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### **HOW TO PREPARE TO NEGOTIATE OR INFLUENCE**

Persuading others isn't difficult but it does take effort and thought. Preparing to influence others and understanding the limits and strategies of others takes time. Every negotiation should start by asking yourself these questions:

1. What do I want?
2. Why do I want it?
3. Do I want to invest my time and effort to get it?

#### **Be crystal clear**

Being crystal clear about the outcome you want to reach with any negotiation is crucial. Knowing what you want to achieve is the first step in achieving it. You need to know what constitutes a "win" or a stopping place for you. Once you achieve your goal, you can feel comfortable with quitting. Unfortunately, many people don't do the simple act of writing out their desired outcome. Without clarity you can flounder and not realize whether you should quit or continue. If you don't know what your goal is in a negotiation, how do you know if you're getting close to reaching it?

#### **Know your desired result and the reasons supporting it**

If asked what you are trying to achieve, you should be able to list not only the desired end result but reasons supporting why you want that goal. You'll be surprised how many people are willing to help you reach your goals if you tell them your rationale for wanting them. For instance, a boss that is aware of your desire to make more presentations and train others could help scout out opportunities or shift those responsibilities from a co-worker who doesn't like that performance aspect. If you are a good employee, it is in the boss's best interest to keep you happy, productive and doing work for which you are best suited.

#### **Determine if what you want is available**

Some people just don't know what they want when they begin. These people may not understand the elements of a deal or risk being vulnerable to one who knows what is at stake. As a practicing mediator and a recovering attorney, it still amazes me how many people can be in a lawsuit for years and not know "what" result they really want. Many times the result they desire cannot even be addressed by the court system. Here they waste hours, weeks, even months of time pursuing a process that doesn't get them what they want. It is hard to evaluate how near you are coming to achieving an outcome if you haven't defined what constitutes a "win." If you aren't aware of what you want, you won't know if something is inappropriate or even when to stop. Define where you are heading first.

### **Don't waste your time**

Also, be clear that where you are spending your time and effort is a good investment. Most of us don't have the time to chase down paths that are not fruitful. We don't have the time to waste on solutions that don't produce the required results.

### **Getting Over the Fear of Negotiating**

Most of us are afraid of the unknown. We are afraid of not being in control or being taken advantage of. One of the biggest problems is actually getting some people to understand that by negotiating you are not trying to cheat others, you are simply trying to get the best deal you can. You often see the same concerns or reluctance when people are having difficulty in sales. They don't want to appear greedy or undesirable or too manipulative.

The problem most people face is they plan on one approach and are flustered when a party takes a different stance than expected. Also, people are afraid of tricks and tactics. Very few tactics are effective. Most are amateurish and are structured to throw an opposing party emotionally. There may be flinching, sighing and yelling but if you stand your ground and know your position, you are going to be in much better shape than trying a counterattack.

The secret to good negotiation is to remain cool, calm and in control.

*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](mailto:linda@lindaswindling.com) or 972-416-3652.*