

PRE-WORK READ-AHEAD NEGOTIATION ARTICLE



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Negotiation Success Depends On A Solid Strategy

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Effective negotiation skills are essential in today’s business climate—to meet objectives, people have to negotiate with clients and colleagues alike. Good outcomes require an appreciation of the importance of relationships and the adoption of a collaborative problem-solving approach known as “mutual gains” negotiations.

But successful mutual gains negotiations don’t just happen. They require careful planning; negotiators must acknowledge this and work to get beyond stated positions (what people say they want) to discuss their interests (why they want what they say they want). Effective preparation also considers both the professional and the personal needs of the parties and the impact of emotion on negotiation outcomes.

The Negotiation Framework is a proven process to make planning both effective and efficient.

1. Do your homework

Information is power in negotiation; learn as much as you can about the issues on the table as well as about the people at the table.

- What are the substantive issues that need to be resolved? What can you learn about how others have solved them in the past that might be useful in this situation?
- What benchmarking data is available? What are the standards that others have used in similar situations?
- What do you know about the other party? What positions do you anticipate he/she will take? What do you think his/her interests are from a professional perspective? From a personal perspective? What would he/she see as a good outcome?

2. Set goals

You can’t get what you want if you don’t know what you want.

- What are your interests, professionally and personally?

- What would be a good outcome(s) from your perspective?
- What could you live with?

3. Take stock

Consider your leverage as you prepare for negotiation.

- What are your strengths? For example, do you have more experience than others competing for the same job? Or, related to the emotional aspects of negotiation, do you have a great deal of confidence in your ability to advocate for what you want?
- Where are you vulnerable? For example, do you have less experience than others competing for the same job? Or, related to the emotional aspects of negotiation, are there things you've done in other negotiating situations that weren't helpful and that you don't want to repeat?
- What can you do to shore up areas where your case might be weak? What can you do to feel more confident and competent as you enter negotiations?

4. Consider BATNAs¹

Think about what will happen if you are unable to reach agreement. If you don't know what your alternatives are, you'll be unable to determine when to walk away. Then consider what will the other party do if you are unable to reach agreement.

- What alternatives do you have and how good or bad are they?
- If you don't like the answer, what can you do to develop other alternatives?
- What alternatives do you think the other party has? How good or bad are those? Note: We often overestimate the alternatives the other party has to our detriment; in many situations, their alternatives are no better than ours!

5. Appreciate their situation

Reflect on ways you can build trust with and encourage engagement by the other party.

- What concerns might the other party have?
- How can you demonstrate empathy?
- How might you allay or at least mitigate those concerns?

6. Create proposals

Given only one option, the other party has a single choice — yes or no. Enlarge those options and you increase the chances of reaching agreement. Think back to your interests and the interests of the other party and get creative.

- Are there differences that might lend themselves to trade-offs?

- Are there possible solutions that can be linked to contingencies?

7. Anticipate challenges

Few people are able to respond at their best to pushback in real time.

- What might the other party say that you don't want to hear?

- How will you respond?

When people invest the requisite time and energy to effectively prepare for negotiations, the dividends are huge. Better, more creative agreements follow.

¹ BATNA is a term invented by Roger Fisher and William Ury which stands for "best alternative to a negotiated agreement." – what will you do if you cannot reach agreement with this party? What other options do you have? Any negotiator should determine his or her BATNA before agreeing to any negotiated agreement. If the proposed agreement is as good as or better than one's BATNA, the agreement should be accepted. If the alternative is better, it should be pursued instead of the negotiated agreement. When one party's BATNA is good (or even if they just think it is good), they may be unwilling to enter into negotiations, or, even if they do, may not be very cooperative, preferring instead to pursue their alternative option(s).