

What you are always Negotiating for...

by Cathy C. Bonczek

When I teach Negotiation skills, we often talk about all the potential “wins” and “losses” that are on the table. Examples are: **negotiating for price or fee, for position, for personnel, for timing, or for conditions.** It’s a juggling act, and you have to know what points and positions you’re willing to concede on, and what points will make you walk away from the table.

You even have to choose how you want the negotiation to end – do you want it to be a Win-Win or a Win-Lose scenario. In the former, everyone gets what they want and can walk away from the negotiating table feeling good about how it unfolded. In a Win-Lose scenario, there is a clear winner and a clear loser, so one party will walk away from the negotiating table feeling bruised.

I remind my clients that there’s one other issue that should always be on the table and that is: your relationship with the other party. **One goal of every negotiation should be to leave the table in a way that furthers your relationship – and allows for future business dealings.**

You may argue that in some negotiations you believe you will never see, or work with these people again. I caution you to be careful in that assessment – you never know when your paths may cross. I’m not saying that you shouldn’t try to win. I am saying that you should take care not to win at the expense of the future relationship.

In order to do that you need to make a careful plan in advance of the negotiation.

Ask yourself these questions, to start:

1. What are the future possibilities of business with the counterparty?
2. What do you want the immediate relationship with the counterparty to be?
3. What is the best possible outcome of the negotiation?
4. What is the worst possible outcome: the one that will make you walk away and end the negotiation?
5. What are the areas (being negotiated) that you feel you already agree on?
6. What are the areas you disagree on, and why do you think they hold those areas dear? In other words, what values or beliefs do they satisfy?
7. What are the words, issues or beliefs that will make them see red?
8. What are the words, issues or beliefs that will make YOU see red?
9. Of all the issues on the table, which are the ones that you can live without? Or live with in a diminished capacity?
10. Of all the issues on the table, which are the ones that you can’t compromise on?

Think carefully about how you want your counterparty to leave the room at the end of the negotiation. It’s likely that you will want them to leave feeling heard and respected. It’s okay if they admire you a little more than they did before, too!

Most important, think of every negotiation as the beginning of a relationship, not the end of one.

