

# Improve Your Negotiation Skills NOW <sup>1, 2</sup>

By Mahmoud Desouky

## Turn your beliefs inside out

Consider yourself to be a hostage negotiator. The kidnapper demanded 10 million dollars and a car for escaping with 10 hostages. Do you believe the "win-win situation" OR "let's split the difference" technique applies here? Of course, you will not say "take only \$5 million and 5 hostages". You will instead demand that he leave the hostages unharmed and surrender.

## When do we negotiate?

Negotiation occurs everywhere there is a desire. I want you to accept the \$1 million USD offer, give me a discount on this shirt, give me a raise, or even go to bed.

## Why are some of us afraid of negotiating?

Before Negotiation, people feel the Adrenaline surge, fear of the unknown, or fear of leaving the group (which is part of our evolution).

To relax, remember that negotiation is not forcing your opponent to do something he does not want. Your opponent is not stupid. We will simply give him what we believe to be a FAIR price.

I was negotiating a price with a vendor, and he kept saying his minimum price was 1500 QAR. I listened and used the tactics you'll learn today, and we ended up with a fair price of 806 QAR (from 1500 to 806). He did not lose; he simply earned a fair price.

## Where should you concentrate your efforts during a negotiation?

During negotiations, we don't focus on "what he needs". Instead, we concentrate on "why he requires it".

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<sup>1</sup> How to cite this article: Desouky, M. (2023). Improve Your Negotiation Skills NOW, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue III, March.

<sup>2</sup> This article is based on a presentation by the author at the 2022 [Project Management South African \(PMSA\) Annual Conference](#) in November 2022. Article coordinated by PMSA, who approved its publication in the PMWJ.

Inside our skulls are two brains: a slow rational one for logic and a quick irrational one for emotional thinking.

Imagine you're moving in a mall and come across a nice suite. Immediately, your irrational brain made the decision to buy, and your rational brain started making excuses to justify the purchase, such as it's a good bargain, it's good for business,...etc. (Daniel Kahneman's book, *Thinking Fast and Slow*).

Use your opponent's hidden fears and desires, and keep in mind that humans are a collection of various emotions that drive them.

## **Psychology and negotiations?**

We always employ a technique called Tactical Empathy.

Empathy implies that you put yourself in his shoes and share his emotions, whereas **tactical empathy** implies that you see the world through his eyes and understand his situation (you don't have to agree, but just demonstrate that you understand his point of view).

Tactical empathy is so powerful because it manifests itself in your gestures, body language, and voice tone. It gives him a sense of understanding and acceptance, which is a natural human desire.

To use tactical empathy, we just listen. We don't listen to respond; we listen to unearth emotions within your opponent which cause him to lower his guard, allowing you to direct the negotiation.

It is natural to want to prove your point of view; it is human nature; however, this is not the goal of the negotiation. Your objective is to find information in his words. For example, your opponent may be under time constraints, have a plane to catch, or even a personal problem.

I was in a meeting about the supply of large equipment when the client refused all of our demands within the first five minutes. We discovered that he is afraid of future maintenance. We focused on his emotions rather than the contract clauses or logical proof, and it worked. We received his and his team's approval in less than an hour.

Now, let's talk about some foolproof tricks that will come in handy today.

- 1- When negotiating. Shut the conversation between you and yourself to give your opponent the impression that he is being "listened to" - that he is the center of

attention. ALWAYS LISTEN to what your opponent says and NEVER interrupt him.

- 2- Slow, calm voice establishes rapport and trust; and at all costs, avoid the ordering voice.
- 3- Make your shoulders and legs face your opponent directly, make eye contact, and make some gestures that show you are listening, such as moving your head or saying Ammmm, Ahhhh, wow, great, and so on. **MIRRORING**, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL. I cannot emphasize this enough.
- 4- Mirroring is the act of repeating the three most important words he said. Let me give you an example from my personal life.
  - “I’ll not go to school” My daughter said
  - “Why are you not going to school?” I replied.
  - “My friend upset me “she continued.
  - “upset you?“ I mirrored then silence
  - “She played with others, and left me alone” she said
  - “What you did when you were left alone?“ I mirrored with open ended question.

I kept playing this game with her until she agreed (on her own) to go to school.

- 5- Silence. It is difficult for humans to remain silent, so when you use it effectively, your opponent will begin to speak, and it will become your most used tactic.
- 6- When negotiating with someone in a higher position, remember to give him his prestige - people in positions of power like to feel they are on top.
- 7- In most cases, if your opponent uses the word (I), he cannot make a decision on his own; however, if he uses the word (we), he is a decision maker.
- 8- Be a human.
- 9- Your worst enemy in negotiation is your anger.
- 10- Never play dumb in negotiations.
- 11- Use odd figures. Use 67 USD instead of 70\$.

## Takeaways:

- Negotiation is a combination of art and science.
  - Before beginning, the super negotiator considers several scenarios for each step.
  - Remember that you should be the one to define what a win-win situation is.
  - If you win 70%, 60%, or even 50% of the time you negotiate, you have saved yourself and your company a lot of money; however, if you do not negotiate, you will lose 100% of the time.
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## About the Author



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