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Why fight when you can negotiate?
All one needs is proper leverage.



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Captain Jack Sparrow.
Fictional character and the main protagonist of the Pirates of the Caribbean film series. The character was created by screenwriters Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio and is portrayed by Johnny Depp. The characterization of Sparrow is based on a combination of The Rolling Stones' guitarist Keith Richards and Looney Tunes cartoon character Pepé Le Pew.

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THE NEGOTIATION

Negotiations can conjure up images of trade delegations, hostage takings, and big business mergers.

However, the truth is that negotiation is also all around us, it is a fundamental part of life and business.

Knowing the basics will come in very handy whether it's deciding your vacation plans or negotiating your salary.

If you stick to the following tips, you'll likely find that you and the other party will walk away feeling as if you got a bargain.

1. *Prepare and know exactly what you want:* any good guide to negotiation stresses the importance of preparation.

However, anyone who has ever tried to prepare for it knows that it is trickier than it looks, as it is almost impossible to imagine all the potentialities that can arise in a rapidly changing situation.

To prepare yourself, as well as you can without getting overwhelmed, follow this next list of things to do:



- a. *Define your attainable maximum, not the likely outcome:* rather than focusing on the terms you think the other party will agree to, identify what success looks like to you, so you don't set the bar too low.
- b. *Define your start point:* some trade-offs will simply not be acceptable to you or your organization and these should be made crystal clear in advance.
- c. *Define your interests:* know your priorities and what you can trade to achieve them.
- d. *Define the stakes and conditions:* measure what you can use when negotiating and think about new factors you can introduce.

It is best to identify specific measures for success. Of course, if you were to consider every negotiable condition in a complex negotiation, you could end up dealing with millions of possible combinations.

But you should at least look at the main items on your list to determine the value and thus inform your process.

This will help minimize psychological effects and streamline decisions on both sides, increasing the likelihood of acceptance.

2. *Focus on potential:* negotiation, as opposed to haggling, can create new value rather than simply distribute it. New value is created by substituting something you want by offering something in return.

Having multiple negotiation items to trade ensures that you can increase the potential for success, rather than reduce it in the process.

3. *Establish an atmosphere of trust and transparency:* At the start of every negotiation, reveal your priorities and ask the other side to be open about theirs.

This seems counterintuitive, as many people don't want to share this information because they fear the other party will misuse it.

Some research suggests that full transparency can lead to manipulation tactics.

However, revealing your interest can signal cooperation and elicit reciprocity. If the other party also offers information, you should feel empowered to share more.

Your counterpart's priorities will provide you with important information that you may not have acquired during preparation and can lead to the discovery of potential compromises and concessions.

This is often overlooked in negotiations, as both parties tend to think that they want to get, for example, a better price and just focus on that.

In such a situation, to generate the optimal result, do not talk about the price at the start of a negotiation. Leave the more difficult elements for the end.



Good negotiation starts with building rapport with the other party. Trust is essential. Trust is a human trait used by great negotiators to establish ground rules when opening a denial as well as when seeking mutual gains.

If a negotiation starts to go wrong, you can always refer to the goals set out at the start of the process as a way to ease the tension.

4. *Know how to dispel intimidation attempts:* at some point, you will likely encounter a negotiator who will try to assert value in a hostile manner. The person may try to intimidate you and may even threaten you.

When this happens, fear usually kicks in and the prehistoric part of the brain that manages your experiences and emotions takes over, shutting down the creative parts of the mind and preparing you for fight or fleeing. You will need to give yourself time to emerge from this state.

By using simple and practical tools such as questions, you can begin to guide the conversation and regain your ability to think clearly.

For example, if your counterpart mentions, « This delivery schedule is not realistic! » It may be useful to take the last words of the statement and turn it into a question, for example, « Isn't the timetable realistic? »

Even if you are afraid at the time, he will now have to explain himself. This gives you time to reposition yourself.

On the other hand, when the tension rises during an attack or when someone raises their voice you could simply mention, « I feel tension in the air. » This can help defuse the situation by getting the counterpart to end their tirade and start explaining themselves.

