

8 STEPS TO NEGOTIATING WISELY

Whether negotiating in the workplace or with clients, successful negotiation requires real skill. **Michelle Gibbings** provides eight helpful tips.

Negotiating is a daily part of life. It may be a discussion with your partner as to who's cooking dinner or picking up the children from school. In a work context, it could be a discussion with your boss about a pay rise or having time off work.

When a negotiation doesn't go well the impact can be huge. You may end up being underpaid, in a job you don't like or paying more for something than it's worth.

When you don't have the confidence or skill to state what you want during a negotiation, you'll find yourself agreeing to things you don't want to do.

This doesn't make for a happy and fulfilled life.

Here are eight key things you need to consider when negotiating.

1 BE PREPARED TO BE PREPARED

Successful negotiators know they can't just 'wing it' and hope for a good outcome.

The preparation is both physical and mental.

You want to be physically prepared, as negotiations can be tiring and draining. Negotiate when you are fresh and rested, rather than at the end of a long, tiring day.

It also helps if you are mentally prepared for the challenges that happen during a negotiation. Your mind will be pushed and pulled in many directions. It's wise to go into the situation expecting this to happen, so you are ready to respond.



Michelle Gibbings

2 KNOW YOUR MINDSET

Negotiating is mentally taxing. Strive to understand the mindset you are adopting, and how you are likely to think, feel and react throughout the process.

If you go in with the perspective, 'I'm right. They're wrong', and are not willing to find common ground, you're unlikely to make much progress.

It is much more productive to approach the negotiation from a basis of mutual respect and a willingness to consider different ideas and options.

3 REMAIN EMOTIONALLY DETACHED

Practise slowing your mind down, so that it doesn't over-react to unexpected comments or outcomes during the conversation. This is where meditation practices and mindfulness techniques come to the fore.

If you find your mind racing, focus on breathing deeply. This provides time for your nerves to relax and your heart rate to slow down, making it easier to reflect and respond calmly. If you can maintain a calm demeanour and manage your internal feelings, your mind will be much more equipped to handle the discussion.

In contrast, if your pre-frontal cortex (i.e. the thinking part of the brain) is overpowered by 'fight or flight' triggers (i.e. the emotional centre of the brain), you'll be less able to make reasoned and well thought through responses and decisions.





Doing this involves being emotionally detached from the outcome. This can be really hard to do, particularly if the issue really matters to you. However, the more attached you are to a predetermined outcome, the far harder it will be to negotiate.

4 UNDERSTAND THE 'WANTS'

Know what you want from the negotiation, and don't be afraid to ask for it. It can be a case of 'don't ask, don't get'. Be deliberate about your needs and when you ask.

Timing is crucial, as a negotiation's starting position can anchor the remainder of the conversation.

You also need to know who you are dealing with, and understand their style and approach. What do they want? What do they care about?

Take the time to understand the options available and how your proposal could satisfy the other person's needs, and pitch the message in a way that is more likely to resonate with them.

5 KNOW YOUR TRADE-OFFS

Think about how the negotiation process will unfold, and the steps required to secure agreement. Consider each of these steps, in advance of the discussion, and be curious as to how they may play out.

Running through possible scenarios and outcomes will enable you to better respond as issues or objections are raised during the discussion.

Negotiations involve compromise. Consequently, you need to know when to push and when to yield. It's hard to do this if you are not clear on your boundaries and priorities.

For example, if you are negotiating working conditions, you may be willing to trade off money for flexibility or money for extra holidays.

It's also essential to have identified your non-negotiables — that is, the items you are not willing to yield on, and the point at which you will walk away from the discussion.

Use your power

The good news is we can all feel more powerful, here are some tips:

- **Practise Amy Cuddy's power poses.** Her research shows that striking a pose for two minutes where you stretch and expand your body to take up as much space as possible, impacts how you feel.
- **Sit up straight** because how you sit and your posture impacts your behaviour and how confident you feel.
- **Tap into your inner sense of power,** which comes from knowing who you are and liking yourself.
- **Be clear on what you can control and what you can't control** in a situation, so you use your energy wisely.

6 VALUE RELATIONSHIPS

Negotiating effectively is much easier if you have a good relationship with the other people involved. So, build your network early and always take the long term view. You want both parties to the negotiation to walk away from the process with their dignity intact and feeling as though they have done well.

If someone feels ill-treated through a negotiation, even if an agreement has been reached, there can be long-term ramifications, particularly if you need to negotiate with them again.

7 USE YOUR POWER

The outcomes of negotiations are heavily influenced by power — how it is used and how it is felt.

It's easy to see how a person having more power in a relationship can lead to a sub-optimal negotiation outcome

for the other party. The person with more power may have more bargaining chips, positional authority or status and so, they negotiate harder and from a stronger position.

However, it's not just having power that makes us negotiate better. Feeling more powerful can impact how we negotiate, too.

The key word here is 'feel'. No matter where it comes from, when we feel more powerful, we are more powerful, and we get better outcomes when negotiating.

Dutch researchers found this to be the case — particularly for women.

Alain Hong and Per van der Wijst of Tilburg University asked people to recall times when they had power, while the control group were asked to write about how they spend their evenings. The participants then went into a series of negotiations.

The results showed that women who were primed to feel powerful made much more aggressive first offers and negotiated better outcomes for themselves than the women in the control group did.

Interestingly, men reached similar outcomes, whether or not they were primed to feel powerful.

For some tips on feeling more powerful, refer to the breakout panel on this page.

8 HAVE RESOLVE

When you are prepared and willing to back yourself, it is easier to have the resolve to see the negotiation through to the end.

Remember, negotiations don't just have a beginning, middle and an end. They are far more circular than that, and often complex negotiations will have many rounds.

Be ready for the unexpected turns!

Michelle Gibbings is a change leadership and career expert, author and founder of Change Meridian. For more information, go to www.michellegibbings.com or email michelle@michellegibbings.com.