




**WALK
TALK**

&

NEGOTIATE

LIKE
A
CEO


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As a professional speaker and an entrepreneur, good negotiation skills are critical. When talking to clients and speaking to audiences, it's up to you to set the stage for a future relationship and more business. After spending thousands of hours with CEOs, it is clear that chief decision makers think differently when on the threshold of making decisions. Not only do they have "WIIFM" ("What's in it for me?") running through their heads continuously, but they also know how to analyze a potential opportunity quickly and determine if they should move forward or back away.

Many speakers say they have something great to offer but they just can't negotiate well. Really? These are some of the traits of good negotiators:

- Confident, yet approachable and warm
- Knowledgeable, yet willing to learn
- Prepared, yet flexible
- Motivated, yet empathetic
- Big-picture focused, yet mindful of details

Do these qualities sound familiar? They should. They describe a majority of professional speakers. Here are ways chief decision makers think and what you can do to improve your negotiation outcomes overall. 

DON'T BE A ROOMBA®

Believe or not, one of my favorite anniversary gifts from my husband was a vacuum cleaner. This clever, self-automated robot device is called a Roomba®. Punch a button and it does the work. Our family enjoys watching it vacuum upstairs and how it safeguards itself when it gets close to the edge of the staircase. It has a height sensor that protects it and it backs away when it gets the top stair of the staircase. When we installed hardwood floors, there was a one-quarter inch height difference where the wood met the tile floor. Like the top of the stairs, the Roomba would back away when it got close to the threshold. The Roomba couldn't distinguish between a one-quarter inch adjustment and a 20-foot fall!

Does that happen to you when you are negotiating? Are you afraid to tell a potential client your fee for fear it will be too high and they won't hire you? This is a mistake I made early in my speaking career. When people inquired about my fee, I would ask, "What is your speaker budget for this event?"

This question implies that my fee might be negotiable and I avoided the question. Even if you have ways to negotiate your fee to accommodate your client's budget amount, they need to know what your fee is. The client still needs to hear your value in the marketplace to quantify your value. Now I say, "My fee is \$X,XXX. What is your speaker budget for this event?"

ASK QUESTIONS

CEOs know the power of questions. Top-level decision makers continuously make decisions, and questions help them funnel the truly important matters, such as:

- What do I want?
- Why?
- Is it worth it?

□ WHAT DO I WANT?

This question clarifies your position so that you can communicate it effectively

to others. It is one of the first questions that most decision makers ask. Know what constitutes a "win" for you. For instance, is the "win" in booking a spin-off, creating back-of-the-room sales, doing an awesome speech on video in front of a large audience, or getting your articles published in association promotional materials?

□ WHY?

What are the good business reasons for considering this opportunity? CEOs listen for ideas that can increase market share, retain people, increase profit, enhance the bottom line and offer other beneficial outcomes.

□ IS IT WORTH IT?

This may be the most valuable question you can ask CEOs. Is this course of action worth your time and effort? Is this the right thing to do, right now?

In many ways, questions are the language of CEOs. They use questions to determine the strength of your beliefs and to decide where to focus their attention. When talking to those decision makers, you should know what you want and articulate it succinctly. Talk in bullet points instead of offering the unabridged version of your programs and expertise.

ASK OUTRAGEOUSLY

One of the main reasons people do not achieve a successful outcome is that they don't ask for what they want. Ask outrageously—CEOs make outrageous requests all the time and get increased outcomes as a result.

If asking for what you want makes you nervous, start by making small "safe" requests. For example, ask for a

recommendation or request the names and contact information for all attendees, or seek another night's stay at a great location. What is the worst that can happen? You might hear "no" or "not at this time." However, you'll be surprised at how many times people will say "yes."

