

NEGOTIATING WITH AN AGGRESSIVE COMPETITIVE NEGOTIATOR (ACN)

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Teaching Note (short one-page version)

- *Control your style to be formal and respectful.* Maintain an attitude of very polite doubt if you disagree with the Other. Never meet hostility with hostility except in physical self-protection. Remember that perceived humiliation is a parent of destructive behavior. A generally quiet mode will make any interruptions you do decide to make more telling.
- *Inject integrative elements.* Acknowledge some of the Other's interests. Name areas of joint gain. If possible, sit side by side and address one issue and then another, rather than "confronting each other" across the table.
- *Control the pace.* Thoughtfully repeat the Other's statements to gain time to think. Restructure deadlines. Keep reasonable control of airtime when it is your turn.
- *Ask detailed and specific questions.* Start with the Other's earliest points or basic assumptions and do not get pulled too early into talking about the Other's final points. If you are unconvinced about something, keep asking, in a curious and cheerful way, "Why?" or "Why not?"
- *Name the problems you have with the Other's point of view, but gently.* Say, "I might be wrong, or..." "What you say could be correct, but some people might raise the following problem..."
- *Use interruptions to deal with tirades and unprofessional behavior.* If the Other makes escalating demands that assume a drumbeat quality, go back to the first demand and temporarily ignore later ones. If there is name-calling or crude rudeness, spill a water glass, drop your briefcase on the table, or bang the table—once. If tirades are intolerable, refuse to negotiate until a later time. You can save face while doing this by adjourning "until we both have the facts (or authorization) we need."
- *If the Other baldly commits to an unacceptable "position,"* (as distinguished from their real interests) consider naming their use of commitment as a disrespectful or unfair source of power. Alternatively, simply ignore the Other's unacceptable statement as if this "commitment" had never been made. If you finally need to address their commitment to an unacceptable position, make an appeal to new facts or new circumstances or a higher authority. Work very hard to save face for both the Other and for yourself.
- *Be absolutely truthful about the facts.* Be fair, trustworthy, and scrupulously respectful yourself even if you are under great pressure. If you should come to learn that that the Other is clearly acting dishonorably or even malignantly, consider pausing the negotiation in a polite manner, and immediately seek advice and support from others.
- *Make yourself believe in the possibility of a good solution until you decide to end the negotiation—and perhaps even break off all contact.* Many people have been misled to think it is not possible to find a good solution when dealing with an ACN. It is easy thereby to make the mistake of falling into avoidance, fights, or inefficient solutions.
- *Be prepared throughout the negotiation for the possibility that an ACN will suddenly become reasonable, pleasant, respectful and prepared to make an agreement.* Honorable ACNs do sometimes do this.