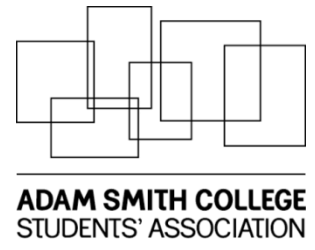


Basic Negotiating Tips



Here are some basic negotiation principles, skills, hints and tips to help you improve your negotiation technique.

We all negotiate in our personal lives, we do it at work and we do it as students too. We negotiate when we go to a car boot sale, or when we want to do something different at work, or when we're dealing with a course or college issue which needs addressed.

Sometimes it's easy to negotiate, but other times, when we have a great deal at stake or we are upset, the task can be intimidating or difficult.

Overview of the Negotiation Process

Negotiating is the process by which two or parties with different needs and goals work to find a mutually acceptable solution to an issue. Since negotiation is an inter-personal process, each negotiating situation is different, and influenced by each party's skills, attitudes and style. We often look at negotiating as unpleasant, because it implies conflict, but negotiating need not be characterised by bad feelings, or angry behaviour. Understanding more about the negotiation process allows us to manage our negotiations with confidence and increases the chance that the outcome will be positive for both parties.

Barriers to Successful Negotiation

1. Viewing Negotiation as confrontational

Negotiation need not be confrontational. In fact effective negotiation is characterised by the parties working together to find a solution, rather this happens, than each party trying to WIN the contest of wills. Keep in mind that the attitude you take in negotiation (e.g. hostile, cooperative) will set the tone for the interaction. If you are confrontational, you will have a fight on your hands.

2. Trying to win at all costs

If you “win” there must be a loser, and that can create more difficulty down the road. The best perspective in negotiation is to try to find a solution where both parties “win”. Try not to view negotiation as a contest that must be won.

3. Becoming emotional

It’s normal to become emotional during negotiation that is important. However, as we get more emotional, we are less able to channel our negotiating behaviour in constructive ways. It is important to maintain control.

4. Not trying to understand the other person

Since we are trying to find a solution acceptable to both parties, we need to understand the other person’s needs, and wants with respect to the issue. If we don’t know what the person needs or wants, we will be unable to negotiate properly. Often, when we take the time to find out about the other person, we discover that there is no significant disagreement.

5. Focusing on personalities, not issues

Particularly with people we don’t like much, we have a tendency to get off track by focusing on how difficult or obnoxious the person seems. Once this happens, effective negotiation is impossible. It is important to stick to the issues, and put aside our degree of like or dislike for the individual.

6. Blaming the other person

In any conflict or negotiation, each party contributes, for better or worse. If you blame the other person for the difficulty you will create an angry situation. If you take the responsibility for the problem, you will create a spirit of cooperation.

Some tips

Solicit the other’s perspective – use questions to find out what the other person’s concerns and needs might be.

When you hear the other person express their needs or concerns, use listening responses to make sure you heard correctly.

State your needs – the other person needs to know what you need. It's important to state not only what you need but why you need it. Often disagreement may exist regarding the method for solving an issue, but not about the overall goal.

Prepare options beforehand – before entering into a negotiating session, prepare some options that you can suggest if your preferred solution is not acceptable. Anticipate why the other person may resist your suggestion, and be prepared to counter with an alternative.

Don't argue – negotiating is about finding solutions...arguing is about trying to prove the other person wrong. We know that when negotiating turns into each party trying to prove the other wrong, no progress gets made. Don't waste time arguing. If you disagree with something state your disagreement in a gentle but assertive way. Don't demean the other person or get into a power struggle.

Consider timing – there are good times to negotiate and bad times. Bad times include those situations where there is:

- A high degree of anger on either side
- Preoccupation with something else
- A high level of stress
- A tiredness on one side or the other

Time negotiations to avoid these times. If they arise during negotiations a time-out/rest period is in order, or perhaps rescheduling to a better time.

Conclusion

Negotiating is a complex process but one worth mastering. If you keep in mind that you are responsible for the success or failure of negotiation, and if you follow the tips above, you will find the process easier.