

# 7 Tips for Masterful Negotiating

Whether you're trying to close a major account or get a better rate from a vendor, here are expert pointers on how to win in negotiations.

By [Christine Lagorio](#)

**Think confidence, machismo, and stamina** are the keys to winning a negotiation? Then your bargaining skills need a reboot. Over the past decade, a growing field of literature on the subject has come to the conclusion that checking your ego at the boardroom door is a must. Compromise and kindness are the new rules of negotiation. How does this gentler approach work? We've compiled a short list of pointers to get you started.

## 1. [Listen Before You Speak.](#)

There will always be time to open your mouth later, but tap your patience to find out what the other side is thinking first. Then you have extra leverage to tailor your points to fit both sides' goals, writes [Norm Brodsky](#). When [Mike Baicher](#) came to see Brodsky for advice about negotiating a loan, Brodsky told him a story with a familiar moral: one man's trash is another man's treasure. Or, in his particular case, one man's misery is another man's idea of humor. So, when entering a negotiation, don't make any assumptions about what's in the other party's mind – just enter the situation with an open mind and plenty of questions. [Read more.](#)

## 2. [Embrace Your Fear.](#)

The late [Bob Woolf](#), a prominent sports and entertainment attorney and author of *It Doesn't Hurt to Ask*, was quick to say that 95 percent of the folks you'll ever negotiate with feel just as nervous and, yes, *scared* as you do. For that reason, he believes that kindness is a key competitive advantage when it comes to negotiations. Find his theory that "nice guys finish first" at the negotiating table hard to believe? Well, his track record of using a combination of professionalism, ethics, and manners speaks volumes—he successfully represented [Julius Irving](#), [Larry Byrd](#), [Carl Yastrzemski](#), and [Thurman Munson](#) in contract negotiations. [Read more.](#)

## 3. [Avoid Storytelling.](#)

In a negotiation, "the important thing is for you to be completely truthful about your situation," veteran entrepreneur Norm Brodsky has said. This is especially true when it comes to negotiating a loan or another financial arrangement. You don't want to win a particular negotiation at the expense of your credibility. The more forthright you are with the other party, the more likely you are to arrive at a satisfactory outcome. "When you're negotiating about money you owe, don't make up stories," Brodsky says. "Just tell the truth." [Read more.](#)

## 4. [Study Up.](#)

Remember, the more knowledge you have of a situation before going to the negotiating table, the better off you will be. There are many reasons preparing yourself with the best

research will be to your advantage, but one lesser-known perk comes from psychological studies. It's called the "consistency principle," which refers to a person's intrinsic need to appear reasonable. That means your counterpart will likely abide by certain standards, and defer to your authority if you are able to demonstrate that you absolutely know what you are talking about. With greater knowledge, you will be able to set the parameters of the discussion in your favor. [Read more](#).

#### **[5. Ditch the Dog Metaphors.](#)**

Negotiating: It's two pit bulls locked in a room and one's going to be forced to roll over. Ick. That mentality is not only outdated, but will get you nowhere. That's because, frankly, baring teeth and barking the loudest doesn't have the power it might seem to when bargaining. When deal-making gets tense, no one ever wants to back down. In [Roger Fisher](#) and [William Ury](#)'s negotiating text, *Getting to Yes*, the experts suggest that instead of viewing your counterpart as the adversary, you focus instead on the merits of the case and search for ways to achieve reciprocity. The idea is to "attack" the underlying issue, rather than the other negotiator. [Read more](#).

#### **[6. When All Seems Lost, Gain Something Else.](#)**

If a negotiation is going nowhere, and taking up too much of your time and energy, you may want to walk away from it. Before you do, entrepreneur [Janine Popick](#) recommends that you stop and think: What else can I or my company get out of this situation? Might someone else give the negotiations a try? Or perhaps you can use the bad situation as an opportunity to train someone at your company on how to deal with toxic clients. [Read more](#).

#### **[7. Remember: You're Already a Pro at This.](#)**

However much you think you negotiate, you're probably underestimating your experience. That's what bargaining manual *Getting to Yes* posits. "Everyone negotiates something every day," the author write. And in *Bargaining for Advantage*, author [G. Richard Shell](#) agrees: "All of us negotiate many times a day." Yes, your co-workers, children, spouse, and even fellow passengers on the train help you refine your skills day in and day out. [Read more](#).