

# SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

By: Robert S. Sher

Recently a client called me with a dilemma; some of his sales people had been having trouble closing transactions and he needed some assistance helping them improve their negotiating skills.

I met with some of the sales staff and immediately realized the challenge ahead of this company. The staff had lost its focus. They were not paying attention to the basic rules of negotiating a sale of any kind. Instead, they were caught up in this negative gloom and doom talk about the economy and it was bringing everyone down.

As a result, they stopped looking for new opportunities and nixed potential deals that could have come to fruition. When they had opportunities to sell, they were making big mistakes like accepting offers immediately, whether or not the company could make any profits.

Sales started to plunge; they needed a big wake up call. This company, like many others, needed a “back to basics” lesson on the art of negotiating.

Here is my Top 10 list to negotiate your way to a good deal:

1. Always be prepared before any meeting. Do your homework. Research every person who is involved in the negotiating session. Information is a powerful tool, and far more reliable than instincts. Rehearse.
2. Know what motivates the other players before you begin negotiating. Some of us are motivated by fear, while others a simple desire to be liked, respected or greed.
3. Make sure you are negotiating on a level playing field. Only negotiate with decision makers. You don't want to be in a room working out details with someone who needs to get approval first from someone else.
4. Do not accept a proposal immediately; take it home with you and read it, then read it again, and then run it by someone else. Do this no matter how good a deal sounds, no matter how much you trust the person on the other end of the negotiating table.
5. It is okay to say no if yes does not seem right. You don't have to get involved in a business venture, sales contract, or anything else, just because it can be done, or it seems to be a good deal. It has to be right for you.

6. Everything is negotiable. Do not ever believe that the last offer is cut in stone. Everything has a price. Assume there is wiggle room in any contract, in any negotiation.
7. Be cautious of those who come into the process late. You should only do business with people who want to be at the table with you. Perhaps being late, missing deadlines, etc. is someone's way of botching the deal.
8. If there is benefit to all parties involved in any business transaction, a deal can always be made.
9. Be discreet. Starbucks is not the place to discuss your business matters. Negotiate all matters in a private setting where it cannot be overheard by nosey outsiders.
10. Allow the other side to talk first. The first offer might be better than you had anticipated.

In the end, we all want to negotiate with someone who will say yes to whatever we are asking for: a raise from the boss, a contract for work or an order for a product line. We negotiate to persuade the other person to agree to what we want, on our terms. It doesn't always work out the way we want because we are all motivated by different things; however, if you brush up on your negotiating techniques, and you play fair, and you treat people nicely in the process, you are more likely to get the big win. If you get stuck, seek outside help from a professional mediator, litigation attorney or business coach.

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