

Achieve more by negotiating smarter

Discover how to negotiate firmly and professionally, while maintaining a good relationship with the other person.



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1. Get More Out of Your Negotiations

You negotiate more often than you think

Negotiation isn't just for CEOs or sales managers. You do it more often than you realize at work, at home, with colleagues, friends, customers, or suppliers. Think about dividing tasks, shifting deadlines, deciding who cooks or where to go out for dinner. Being a good negotiator can benefit you in many ways!

What is negotiation, really?

Negotiation is the process of working together to find an agreement that satisfies both parties. It's not a competition with winners and losers. Rather, it's a strategic exchange where you weigh interests and make choices, always with respect for the other side.

A good negotiator, according to The Influence Company:

- Doesn't just take positions, but also tries to understand the underlying needs and interests.
- Communicates clearly and with purpose.
- Seeks a balance between giving and taking.
- Works toward both a good result and a strong relationship with the other party.

Important to know: negotiation is more than a rational process with arguments and numbers. Emotions, beliefs, and behaviour play a big role in how people make decisions. Those who understand this can truly make a difference.

It's not just about money

You often negotiate about things other than money. Think about how often you discuss time, priorities, or responsibilities. How do you divide tasks within a team? Which projects take priority? Who takes the lead on a project? Or negotiating terms: can you work partly from home? How much autonomy do you have in your role?

In practice

Let's say you're managing a project with a tight deadline, but you won't be able to finish on time. You'll need more resources or time to complete it properly. In that case, you negotiate with your manager for an extension or additional budget.

"Successful negotiation means getting more of what really matters to you - both at work and in your personal life."

Do you dare to negotiate?

Many people don't express their needs because they fear a difficult conversation or conflict. For example, you'd like more flexible working hours but assume your manager will say no. So you just accept the current situation. But with the right approach, a negotiation often gets you further than you think.



2. Skills of a Good Negotiator

Negotiation is communication

Many people think negotiation is about bluffing and using tricks. But that won't get you very far. You might get your way once, but you'll damage the relationship—and lose in the long run.

What really matters? Clear communication, listening, and asking the right questions. What you say, how you say it, and how well you listen all determine your success.

Good negotiators have these communication skills:

- Clear articulation: You deliver your message convincingly.
- Making agreements: You know which agreements are needed for a successful negotiation process.
- Active listening: You don't just nod and wait your turn—you genuinely understand what the other person means.
- Smart questioning: You uncover the other person's interests and needs.
- Creative proposing: You make suggestions based on what the other side values.
- Transparency: It helps you get what you want and builds trust.
- Reading nonverbal signals: What's left unsaid can be just as important as what is said.

“A good negotiator doesn't dominate the conversation, but intuitively senses what's really going on.”



In practice

You need extra budget from your manager for a project. Instead of directly asking for money, you start with a few questions:

“What’s your biggest concern with this project?”

“What does this project need to deliver for it to be a success in your eyes?”

This helps you understand what matters most to your manager—so you can tailor your proposal accordingly.

The Power of Active Listening

Things often go wrong because people are too focused on their own story instead of listening to the other side.

How to listen actively in 2 steps:

1. Summarize – “If I understand you correctly, your biggest concern is...”
2. Follow up – “Can you tell me more about that?”

By listening well, you show that you understand the situation—without immediately going on the defensive. This leads to more understanding and fewer misunderstandings. And just as important: it reveals underlying reasons or interests you can work with. Behind every demand lies a story. Go deeper into that.

Better Questions Lead to Better Answers

Good negotiators ask more questions than they give arguments.
Why? Questions guide the conversation and make the other person reflect.

Three types of questions for your toolbox:

1. Open-ended questions, to gather information:
“What are your main goals?”
2. Reflective questions, to explore the other person’s interests:
“What makes this important to you?”
3. Hypothetical questions, to move the conversation forward:
“Suppose we could solve this, what would that mean for you?”

In practice

You’re negotiating a potential partnership, but the other person seems hesitant. Instead of lowering your price, you ask:

“What would make this a no-brainer for you?”

Voilà, you find out exactly where the real opportunity lies.

Nonverbal Communication Says More Than You Think

Negotiation isn’t just about what you say—but also how you say it. Your posture, tone of voice, and facial expressions often say as much (or more) than your words.

Pay attention to these signals in yourself:

- Eye contact – It builds trust and shows you’re engaged.
- Body language – Sit up straight with a relaxed, open posture to come across as confident. Avoid crossed arms, which can signal defensiveness.
- Tone of voice – Speak in a calm and confident tone.
- Pauses – Silence can be powerful. It gives the other person space to respond—or to reveal more.



