

Negotiation

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Women who know how to bargain for what they want have stronger control over their lives. Women who don't feel helpless and insecure the minute they encounter a confrontation. To resolve difficulties and not be victimized by others, we need to learn how to negotiate.

To achieve and hold positions of power we must use information to affect the behavior of others. Most women have difficulty negotiating, not because they lack intelligence or ability, but because they have never been taught the basic principles.

Practically everything in life involves negotiation. For instance, when we rent, buy, sell, or introduce **an** idea, we are negotiating. When we have a dispute and enter into a discussion to settle it, we are negotiating. There is no such thing as a **born** negotiator, although some are better at it than others. Charismatic individuals **can** temporarily sway people, but the potential for misunderstanding later on is almost inevitable. If we want tangible results from interactions with others, we must communicate **our** position in an intelligently persuasive manner. Charm is no substitute for a knowledgeable approach to successful **bargaining**.

Plan for a discussion beforehand

The first principle of successful negotiation is to be prepared in advance. Never go into negotiation without knowing what you want the outcome to be. Having an agenda for discussion will set the tempo for what follows.

Putting together an agenda requires careful planning. An agenda can either disclose or conceal motives. Know what your real needs are, **your priorities**, and your deadline. Ask yourself, "What is the worst that can happen if we cannot reach an agreement?" Be sure that you have a definite alternative if you can't. The person who will benefit the most from any negotiation is the one with the least to lose.

Take the time to decide beforehand how issues can best be introduced. Whenever possible, devise a number of solutions. Nodding conveys understanding and could be misconstrued. Make an effort to subvert the natural inclination we all have to be agreeable with our body language.



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Evaluate the other party's body language

Identifying your opponent's body language is a way to determine her state of mind. If the other **party** is leaning forward toward you, there is

a good chance she is attentive and is taking in the information. If the other person is holding back her shoulders even slightly, it may indicate she is distracted and withdrawing from the conversation. Rapid, exaggerated, or abrupt movements could be interpreted as impatience or intolerance.

Another important clue to a person's attitude is eye contact. Observe the other person to determine if her eyes are focused on you, or if they are wandering, and avoiding eye contact.

Remain attentive. The message here is simple. Be particularly aware of the way your opponent's body is positioned during **your** conversation. A person **with** rigid posture is less flexible and will probably offer more resistance to your suggestions.

How to handle a difficult person

No matter how congenial you are, you may still encounter hostility. Don't allow negative emotions to surface. Doubt, fear, anger and rage will interfere with your good judgment. Whatever the provocation, it is counter-productive to give in to anger. When a destructive feeling strikes you, neutralize it by focusing on the real issues and your ultimate objective.

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Regardless of how obnoxious the other party is, never be abrasive. Stay centered and express yourself clearly and decisively. Desperate and irrational **behavior** by your opponent will more than likely result in their eventual embarrassment. If you remain calm, it will work to your advantage. The more confident you are, the less you have to do to prove your point. Think twice before you lose your temper; it is a sure sign of weakness. Be as pleasant as you can, and as unpleasant as you have to be. But, whatever you do, take care not to intimidate, threaten, accuse or humiliate the other party. Be direct but non-confrontational.

Timing is everything

Trying to rush negotiation inevitably puts one **party** in jeopardy. Always allow for acknowledgement time. Patience will ultimately pay off. **Transactions start with** all kinds of false assumptions and misconceptions. Both parties enter into negotiations assuming that their unrealistic goals will be easily met. The process of bargaining generally takes both parties by surprise. Each **party** is forced to re-evaluate their **priorities**. People require time to reconcile their original expectations with the reality of more tempered negotiated **aims**. Every negotiation deserves an acceptance phase: a time for both parties to adjust and to mentally prepare for compromise.

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Addressing the other party's concern

Never answer a question until you are sure what is being asked. Don't be pressured into answering every question. Some will not merit an immediate response. There may be certain questions that you may wish to delay answering until you know the issues and prepare an appropriate response. Know in advance what you do not want to reveal. Do not be annoyed if the other party interrupts you.

Study your opponent

You can tell a lot about a person by the way they orally express themselves. Listening is a skill that improves with practice, by isolating key words and phrases. Pay special attention to the person's mood. The way in which the other party phrases sentences indicates their emotional temperature. Weigh words carefully to determine if they are excited, angry, indifferent, or are trying to impress you. Obtain as much information as possible about the other person's value system, prejudices, likes and **dis-**

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likes. Establish where you both agree and where you disagree. Never interrupt or contradict your opponent. Be careful not to make gestures that indicate you agree with what is being said unless that is the case.

Study and evaluate the other party's plan

Never accept the other party's agenda without thinking about it **first**. Go over their suggested plan to evaluate **what** it does not include. Be skeptical of getting too good a deal. Consider all the advantages and disadvantages. If you have objections and do not like what is being presented, speak out. Make sure your viewpoint is understood as soon as possible—Failure could complicate talks and delay a settlement. Objections are always raised during negotiations; handle them the moment they arise rather than later, when they are more difficult to deal with.

Starting the negotiation

Your approach to negotiation is of utmost importance. Be mindful of the attitude you convey, never appear stressed, and speak in a **well**-modulated and deliberate voice. Show you are mentally alert, poised, and confident by the way you walk, sit and stand. Your tone of voice, facial **expressions**, and posture greatly affect the initial response to **you**.

Address the other **party** with tact and respect for their **dignity**. Show concern for their needs and **feelings**. It is a whole different world when you see it through your "opponent's" eyes. Begin on a positive note by immediately establishing what you both have in common. Employ friendly small talk and chat about the situation, the weather, or news. Establish

mutual interests in your warmup comments- they **can** be the basis for friendly communications in the future.

