

# Ethical Negotiations



by Merna Skinner

**T**HE SAVVY NEGOTIATOR recognizes that using unethical tricks to win single deals does not build long-term relationships. Their client won't want to do business with them again if they resort to underhanded manipulation.

Many people put too much energy into manipulating others to get what they want instead of conducting a mutually respectful negotiation. I recommend approaching the other party with a solid strategy, remaining neutral until sufficient information about them is uncovered, and staying flexible when it comes to the give and take of actual bargaining and final deal-making.

So how do you differentiate between smart tactics and manipulative ploys? Tactics include methodical preparations for your meetings and careful interactions that delay any commitments on your part until the other person's needs are uncovered. Ploys are behaviors designed to throw off the other negotiator by catching them off-guard so that they are apt to agree to things while emotionally unnerved. These include deferring decisions to a higher authority to bide time, asking for more at the end of the negotiation, raising your voice to challenge a stated price, or pitting your offers against fictitious competitors.

## Become an Ethical Negotiator

Here are nine ways to negotiate that make people eager to work with you:

**1. Plan your pre-meeting strategy.** Know what you want, what you'll take, and what your "walk away" position is. During planning, set your aspirations high and learn all you can about the other negotiator. Ask, "What will they likely open with or ask for during the meeting?"

**2. List a full range of bargaining "currencies."** Compile a list of other items you may use in the negotiation. Currencies can include the timing of a final transaction, the support and service required, or the number of units you will take. The longer your list, the stronger your starting position.

**3. Research the other negotiator.** Find out as much as possible. Is she forceful? Does she have time constraints? If you know the other negotiator's style, you can modify how you communicate and improve rapport.

**4. Set a positive meeting climate.** Your goal is to be conversational, relational, and energetic. Sit at either a round table or 90 degrees from the other party. Body language should communicate receptivity and a willingness to listen to the other person.

**5. Bring an agenda that both parties can use.** Get agreement on the agenda. Ask, "Does this include everything we need to discuss?" If not, you must modify the agenda.

**6. Neutrally obtain information.** Probe with open-ended questions to gain information. Remain as non-judgmental as possible. Acknowledge everything but agree to little. Know what the other person values.

**7. State positions.** You and your fellow negotiator must state your respective positions. This often means talking price. Always get the other person to talk dollars first, because it generally gives you a stronger position.

**8. Bargain methodically.** Giving and receiving concessions is part of the process. For every concession you give, make sure that you receive one in return. Since most concessions occur at the end, retain some so you can trade.

**9. Agree in writing.** You should write a contract as soon as possible outlining agreements. If the final legal document will take some time, at least get a co-signed letter of agreement while you await detailed paperwork. **SME**

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***ACTION:** Use these nine ideas in your next negotiation.*