Adapt to the Other Person's Style

Not everyone negotiates the same way. One person may focus on winning, another on harmony and compromise. If you recognize their style, you can respond strategically.

When interests clash, people handle it differently. These are the five conflict styles from the Thomas-Kilmann model:

1. Competing – Focused on winning, less concern for the relationship. This may work for short-term deals.
2. Collaborating – Focused on win-win outcomes for both parties.
3. Compromising – Both sides give a little to reach agreement.
4. Avoiding – Dodging or postponing the conversation.
5. Accommodating – Letting the other side have their way to preserve the relationship.

For long-term collaboration, a **collaborative** or **compromising** style is usually most effective.

In practice

You're talking to someone who's pushing hard to prove they're right. Instead of engaging in a power struggle, you choose the collaborative route:

"I think we both want this project to succeed. Let's see how we can make the most of it together."

A helpful technique here is to identify your shared and opposing interests together.



3. Smart Strategies for Better Deals

Good preparation is key

The biggest pitfall in negotiation? Going into the conversation unprepared. Successful negotiators know: 80% of the result is determined before the conversation even starts. That's why we say: 50% of your negotiation time should go into preparation.

Ask yourself these questions beforehand:

1. What do I really want to achieve? What's my goal, and what's negotiable?
2. What is my bargaining range: my minimum and maximum?
3. What's important to the other party? What do they want to achieve?
Map this out as much as you can, so you'll know where you're aligned and where it might be more difficult.
4. How will I handle resistance from the other party?
5. What will I do if we can't reach an agreement (your BATNA)?

Doing this helps prevent you from saying "yes" under pressure or making concessions you'll regret later.

The BATNA principle: your plan B

BATNA stands for Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. In other words: what will you do if you don't reach an agreement? This is crucial, it helps you avoid giving in too quickly out of fear of losing the deal.

How do you determine your BATNA?

It's simple. Make a list of the alternative options you have. Choose the best one. Then use that alternative as a benchmark during your negotiation.

In practice

You're negotiating your salary with a new employer. Meanwhile, you've already received an offer from another company. That's your BATNA. It allows you to negotiate with confidence, knowing you have another option. It gives you calm and self-assurance.

Note: Be sure to assess the cost of an alternative. Ending negotiations, finding a new party, and restarting the process—all take time. The alternative may also come with contextual downsides. For example, you might get the salary you want at another job—but have to commute longer or give up your company car.

"A BATNA gives you the freedom to make better deals."

Anchoring: Set the tone with the first offer

Whoever names a number first often sets the playing field. This is called anchoring. Why does it work? People (often unconsciously) assign value to the first offer made. This applies to money, but also to things like deadlines and responsibilities. Important: Anchoring only works if you're well prepared. Be ready to explain why your offer is fair. Not sure what's reasonable? Then let the other party make the first move. Sometimes it's better to wait. Especially when you have little information about the other party's goals or want to collect more insights before making your move.

Make concessions wisely: never give something away for free

Negotiation is about give and take. But never give something away without a return. Three golden rules for making concessions:

1. Always ask for something in return – Never give in without a trade-off.
2. Make small steps – Multiple small concessions feel bigger to the other party.
3. Make it valuable – Frame your concession as a win for the other side.

Framing: How to make your offer more appealing

What you say matters—but how you say it matters just as much. That's framing.

Two techniques that work:

- Positive framing: "This solution will save you €5,000 per year."
- Comparison: "Other clients typically pay 20% more for this."

In practice

You're negotiating for a more flexible work week.

Instead of saying: "I want Fridays off,"

You say: "If I work four days, I'll be more productive and have better focus."



4. Successfully Handling Pressure, Emotions, and Resistance

How do you deal with a difficult counterpart and avoid using tricks?

Not every negotiation goes smoothly. You might be dealing with a dominant negotiator who increases the pressure—or with someone more hesitant or unsure. Others might rely on tactics like false urgency or the classic “good cop, bad cop” routine. Don’t fall into these traps or be tempted to use them yourself.

Ways to stay in control during the negotiation:

- Use facts, don’t apply pressure – Stick to objective criteria for both yourself and the other party.
- Play the issue, not the person – Separate people from the problem. Focus on the content and your relationship with the other party.
- Stay calm and rational – Don’t get carried away by your own emotions or those of the other person.
- Use the mirror technique – Repeat what the other says, in neutral terms.
- Ask for clarification – “Can you explain why this is necessary?”

In practice:

A supplier says: “This deal is only valid today.”

You reply: “I don’t make hasty decisions. If it’s really a good deal, it’ll still be valid tomorrow.”

