

BY ELDONNA LEWIS-FERNANDEZ

BECOME A MASTER NEGOTIATOR

Key strategies for emerging victorious

To help individuals maximize their bargaining prowess at work and in life, here are seven strategies for emerging victorious in any negotiation:

1 Project confidence through preparedness.

Many people think they need to show a certain kind of confidence, like being loud, bold, or brazen, to successfully negotiate a deal. Others think that a lot of experience is required to be effective.

Most of the time, however, it merely takes tenacity and preparation to ensure you are aptly equipped to find mutually desirable terms, anticipate objections, and discover what motivations will resonate with your opponent.

Projecting confidence also means having heart, which can be endearing to others whether or not you have years of negotiation experience. This can also result in the opposition having a less defensive stance, making it more amenable to your stipulations.

2 Understand that everything is negotiable.

When you think like a negotiator, everything is negotiable. It's a mindset you have to operate from in order to become not just good but a great negotiator.

When you decide that the terms for anything can be changed in your favor, a world of opportunity

presents itself. There will be rules to adhere to with each deal on the table, of course, which are needed to evade chaos and keep discussions on track.

Even rules, however, are negotiable. They can be modified if you simply propose an ethical, viable, and mutually beneficial alternative solution. Powerful negotiators are rule breakers.

3 Create a strong foundation by building relationships first.

This is probably one of the most important things an individual can do in regard to negotiation—and in work life, too.

Perhaps you have attended an event where you exchange your e-mail address or cellphone number a dozen times without having a real conversation with anyone. It's time to slow down and start making real connections with people—particularly those you might be involved with in a negotiation later on.

4 Ask for what you want.

There is one key truth in negotiations: You must ask for what you want. People naturally fear rejection or were taught not to be greedy as children,

so we instinctually refrain from asking for things in life.

In the workplace, rejection is never personal—it's merely a reflection that you did not present a viable argument substantiating why you should get what you want. If you hear "No," it's the offer that is being rejected, not you, so keep emotions in check and recalibrate your approach.

"No" often just reflects a need for more information. Take heart in knowing that people say "no" an average of three times before they say "yes." It is important to understand that if you don't ask, you don't get, and the way to master the art of rejection is to get rejected and keep asking. Most of the time, you will either receive what you want or an acceptable alternative.

5 Use the power of silence.

Talking too much is a surefire way to kill a deal. Never underestimate the power of silence. There's an old adage that says "he or she who speaks next loses." When discussing a deal, if you simply stop

talking and get comfortable with the awkwardness of silence, your ability to win your argument, sell the product, or get a concession in the negotiation increases significantly.

6 Document every thing. The importance of getting the final agreement in writing cannot be stressed enough. Even better, consult with a contracts attorney to review contractual documents or any that require a signature.

The purpose of a written agreement or contract is to provide protection for both sides and alleviate any ambiguity of terms.

Documenting the agreement eliminates perception problems and protects the interests of all parties involved.

7 Understand exactly what you are signing.

Before you sign anything, read what you are signing—no matter how large of a packet or information it entails.

Modern life is fast-paced and people are usually engaged in multiple things at once, making it difficult to focus and causing some to sign legal documents without reading them first. Make sure you read any agreement or contract in full to ensure you are not confirming terms you will regret and cannot undo, which can cause problems for your future. **PM**



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