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TOUGH NEGOTIATIONS OR PERSUASIONS

There are a number of situations that come to mind. Here are a few:

The unpopular position. Some negotiations have less to do with the products or services offered and more to do with overcoming a public perception. Consider selling an expensive manufactured item like an aircraft or a piece of military equipment that is made in a country that is unpopular. For example, at one time some Americans didn't hold warm feelings for France or Germany. The governments of these countries opposed the United States' military action. Many of the competitors of these French and German produced their equipment in America with American workers. Competing with a politically unpopular product is a challenge. The potential buyers don't want to be seen as supporting an unpopular cause or, in some cases, unpatriotic.

Whether it is public opinion, politics or overcoming bad press, you must try to separate the emotional pulls from your offering. In this circumstance, you might acknowledge that governments are taking action but stress that the company is neutral in the affairs of politics. Your product or service has a superior history and special attention has always been given to American clients. Many businesses will overlook politics if the offering is superior. Some won't. You must find the purchasers who will.

Increasing price or taking something away from a customer. Negotiating with clients can be very challenging. It isn't easy to offer your clients less services or fewer gratis items while increasing the cost of the base product. Yet, this type of situation occurs all the time. The position becomes even more difficult if your competitors continue offering the same level of service. It's also hard to address customer needs that weren't met or explaining to a client why the order they placed will never be filled.

Laying an interest-based foundation for your relationship at the beginning is your best defense in this situation. Clients who believe that you are honest and looking out for their best interest are more likely to work with you when things don't go as planned.

You've got bad feelings or bad history. Persuading others who have a history of mistrust or another agenda is another difficult situation. Union leaders and management issues usually comes to mind. However, it might be military personnel working with civilian suppliers, volunteers working to persuade a government agency or representatives from various civil groups competing for restricted funds. Anytime people feel that one side may not understand or respect their perspective or position, influence becomes more difficult.

To resolve these types of issues, you must first find the common ground. There are usually joint benefits to co-operating, even if the benefit simply is understanding a different viewpoint. Respect for another's point of view, even if you strongly disagree, is the start to a solution here. Disagree without being disagreeable and watch the relations improve.

It affects your wallet. Probably the toughest business decisions are ones that have a risk of personal economic impact for you or a team. For instance, influencing a team decision, especially an unpopular one that could lead to job reduction, is very difficult. So is negotiating with your boss for more authority, recognition, face time, less responsibility and more communication because it deals directly with your earning ability. It is even difficult when you are negotiating for others, for instance, improved working conditions, better recognition of peers or more control over the use of resources.

In these instances, it helps to admit the truth or real condition. Yes, you understand that these changes could affect jobs in the future. Yes, you know your boss is extremely busy. Once awareness has been stated, present your request. Focus on why the change or request is merited and the ways you want to improve the relationship, condition or outcome to the extent possible. Make sure you point out any benefits that the other party gains by adopting this course of action.

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.