“Stay in control and don’t let yourself be pressured.”



What to do when facing resistance?

If your negotiation partner feels threatened, insecure, or pressured, chances are you'll hear a "no," or get an angry or frustrated response.

Here's what works in those situations:

- Acknowledge the other person's concerns – Show that you're listening and understand their worries.
- Ask follow-up questions – "What's really holding you back?"
- Create a safe environment – Make sure the other person doesn't feel cornered.
- Use reframing – Present your proposal in a different way.

In practice:

A client says: "This doesn't fit in our budget."

You respond: "I understand. Costs matter. What's the most valuable part of this solution for you?"



How to stay calm under pressure?

Pressure leads to poor decisions. A skilled negotiator slows things down and regains control of the conversation.

How to stay cool:

- Take a short pause – Think before you speak.
- Use the power of silence – Silence can encourage the other person to keep talking or reveal more.
- Ask questions to buy time – “Can you elaborate on that?”
- Be aware of your emotional triggers – Don’t react impulsively or say something you’ll regret.
- Agree in advance that you can pause the negotiation – And use that pause when needed.

How do you create a win-win, even with differing interests?

Many negotiations stall because both parties cling to their positions. But what if you focused instead on shared interests?

At TIC, we say: smart negotiating means winning together.

Tips to create a win-win:

- Establish a clear negotiation structure – Successful negotiations follow a process both parties have agreed to. This creates clarity and a sense of collaboration.
- Talk about interests, not positions – Why does someone really want something?
- Increase the size of the pie – Instead of fighting for the biggest slice, add something to the deal to create extra value. You can do this by uncovering and addressing the other party’s deeper needs. For example, behind a request for a lower price may be the need to remain profitable. You could help by offering support with transport or risk-sharing.
- Make smart concessions based on interests – Offer something that costs you little but means a lot to the other party, and vice versa.
- Work together – Position yourself beside the other person, not against them.

In practice:

You want a higher salary. Your manager says: “There’s no budget.”

Here, it’s useful to state your need clearly. A fair salary represents recognition and growth. What are other forms this could take?

You might respond: “Understandable. What are other ways to add value—perhaps through training or more flexible hours?”

“There’s almost always a way to improve the deal for both sides.”

What to do when negotiations are stuck?

Sometimes, the conversation seems completely stuck. In that case, other tactics can help.

Try the following:

- Change the topic temporarily – Taking a step back can ease the tension.
- Bring in a third party or mediator – A neutral perspective can defuse pressure.
- Suggest a trial solution – “Let’s try this for three months and evaluate.”
- Reach a partial agreement – What can you already agree on?
- Clarify the consequences of not reaching a deal – Talk through what happens if there’s no agreement.
- Or, more optimistically: What does success look like if you do reach an agreement? – This can re-energize both parties to work toward a positive outcome.

How do you deal with emotions?

Emotions play a major role in negotiations. Anger, disappointment, or frustration can easily derail a conversation—unless you know how to manage them.

Here’s what helps:

- Acknowledge emotions, but don’t be guided by them – “I can tell this is a sensitive point.”
- Stay professional and objective – Don’t get pulled into personal attacks.
- Use empathy and connection – “I see this matters to you. Let’s explore what’s possible together.”
- Take a time-out if tensions run too high – This helps prevent escalation.

In practice:

Your colleague responds angrily: “You don’t understand how important this is!”

Your effective response: “I hear this is a big issue for you. Can you help me understand why it’s so important to you?”

5. Ready to make more impact?

Negotiation is a skill that will serve you throughout your life. As you now know, it's about much more than making arguments or pushing your agenda. What you need is strategic insight and the smart use of communication.

With the insights from this e-book, you've already taken a big step toward getting more out of your negotiations. You know the common pitfalls. You can recognize resistance. And you've learned how to steer conversations without putting your relationship with the other person at risk.

You don't learn to negotiate just by reading a book

Knowing is not the same as being able to do. In this e-book, we've introduced you to the fundamentals of negotiation, but you won't become an expert by learning the theory alone. Real progress comes through practice, experience, and reflection.

That's why our training programs combine a solid theoretical foundation with intensive hands-on practice. You'll learn how to present yourself, receive direct feedback, and discover what you need to become more successful in your negotiations.

Training Power2Negotiate

For professionals who want to negotiate with more confidence. Do you find negotiations stressful or struggle with tough conversations? Power2Negotiate is for professionals who want to negotiate with confidence, handle pressure, and reach better agreements. Learn practical tools to manage stakeholders, navigate high-stakes talks, and achieve stronger results every day and when it matters most.



Colophon

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