



## **Negotiation's Two Worlds: An Insider's Guide to Negotiation Strategies and Tactics**

The day comes when you decide to purchase a new, more fuel efficient vehicle. You're thinking about the conversation with the car salesperson to negotiate the deal. You feel ... excited? ... elated? ... scared? ... depressed? Is the idea of negotiation invigorating or enervating?

Individuals have pre-set ideas about negotiation—whether buying a car, working out a staff schedule, or conducting salary bargaining. Sometimes our ideas and skills help the negotiation move toward a mutually beneficial outcome, and sometimes our assumptions edge us toward impasse, deadlock, or unnecessary defeat.

Do your negotiation counterparts at salary time arrive with unmovable positional statements that can only lead to someone losing? Is there a perception that one or both parties are out to make a deal that “gives up” as little as possible and cheats the other side? If so, then a poisonous negotiation environment exists that could use some detoxification. Strategies are needed to transform the situation from noxious competition to competition in good faith. Sometimes, in a strictly competitive situation, potentially beneficial solutions go by the wayside because nobody wants to be the one to concede first.

Conversely, do the negotiators arrive at the table with a set of principles about the underlying needs of each side as a starting place to search for the most optimal solution?

Researchers have discovered that one's approach to negotiation actually is more than a personal preference. There are two, almost diametrically opposed worldviews for negotiation that exist side-by-side in North America—each worldview carries with it unique rules, tactics, and strategies. The worldviews go by many names. One is a **competitive system**—also called the win-lose or “distributive system” since the “spoils” of the negotiation may be divvied up among those at the table. The competitive worldview fosters a winner-take-all approach that is good at advancing personal goals. When equally skilled competitive negotiators meet, compromise or splitting the difference is a common outcome. While meeting at the middle where everyone gives a little to get a little can be a quick and efficient solution, it also may leave potential value on the table that nobody receives (everyone has to “lose” something). Negotiators highly skilled in ethical competitive negotiation can gain advantage for their side and reap high benefits. All negotiators should understand how to work in a competitive system and to counter the most frequently used competitive tactics, including understanding bargaining ranges and dealing with impasse.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to adversarial competition that is appropriate in many situations. The cooperative worldview goes by many names—mutual gains, win-win, and integrative--since these negotiators try to integrate their ideas to find a workable solution. The **cooperative system** is good at seeking creative outcomes that benefit both parties. When cooperative negotiators meet, it takes a bit more time since information is

exchanged, there are forays into brainstorming, and both sides explore many options to see which solution generates a package that has the most desirability for each side. Negotiators highly skilled in mutual gains bargaining come up with negotiated outcomes that are unexpected, but meet the essence of both side's underlying needs. Competent mutual gains negotiators master several collaborative tactics—such as discovering interests that underlie positions and framing issues the right way.

Cooperative and competitive systems each have strengths and weaknesses. But what happens when one person only knows how to compete and one person only knows how to cooperate? The cooperating individual busily comes up with creative ideas that are snatched up by the competitor. The competitor thinks the cooperator is a pushover; the cooperator sees the competitor as an unethical robber baron.

An underappreciated fact of modern life is the need for leaders and negotiators to be nimble—to master the strategies and tactics of both systems. The conflict competent leader must know how to get the best deal for personal and organizational goals—both short term and long term. Competent leaders also know winning everything I want today can be the worst thing I can do for a long-term relationship.

Two ironic outcomes of negotiation are “winning,” but destroying a relationship and “cooperating,” but having one's personal goals fall by the wayside. Adding both cooperative and competitive tactics in one's personal skills toolbox adds the skills necessary to thread through negotiation's pitfalls.

What most characterizes a competent negotiator today? Competent negotiators have deep strategic and tactical knowledge and skills. They can operate in competitive ways when necessary, but prefer to seek mutual gains when possible. Finally, they exhibit nimble adaptation to the specific requirements of each new negotiation opportunity.

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