to be avoided at all costs. And, because they're uncomfortable with negotiating and the confrontation and risk taking it entails, these people frequently get the short end in bargaining sessions.

Success in negotiations can increase your salary; get you a better position, gather support for your project or department; gain approval for a budget; and improve your chance for success on the job. Therefore, it pays to overcome your aversion to haggling and to improve your negotiating skills. You can gain immediate improvement simply by following the suggestions presented below.

Win-Win Negotiation

When most of us think of negotiating, we assume one of two things will happen: either we'll win or we will lose. But the pros don't look at it that way. They know that a successful negotiation is one in which *both* sides feel like winners...at least to some degree.

When you sit down to bargain, don't feel you have to win on every issue. Score major victories, but concede small points. Ask yourself, "What can I give up that will please the other person without putting a major dent in what I want out of this?"

Everything Is Negotiable

Many folks like to think that at certain policies and procedures are unchangeable, as commandments etched in stone. The fact is, nothing is unchangeable and everything is negotiable.

Knowing this fact is a powerful advantage in bargaining.

The Rule of 3

Before you sit down to bargain, you should have three figures or positions fixed firmly in your mind:

1. **The maximum**--the highest figure. The most you dare ask for without fear of "blowing away" your Opponent.
2. **The minimum**--the bottom line. The lowest figure you'd settle for.
3. **The goal**--a realistic figure you have a good chance of getting.

It pays to be optimistic and aim high when setting your maximum

When negotiating, try for your goal but be prepared to accept any offer between the minimum and the maximum. In some cases you may be surprised to find that the maximum is approved without argument. At other times, you may not even be granted the minimum amount. If this happens, you may be forced to consider more a drastic action such as not taking the listing.

YOU Set the Rules

The person who controls the negotiation is usually the one who has set the guidelines. Make sure this person is you.

To do this, say, "Before we get started, I'd like to go over the situation as it stands, and outline what we hope to accomplish here." Then go on to state things as you see them. The other person will generally agree, interjecting only to make a few minor modifications to what is basically your point of view. Thus, when you begin to negotiate, you're in control of the situation--because you defined it.

You Pick the Time and Place

To succeed in a negotiation, you must be prepared physically, mentally and psychically.

You set the day, time and place for the appointment. Don't be pushed into a time, date, etc you aren't comfortable with or not prepared for.

Say to the customer, "I have appointments but can see you on _____ at _____ time. You'll gain time to prepare your case. You'll also enjoy the advantage that comes from holding the negotiation at a time and place of your choosing.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR NEGOTIATING SKILLS

An Arsenal of Facts

The best way to prepare for a negotiation is to gather all the facts, statistics, documents and other evidence supporting your position

Printed evidence is especially potent. People are skeptical of oral arguments, but they assume that words printed in an article, book or report are true. Collect surveys, studies and article clippings, make copies, and highlight or underline key facts to make them leap off the page. Unleash this powerful support when you feel you are losing ground on a key point.

You may end up using only a small percentage of this material, but you'll negotiate with greater confidence knowing it is available. Experience proves that people who succeed in debates and negotiations are usually the ones who have the most facts.

Don't Be Hasty

Engineers and other people who think logically are eager to achieve what psychologists call "closure." Closure is a neat, final, well-defined solution to a problem. Technical people seek closure because they are trained to find precise solutions.

But life isn't an equation; negotiations and other "people problems" can't always be wrapped up as neatly as a mathematical proof or engineering design.

When negotiating, you should expect and be willing to accept at least some ambiguity in what is resolved.

The Human Touch

Above all, remember that you're dealing with human beings, not machines or chemicals.

You'll have an edge if you learn as much as you can about your opponents before you sit down to negotiate. Be aware of the personalities involved and adjust your "sales pitch" accordingly. Top executives, for example, usually want to get to the bottom line in a hurry. They are concerned with the "big picture" and don't want to waste time with minutia.

Technical managers, on the other hand, like to prove that they've kept up with the latest developments in the industry . . . even though they're managers now, and not working engineers. So, before they approve your project, they might want you to explain every detail down to the last nut, bolt, fan and filter.

The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once said, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility." You may dislike your opponent or be angry at him for blocking your way, but your negotiations with him should be civil and friendly not argumentative and hostile. Keep your cool when attacked, and respond with sound arguments and supporting facts, not an outburst of temper or shouting.

Try to highlight, whenever possible, the common goals and points of agreement between you. After all, this isn't war, it's a negotiation. The two of you have, for the most part, similar goals; it's your ideas on how to achieve these goals that differ. When responding, use phrases that show your empathy with the other person's position, such as "That's a good point" or "I agree with most of that, but . . ." Make the other person feel like a winner and both of you will be.

Compliments of
Alexis Bolin, ABR, CRS, CRP, ERC, ERS, PMN, SFR, SRES

KW Realty Gulf Coast
800 Langley Ave
Pensacola, FL 32504
Cell: 850-777-0275
Office: 850-478-5446
Email: alexis.bolingroup@gmail.com