What your opponent wants from you

The other party wants many of the same things you do: to be heard, acknowledged, establish a sense of truth, and count on your **integrity**. She'll want to know you are making a sincere effort to extend yourself. She doesn't want to be manipulated or deal with surprises and last minute changes that drag negotiations on.

Bargaining is always a risk. Each of the parties involved has self-esteem at stake and that can be **intimidating**. People get anxious when they are vulnerable. Be thoughtful and do what you can to put each of you at ease.

Rehearse your agenda first

Once you establish your agenda, ask a friend, family member or associate to listen to your proposal and play devil's advocate. Request that they address hard-line questions to you. Your best defense is to answer these types of questions ahead of time. The more time you have to think about what you will be asked, the better your answers will be.

Handling objections

Answering objections is one of the most important details involved in closing a sale. Generally, there are two phases of an objection. The first is reluctance, a series of excuses made by your prospect during the opening part of the presentation for the purpose of guarding time. The second phase—the real objection—is given by the prospect after the presentation has been made.

The objections the prospect raises in the early stages of the negotiation rarely account for anything, aside from the usual negative, habitual response. She may react by saying, "I have all the merchandise I need," "I cannot afford it," or "I am in a hurry." Be careful not to question these opening excuses. It would be premature. Instead, shift the tone of the conversation to how you can help the prospect solve a problem. As any good salesperson **knows**, "People do not buy goods and services, they buy solutions to their problems."

To get beyond the **reluctancy** phase and help the prospect identify her needs, you must become a creative problem solver. You cannot overcome her objections if you don't know what the problems are **first**. Ask some questions and be prepared to listen carefully to the answers. With simple, probing questions, find out about the prospect's business or if the prospect is currently using merchandise or services like yours. Determine wants and needs by asking open-ended questions that help gain valuable information. such as who, what, why, where and how.

No prospect **will** immediately accept your point of **view**. Telling her that she made wrong decisions in the past—or commenting on faults—will not endear you to her.

The prospect's confidence is gained when you agree with the claims she is making about their specific problems. When you allow your prospect to express concerns, she begins to trust you. This is when you begin to **sway** her to your way of thinking. You must first plant a seed about how your product or **service** will better relate to her particular needs. State only a few points at a time. If what you are trying to say becomes cluttered with irrelevant remarks, you could end up being boring or confusing. Avoid technical terms that **are** meaning less and will only complicate communication. Speak in your natural conversational manner and **try** to eliminate the clutter of "sales talk."

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Objections generally are the result of ignorance or lack of complete understanding about the specific merchandise or service. A response that will lead the prospect in the direction of the sale can be formulated, if you plan in advance. One thought must be paramount to be successful: "This prospect needs me." If you can be interested in your prospect and work hard at helping her solve a problem or meet a need, that desire comes across. If your mind is filled with greed or sales to be closed, those thoughts are also conveyed. Confidence in you and cooperation in helping you close the sale **will** vanish.

Always investigate

Before negotiating, think about the person **with** whom you will be dealing. **Learn** as much as you can about your opponent's point of view in advance. Assumptions can be deceiving, although you must make assumptions about

the opposing party. The important thing to remember is that they are, at best, only uneducated guesses. Prove them right or wrong as soon as possible.

Become as familiar with the organizational structure as possible. Most importantly, find out the limit of their authority. If **superiors** have **final** authority over decisions, firmly establish who's approval will be **necessary** to **con-summate** the deal. Never negotiate with anyone who has no

authority. Be prepared to walk out if, at the last minute, the authority changes. If you understand the authority structure before you negotiate, you avoid being a victim.

Making concessions

Concessions have a way of shifting the balance of power; they should bring you closer to your goal. They provide you with bargaining leverage if you keep track of how many you have made. Never make a concession until you know **all** the demands. Know yourself well enough to understand what concessions you can live with. Whatever you claim you are ready to give up, you should be prepared to actually relinquish. Don't be too eager to make the first concession on an important issue. The other party will put greater value on things that are harder to get.

You do not have to match what the other party gives up. Nor are they obligated to match your concessions. Though you both may wish to be reasonable, you are **sure** to have difficulty doing so. Keep in mind that an eventual settlement is more important than individual issues.

Once the other party makes a concession, do not comment about the logic of the decision. If you do, it may be

misinterpreted. Such a statement during this critical period could upset the other party and put you in an awkward position. Focus on your next strategic move.

Get it in writing

No agreement—no matter how carefully negotiated—is worth much unless it is in writing. A promise is just a promise. It is also wise to remember that there are always loopholes in every contract. Examine the agreement closely before the final handshake.

Failing to reach a settlement

Nowhere is it written that all **final** agreements **are** fair and reasonable. There **are** times you cannot reach agreement and may have to settle for a **partial** solution. It may be better than nothing. What is important in negotiating is that the parties involved achieve some level of satisfaction, at least enough to encourage them to sign an agreement.

We have all heard the expression, "You win some, you lose some." Sometimes we fail for reasons unrelated to our efforts, mainly because of circumstances out of our control. Few really great negotiators have flawless records. Remember, failure is a point of view, not a result. If you cannot **arrive** at a settlement, it does not mean you have to abandon hope for any future discussions. Times change. Someday, you may have another opportunity to renegotiate.

Encouraging prospects to make a decision

Even if you convince your prospects of the value of your product or service, they may procrastinate in **making** a decision. Few of us feel comfortable making decisions. You must also create a sense of urgency to help them move swiftly through the decision making stage.

Availability, price, and loss of opportunity are the three major reasons why people will make an immediate decision to buy. Focus on these in sales presentation and you **will** be successful in sales transactions. ■



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