

## The Formula for a Successful Negotiation

Now that I have your attention, there is no magical formula to a successful negotiation. Great results take work, planning, timely, and flawless execution. However, the good news is with proper preparation, you can achieve magical results.

This is the first in a series of articles which look at the facets of the preparation process so critical to the success of an efficient and durable negotiation. The details of preparation are often overlooked and/or not given the appropriate consideration. The first one we will analyze is where to conduct the negotiation, a critical decision which is often made without a deliberate thought process.

### A. Knee Jerk Reaction

When polled, most people opt to conduct the negotiation in their office or place of comfort. This is understandable but may not be justifiable. There are advantages and disadvantages for the choice of venue. The most important point is to choose the proper venue to increase your negotiation advantage.

**The take away:** Do not fall susceptible to your knee jerk reaction. The choice of where you conduct the negotiation should be a purposeful choice.

### B. What is the Nature of the Negotiation

Is the negotiation between parent and child? Is it between management and labor? Is it between supervisor and floor employees or senior management and subordinates? Depending upon which role you have in these scenarios, it may influence where you choose to conduct the negotiation.

For example, if you are having issues on the manufacturing line, do you call the line supervisor and make him/her sit on the other side of your desk? Maybe. Perhaps your point is to make sure s/he understands who is in charge. You may be subtly attempting to intimidate him or her.

On the other hand, you may want to visit the line, inspect the process, get a guided tour by the line supervisor or his/her designee, then conduct the negotiation. Even at this point, you may be confronted with other possibilities; do the negotiation in the line chief's office, at the coffee shop, or on the line. Each of these venues may give another message beyond the scope of the negotiation. Meta messages of respect, empathy, and *esprit de corps* may be as important as the purpose of the negotiation.

**The take away:** The place of the negotiation can have an impact on whether the outcome is efficient or merely just completed. Consider the implications and messages you are intending to convey by your choice.

## C. Factors to Consider

### 1. Your place

You have the “home town” advantage giving you a certain zone of comfort. It also makes it convenient for you to find documents and records if you need them in the course of the negotiation. It is also possible your place will influence the other party, perhaps even intimidate them. For example, you may have photos with famous individuals or degrees from prestigious universities which you may want to be visible for strategic purposes.

A very successful attorney maintains dioramas in his office, highlighting his most successful cases. There are miniature replicas of the incidents underlying his cases, newspaper headlines, and other written and visual information. It is very impressive. It says “I am very successful” before the prospective client meets the attorney

### 2. The other side's place

There are many reasons, some actual and some perceived, to consider conducting the negotiation at the other party's venue. It shows you feel confident enough in your side of the negotiation to be comfortable in the other party's zone of comfort. Further, in the event that documents or other proprietary information becomes relevant, the other side is going to find it more difficult to say they do not have access to the information—you are in their office.

Practically speaking, there are some advantages to going to the other party's place. In a situation where the negotiation involves a requirement's contract, where the other side's ability to provide your needs is crucial, it would be to your advantage to actually see their production facility.

There is a lot of intelligence one can gather by visiting the other's office. What does their office look like? What books do they have? What gadgets, games, toys, or other paraphernalia are on display? What pictures do they have? All of this information gives you an insight into their interests and who they are, which could easily translate into a negotiating advantage.

**The take away:** The choice of venue is simply a tool to be used to achieve the goal of a successful and durable result. Make your choice carefully and consider the message you give by your choice.

## D. Conclusion

Where you conduct the negotiation, whether your office, the other's venue, the shop floor, a coffee shop, the golf course, or in the hallway, it should be a considered, thought out decision. Each facet of the negotiation process is but a part of the end game—a durable agreement. Great negotiators know even the smallest detail can have a measurable effect on the outcome.