

**Negotiating After Deadlock:
Moving from Confrontation to Collaboration, Even After They've Said NO!**

**F. Michael Babineaux, C.P.M., A.P.P., Principal
Babineaux Educational Services and Training, Inc.
901/753/7027; Mike@BESTraining.com**

89th Annual International Supply Management Conference, April 2004

Abstract. There are two different approaches to negotiating. One approach holds that negotiating means defending our solutions or positions, proving we are right and winning. The other approach holds that negotiating means meeting mutual, complimentary and differing needs and creating mutual understanding and acceptance. This program explains how to lead people who want to be right and win (the first view) into wanting to meet the needs of both parties (the second view). This is accomplished using four techniques designed to move a negotiation from a point of confrontation to collaboration.

The Opportunity. When we take the win/lose approach to negotiating, we invite confrontation. Strategies, techniques for making our opening demands, positioning ourselves, and trading concessions are very important to us in the win/lose approach..

In the second approach, negotiations are focused on arriving at a mutual understanding in order to meet complementary and differing needs and come to an understanding and acceptance that lets both sides walk away satisfied. When we take this view, it is important to recognize our own needs and those of others and to direct the conversation toward acceptance.

But it's not as easy as it sounds. To move negotiators from confrontation to collaboration means knowing how to break a deadlock and move the negotiations forward even when the people you're negotiating with decide to take a firm stand against you.

Four deadlock causes and strategies to break the deadlocks are:

DEADLOCK CAUSE

Pushing Your HOT button

Lack of Benefit Understanding

Resistance to Your Ideas

Lack of Consequence Understanding

DEADLOCK BREAKER

Go To The Balcony

Step to Their Side

Build a Golden Bridge

Use Your Power to Educate

The First Deadlock Cause & Breaker. The first deadlock may have been caused by your own natural reaction when someone pushed one of your buttons. Natural reactions occur, such as "striking back." Reactions such as that are not conducive to successful deadlock breaking. A better strategy is to suspend that reaction, regain your mental balance and refocus on achieving the goals you set. A Harvard professor, Dr. Ronald Heifetz, coined a phrase to

explain this strategy. He called it, “Going to the Balcony.” It is his metaphor for taking a step back and getting a better perspective.

The Second Deadlock Cause & Breaker. Of course, all deadlocks are not caused by reactions to other people’s words or actions. Some may be caused by someone else’s negative emotions, such as defensiveness, fear, suspicions, and hostility. When this occurs, you not only need to regain your own mental balance – you need to help the other person regain theirs, too. A good strategy is to do the opposite of what’s expected. Instead of arguing against the person’s point as he might expect, ask him to further explain. Practice active listening and people will be more inclined to listen to you. This strategy is called, “Step to Their Side.”

The Third Deadlock Cause & Breaker. This deadlock comes about when a proposal has been made but the other parties can’t see the benefits of agreeing to it. This could be caused by a number of things. They may feel they can’t go along because it wasn’t their idea - agreeing might make them “lose face.” In these instances a strategy called, “Building a Golden Bridge” may be successful in breaking the deadlock. Simply put, this strategy means to show them how they benefit from the agreement.

The Fourth Deadlock Cause & Breaker. The fourth deadlock breaker is “Use Your Power to Educate.” In the third deadlock we learned to show the benefits of agreeing. In this one, we do the opposite: we make them see the consequences of failing to agree. The other parties are unaware, or don’t understand what can happen if you do not break the deadlock and move on. It’s in this closure phase of negotiation that most deals are decided. If you’ve tried everything else, make them see the negative consequences of not reaching a mutually advantageous agreement.

Summary. It doesn’t matter whether you’re negotiating a purchase, a raise, or just trying to get a colleague to do something for you, these strategies will work. In summary, they are:

Go to the Balcony – You can only control your own behavior. This strategy allows you to do that. Belay your natural tendency to “fight fire with fire” and remember your goal. Instead of getting mad or thinking of getting even, buy some time and calm down.

Step to their Side – To move from confrontation to collaboration, a favorable climate must be created. The “Step to their Side” strategy does just that. It gives you an opportunity to take the first step towards cooperation by listening to their side, acknowledging their authority and competence.

Build a Golden Bridge – If the people you’re negotiating with are resisting your suggested solutions, you may have to convince them that these solutions are in their best interest as well as yours. The “Bridge” is the strategy that helps them understand that your solutions are really victories for them.

Use Power to Educate - Simply said, some people just don’t understand the downside of not coming to an agreement. This strategy is used to elevate their understanding of the negative consequences of deadlock.

Closing. The sequence in which you use these strategies is important. For example, you can't defuse someone's negative feelings unless you've gotten your own under control. That means that you've got to make sure that your reactions are designed to move the negotiations forward and that they do not cause or contribute, to the deadlock. Performing these strategies in sequence, however, doesn't mean that once you've used one you won't have to use it again. Negotiations are fluid. You may find yourself moving back and forth and using a particular strategy to break deadlocks in the early stages of negotiation as well as the later stages. Also, because every negotiation is different, you need to use your specific knowledge of the situation to determine which strategy to use and when to use it in order to break the negotiation deadlock.

REFERENCES

Ury, William, *Getting Past No*, Bantam Books, New York, New York 10036