

Instant Negotiation

The quick tip sheet for when you need good negotiation skills *right this minute*

By Wendy Keller, author of “The Secrets of Successful Negotiating for Women”, www.WendyKeller.com

Got an important negotiation coming right up and no time to learn all the important techniques, tricks of the trade and strategies I offer in my book? No worries. This “recipe for success” will get you ready in a snap for a basic negotiation with someone, from the dry cleaner who ruined your shirt to the discount on the rent.

The Three Principles of Successful Negotiation:

1. Be prepared
2. Be positive
3. Be persistent

Be prepared means this: know the facts. Not just knowing what you want, but what they want and what they are capable of doing for you. Sure, they might have ruined your shirt, but the remedy might not be a check for the amount you paid for it. It might be a deep discount on your next items, or a refund of your current order, or 10 free tickets to the theatre next door to their shop. You **MUST** know what they **CAN** do and what they **WANT** from you. If you don’t know, do a few minutes of research on Google. There, you’ll find the wholesale cost of a car, for instance, or how other people got their dry cleaning debacle resolved. Your preparation means exploring the options and solutions before you begin.

Be positive means this: you know what you want, you go to the negotiation prepared with an acceptable range of options, and most of all, before you get there you visualize yourself having a calm conversation that results in an acceptable outcome for both parties. There’s nothing to be afraid of – the worst they can do is say “no.” Sometimes, women seem to think that they are doing something charitable by paying full price for something or not complaining about bad service or shoddy merchandise. Forgeddabout it. Let’s get clear: Business is in business to make a profit **AND** the cost of acquiring a new customer is **MUCH** higher than the cost of making an existing one happy. All businesses operate on the former principle, smart ones also live by the second one. (Those who don’t are the morons who will flat out refuse any kind of negotiation and let you walk fuming out the door. Don’t worry. Their day is coming.) Go in calmly, positively, politely and firmly. Explain the problem without pleading, begging, yelling or crying. Being mousy isn’t doing anyone any favors and it will make you feel worse. Just briefly explain the problem and then tell them you would like the situation resolved. Then (this is the **BIG**

SECRET!) ...shut up. Let them make the first offer to fix the situation. If they need a little prompting, say, "I'd really like to continue living in this apartment, but the leaking pipes are just too much to bear." Silence. You say nothing. Don't smile or fidget. Just look them in the eye and be quiet. Most people will say something, because your dignity gives you the upper hand. Their answer may not be what you want to hear. So tell them clearly the solution YOU have in mind and then end with a power statement like, "Can we agree to that now?" As in, "I'd like you to get the plumber in by tomorrow evening. Can we agree to that now?" Stay positive and focused on the fact that you expect a positive outcome, a resolution both parties can live with amicably.

Be persistent: OK, here's a newsflash: people lie. They stand there and pretend they have the power to resolve your issue and they don't, or that they will but they won't. And you might not know who has the power to negotiate a solution with you.

From a person's demeanor, you can tell if this is a person who wants to keep you as a customer or if they couldn't care less. (Hint: the gum-smacking kid with the weird piercings couldn't care less. You can skip him or her entirely and go for the supervisor.) But most working adults realize that without customers, they won't get a paycheck. I'll start with the frontline person and make two attempts: first a direct approach and then if they decline the chance to make me happy, I'll restate my request, along with a "How do you propose we solve our problem here?" at the end. (Use the "we" form – it gets them involved even if it is involuntarily.) Be silent. Give them a chance to answer. They could be calculating the cost of the product, or giving you what you want vs. losing you, whatever. Wait. Words will come. If you can't find a creative outcome that suits you both, and it's worth it to you (see the book for a handy way to calculate what's worth negotiating and what isn't), go up to the next level person – clerk, assistant manager, manager, district manager, and so on. Repeat the previous steps.

These quick, broad, general tips are literally that – the tip of the iceberg of what will make you a strong, competent, effective negotiator. Find out more by reading "The Secrets of Successful Negotiating for Women."