

ARTICLES

SIX KEYS TO NEGOTIATING SUCCESS

by [Bob Gibson](#)

We don't have a choice as to whether or not we negotiate. Our choice is whether we do it well or poorly. We're involved in negotiations every day as we sell products, services, ideas and ourselves. Supervisors negotiate with employees to motivate them. Employees negotiate for raises and promotions. Parents negotiate with children to get them to do their chores. Husbands and wives negotiate each time they decide how to spend the weekend or their tax refund.

These six keys to negotiating success, though focused on the sales process, can be applied to any form of business or personal negotiating:

1) Remember negotiations is an ongoing process, not an event. These relationships need to be nurtured over time. Often the outcome is determined way before the two parties sit down at the table.

2) Avoid a subservient mentality. Most people sell themselves short because they don't recognize the personal power they possess. You must believe the prospect needs what you're selling at least as much as you need the sale. Check your body language, tone of voice and word choices when you make your presentation.

3) Prepare to negotiate. Information is power. Research the history of the account, problems in the past, past profit margins and personal "hot buttons" of the decision maker. The more you know about the situation and the decision maker, the better your negotiating position is.

4) Determine the best and worst-case scenario for you and for the prospect before the negotiations begin. This may include range of price, delivery time and payment options. By projecting each party's highest and lowest expectations for a deal to take place, you'll often find that a compromise can be made within the area that overlaps.

5) Build value to increase your negotiating position. Set yourself apart from the competition by integrating your business process with the prospect's. Find out how their business works from the inside. For example, change the way you package or deliver your products or services to make it more convenient or profitable for the prospect. Businesses add value when they offer prospects a one-stop shopping concept (i.e., the financial planner who can bring in a trusted accountant or lawyer as a consultant when necessary or a printing firm that keeps graphic designers on call).

Once working with the business, keep track of every incident that adds value, such as special requests you fulfill. Make that known by bringing a written list to the next negotiating session. The more value you communicate, the more likely you'll be considered a better choice over your competitors.

6) Expect reciprocity. When you give something away, or concede on an element in the negotiations, always ask for something in return. Otherwise, you're training the other party to continue to want more while reducing the value of what you're conceding. By keeping that balance, you'll soon be perceived as an equal in the process. That's a crucial element to negotiating success.

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