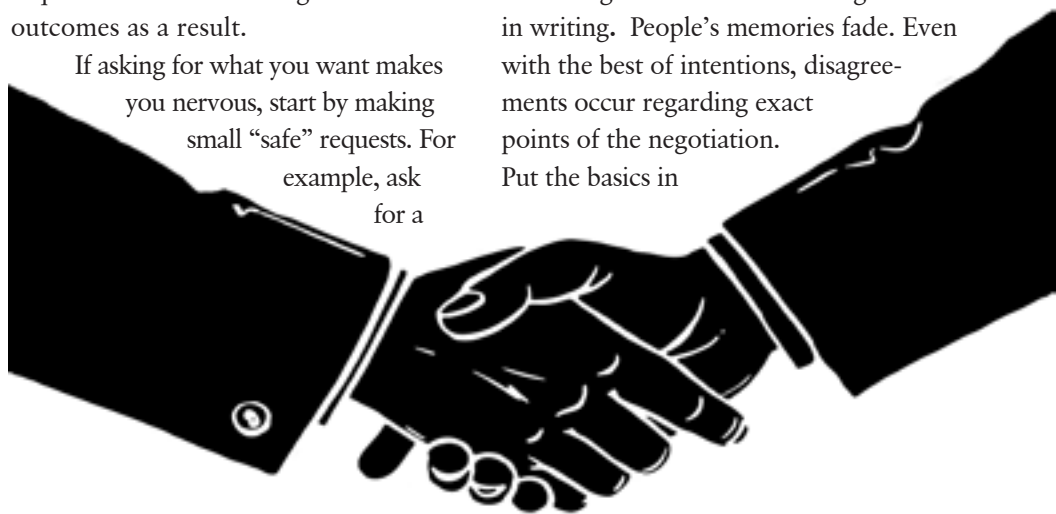
MAKE DECISIONS

CEOs like to make decisions. When possible, try to offer two or three options. Allow yourself the time to ask the right questions and get them answered before you invest money or time. Many speakers learn the details after they booked with clients, or find they cannot get out of a business relationship that is not delivering what was promised. In many negotiations, the devil truly is in the details.

Olympic skier-turned-professional speaker, Vince Poscente, CSP, CPAE, knows how to get the input of the decision maker when he is presenting. In addition to the pre-conference phone call, he schedules a breakfast with the CEO, vice president or decision maker who is championing the program on the day of his keynote. As Poscente explains it, "Excellence and customization are expected at this level. However, hearing what decisions they face goes the extra mile and allows the decision makers to make sure their message is heard."

COMMIT RESOURCES

After your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, then you can commit your time, talent, energy and finances. Smart negotiators record their agreement in writing. People's memories fade. Even with the best of intentions, disagreements occur regarding exact points of the negotiation. Put the basics in



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ASK

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writing as soon as possible, preferably while all parties are still together. Clear up any misunderstandings before they can become deal breakers later. Don't sign anything until you understand all of the language in what you are signing.

To know how to best commit your resources as a speaker, keep the following in mind:

- Realize the other side's limits.
- Identify where approval is needed.
- Don't flaunt a favorable power imbalance.
- Assist the other side in "selling" the deal to others.

Once you've answered these questions, separate the essential from the desires and figure out what will make the arrangement work for all parties.

If you are going to consider negotiating, don't itemize the package. "Negotiate the package, not the point,"

says Dianna Booher, CSP, CPAE, who is a prolific author and a brilliant CEO. Don't itemize the package. Typically, a client will say something like this:

"I don't have your fee of \$X,XXX. Will you accept \$XXX? Of course, we plan to buy books for the group of 300 to 500 people, and we expect that you'll probably charge us some sort of customization fee. My boss also said we'd like to license the audio recording for overseas groups. If this first program is well-received, we'd like you to keynote three more conferences in the fall."

"You might be tempted to accept the lower fee, thinking that you'll make up the difference on the sale of your books, etc., but once you agree to the lower keynote fee, things could change," Booher says. "In later conversations, lo and behold, the client decides to buy only 50 books, needs no customization, and cuts two conferences in the fall. But once you've already agreed to a lower keynote fee, it's difficult to take it back."

BULLET PROOF YOUR POSITION

Perhaps renowned author Dr. Seuss said it best, "You have to be smart and keep watching their feet. Because sometimes they stand on their tiptoes and cheat." In other words, develop a contingency plan to prevent negotiations from getting derailed.

Successful CEOs always have a back-up plan. What's the worst-case scenario and how would you handle it? What is the other party's worst-case scenario? Write down the percentage of likelihood that either scenario could occur.

Know your BATNA (best alternative to negotiated agreement) gives you power. The term BATNA was coined by Roger Fisher and William Ury, researchers with the Harvard Program on Negotiation. It is also a fancy term for having a "Plan B." A backup plan allows you to evaluate more logically and to walk away if needed.

ADJUST COURSE

In a coaching session, a CEO named "Bob" revealed some gut-wrenching information about having to lay off 30 percent of his work force. As an empathic negotiator, I immediately assumed "Bob" would need consoling. Wrong! His response was, "I had to adjust course. I simply don't have the luxury of second guessing or beating myself up. The rest of the people in this company need me to move forward."

Speakers often settle for less than they want in a negotiation because adjusting their course seems time consuming, difficult or risky. Or they suffer from "analysis paralysis," which may cost critical timing. Like Bob, you do not have the luxury of beating yourself up. Dwelling on past mistakes will take you off course and diminish your effectiveness. Make the best negotiation decision you can at the time. Later, review what worked, what didn't and move on.

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

One of the biggest fears is that you are going to leave something on the table or that there could have been a better deal. You might have been able to obtain a better outcome if you had more time or information. But you might also have risked having the deal falling apart, having the party go elsewhere, or having more time to find out better information to use against you.



From the courtroom to the boardroom, Linda Swindling, JD, CSP, knows firsthand about high-stakes communications and selling to the C-suite. A

recognized authority on negotiations, workplace issues and persuasive communication, Swindling is a television expert and a former employment attorney. She is the 2010-2011 president of NSA/North Texas, and has authored or co-authored 20 books and spent thousands of hours as a CEO advisor and facilitator. Contact her at linda@journeyon.com.