5. *Advanced negotiation tactics:* once you've mastered these basics, including knowing how to build trust and relationships, you can focus on some advanced tactics.

Although they can be effective ways to gain an advantage, you should use them with caution.

For example, the benchmark tactic. A reference point can be a price, an object, a service, or a favor.

Even though establishing a benchmark for trading seems like a simple tactic, it should be used with caution as it can also backfire.

If you're wondering if you should make the offer first or let the other party go first, a good rule of thumb is that the party with the most information to put in, should go first.

However, it is necessary to evaluate before starting. If this is you, should your request be realistic, or should you ask for a lot more than expected and meet in the middle?

Remember that your point of reference can damage the relationship you have carefully established, generate hostility, or force your counterpart to drift away.



On the other hand, you will have to consider the fact that there are negotiations where the other party asked for much less than they could have had, which becomes a costly mistake for you, if you offer first.

However, if you are presented with an « unrealistic » point of reference, it is best to communicate that it is a failure and ensure that both parties realign their strategy before making another offer.

6. *Tough guys don't win:* a good negotiation creates an agreement in which both parties feel good. A win-win negotiation above all, does not consist in winning only for oneself.

The advantages of a win-win attitude during agreements make it possible to carry out the post-agreement successfully.

More importantly, your reputation will be much better if you trade fairly and with respect.

7. *Listen:* the key to a successful negotiation is to fully understand the other party wants, needs and motivations. You can only achieve this by listening and learning from what they tell you.

The adage that 2/3 should be devoted to listening and the other 1/3 to speaking is good to follow.

8. *Find out what really matters to the other party:* finding out the other party's motivation can allow you to retain the advantage for the latter part of the negotiation.

For example, as a seller, you offer a free warranty. This is probably a marginal cost to you here, but it can give your customer peace of mind when things go wrong.

9. *Put on the scene:* the environment and the climate make all the difference in the negotiation. Choose the venue carefully, as it will reflect how the negotiation may unfold.

For example, cold and informal meeting rooms can inspire hostility, while a more informal setting can promote warmth and understanding.

10. *Announce your colors:* at the beginning of a negotiation, you must define the terms of engagement. For example, everyone should agree to conduct a productive and respectful negotiation.

This is useful for clarity, but also allows you to backtrack if someone strays. For example, if a person becomes stubborn and acts tough, you can remind them that they have agreed to be respectful.

11. *Bargaining Power:* Bargaining power comes in many forms, and you can often have more of it than you think. It is essential to understand where your strengths and weaknesses lie.

Bargaining power is not just the obvious measure such as marketing power, but can be more subtle such as political, social or relationship power.



12. *Some offers just don't work*: some negotiations can hit a wall. It may be a good idea to pause and regroup, or to be open and frankly discuss the impasse. If all else fails, then maybe the deal can't be done. Some offers are not meant to be.

However, new information may appear a little later which will change the whole equation. If so, remember that there's nothing to be ashamed of, if you can't reach an agreement.

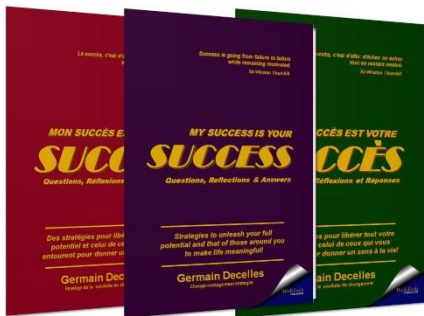
13. *Enjoy*: negotiation can be tense, drawn-out, and stressful. Learn how to make it an enjoyable experience and everyone will thank you for it.

14. *Remember win-win*: if there's one suggestion to take away, it's a win-win.

Negotiating is about getting a good deal and aiming to destroy the other party will do you no favors, as the cost associated with your long-term reputation could be most damaging.

Here we all need to remember Captain Jack Sparrow comment, « why fight when you can negotiate? All one needs is proper leverage. »

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In addition to writing, Germain Decelles acts as Change Management Strategist. He has over 40 years of business and consultation experience with local and international markets, including sectors such as retail trade, distribution, information technology and communications, transportation, manufacturing, financial services, and government organizations.



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