

YOU CAN NEGOTIATE BETTER DEALS

According to the story, two children are fighting about the last piece of cake. Their mother, tired of the bickering, decides to put the issue to rest. She says, “Children, I think I have the solution to the problem. We are going to slice this last piece of cake in half so that both of you will have some.” She handed the knife to one child and said, “You slice.” She looked at the other child and said, “You choose first.” This tale of parental wisdom is a great metaphor for salespeople.

Win-win negotiating ensures an equitable process and outcome for buyer and seller. People want to get as good as they give and feel good about how they got there. This applies to customers who want to receive the value for which they have sacrificed. This applies to sellers that want to earn a fair profit for the goods they take to market. When both parties win, it builds a solid foundation for future growth. People want fairness—in the outcome and in the process of getting there.

Fairness begins with attitude and expectations. A win-win negotiating attitude means that you begin with the attitude that both parties must gain from the process and the outcome. Gaining from the process is airing your concerns and partnering in the creation of a viable solution. Gaining in the outcome means an equitable negotiating solution. This win-win attitude begins by accepting that you are negotiating for the customer, not against the customer. You and the customer form an alliance to defeat a common enemy—the problem that your customer wants to solve.

Viewing your customer as your negotiating partner is different than viewing your customer as your opponent. You must defeat an opponent but support a partner. Which dynamic is more appealing to you? When you strive for a win-win process and outcome, you do not need the games, gambits, and maneuvers that define the style and practice of many negotiators. Winning means that the two of you find a solution that works for both of you. The I-win/you-lose, I-lose/you win approach results in a double loss. When the seller wins and the buyer loses, the buyer resents the process and the outcome, which leads to their abandoning the relationship as soon as possible. When the buyer wins and the seller loses, the seller resents the pounding and yielding too much, which leads to poor service and no support. In both cases, both parties ultimately lose.

Your expectations at the beginning of the negotiation set the tone for the process and the outcome. If you begin the negotiation with the attitude that somewhere in there is a good deal for both of you, it affects what you end up with and how you get there. You begin the search for a mutually beneficial outcome by seeking common ground versus staking out your positions and protecting your turf. Common ground means that you listen to each other’s concerns and objectives and jointly find a path that will lead you there. This process of accommodating each other’s needs builds trust and encourages equity.

When your negotiation is one-dimensional, i.e. winning at all costs, the win will cost you dearly. If you expect an outcome that benefits (not merely acceptable to) both parties, you can state that early in your conversation: “Mr. Buyer, I am excited about this opportunity to find a win-win solution and process of getting there.” Imagine the tone that is set by that attitude and those expectations. When buyers realize that your agenda is their agenda and that they will not need to open their negotiating tactics manual, their attitude will mirror your attitude. As you walk down the path of agreement, it builds trust in the relationship. Trust is the currency of all good relationships. When people trust each other and want to do business with each other, they will work out the details. Trust comes from the buyer knowing that you are seeking common ground and mutually beneficial outcomes.

This win-win process is one way to negotiate. Some people, those who have a transactional attitude about buying and selling, find this approach unappealing. They would prefer to get their desired

outcome and walk away. Other people, those who have a more relationship-oriented attitude about buying and selling, like the win-win approach because every negotiation strengthens the bond with their customers. You can negotiate better deals for and with your customers. You slice; they choose.

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