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BEHAVIORS TO AVOID IN NEGOTIATIONS

1. Not putting your agreement in writing

People's memories fade. Disagreements occur regarding exact points of the negotiation. As soon as possible, preferably while all parties are still together, put the basics in writing. Clear up any misunderstandings before they can become deal breakers later.

2. Making assumptions about others' motivators, wants or needs

Remember this...you don't know why people do what they do or exactly what they want. The same things that motivate you do not motivate other people. Their needs, wants and desires will differ from yours. (Reflect on your personal relationships if you need proof.) Ask the people you are negotiating with what they want or need and ask about their motivation.

3. Accepting first offer

Rarely is the first offer the best. Accepting the first offer says two things about you. First, you are overeager to reach a conclusion. Second, that you are not confident in your position. By not bartering, you also send a message to the other side that they have made a bad offer at the very beginning which they may try to retract. If a first offer is better than you anticipated, one of two things has happened. Either you are missing something of value in your evaluation of your position or the other party has not evaluated their position accurately. There are exceptions to this but always pause and think before reacting.

4. Becoming emotionally involved

Emotions can register as excitement, anger or even frustration. The saying "never let them see you sweat" is appropriate. Once any negotiation becomes personal instead of a business deal, you are in danger of coming out on the poor end of the agreement. Instead, take a break. Get your emotions under control or send in someone else to negotiate for you.

5. Not questioning

The more the other side talks the better your deal can be. Ask for explanations. Question the way values were arrived at. You can only determine the other side's motivations and true interests through questions. Ask, ask, ask.

6. Not asking for more or less

Shoot for the moon. Know what is reasonable and ask for a little bit more. No, it isn't greedy to ask for more. You never know when you might get a little extra. Also, if you don't, you have nothing left to barter with to get you to what you consider is a reasonable position.

7. Not holding something back for barter chip

Don't be surprised when the other party asks for "a little something extra" at the end. Know what

you have that you can barter with and that is not essential to your position. If you don't have to play that card, you have a bonus. If you do, it is not unexpected.

8. Believing everything you are told

Yes, it is true. Not everything you hear in this world is the truth and not everyone's version of the truth is accurate. Just because information is written or produced in a graph, does not make it valid. If what you are told "smells funny", is illogical or does not follow what you have been informed before, ask for independent support. Back to the basics: Ask, ask, ask.

9. Over-committing or over-attaching to process

This attachment to the process is why some people make bad deals when purchasing a car. It takes a lot of emotional energy to trade in an existing car, pick the color and model of a new car, and determine a price that they can afford. Many buyers find themselves so entrenched in the purchase process that they will agree to pay more or purchase undesired options rather than starting the buying hassle all over again.

10. Not willing to walk away

This behavior relates to attachment and commitment. Once you lose your ability to walk away from a deal, you have greatly decreased your power in any negotiation. Always leave yourself an out and know what your options are if the current negotiation does not work out.

A recognized authority on negotiations, workplace issues, and persuasive communication, Linda Byars Swindling, is an author, television expert, a former employment attorney, and a Certified Speaking Professional. As a chair for Vistage International, the World's Largest CEO Development Organization, Linda has more than 2,000 hours as a CEO advisor and facilitator. She can be reached at linda@lindaswindling.com or 972-416-3652.