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Being a good negotiator is a skill you will need from the first phone call to the hotel until the meeting wrap-up. There are always last-minute items that need to be worked out — especially if something goes awry on site! The following list provides some tips for successful negotiation:

The Actual Negotiations — from “A - Z”

- a. The best and most effective negotiating is face to face because you can “read” the sales person’s facial expressions and body language.
- b. Be as prepared as possible before the negotiations begin.
- c. Remain “cool.” There is always an alternative route around a problem (you just need to find the correct path).
- d. Listen carefully to what the hotel has to offer, collect your thoughts, and speak after you have the information coherently ordered in your mind.

e. Accept silence. The more the hotel lets you talk, the more “give” you will give and the less “take” you will receive.

f. Don’t fidget, bite your nails, kick your foot back and forth, or look around the room when you are speaking or being spoken to. These things may hurt your credibility.

g. Stay enthusiastic and up front about the meeting’s needs, the hotel will reciprocate and not view you as a cut-throat. A positive attitude will play an important role not only during the negotiations but also throughout the meeting.

h. Tell one or two “war stories.” They are neutral ground and give a few moments of distance from the current negotiations (don’t tell more than two war stories, as you do not want to lead the hotel to believe all your meetings had some kind of disaster).

i. Never reveal your deadlines. The negotiating process should not be rushed and both parties should be comfortable with the outcome. Neither party should look too eager to jump into a decision on the spot, especially if one of the parties is under a deadline.

j. Don’t negotiate when you are being distracted (eg, while eating or walking). Devote 100% of your attention

to the matters that are on the table.

k. You are not on your “home turf,” which places the hotel staff at an advantage. Distance yourself from the immediate area and concentrate on the issues. If you are really uncomfortable, change the environment; rather than sit in the sales person’s office, request that the negotiations be conducted in a private meeting room.

l. Keep the footing equal. A planner who is alone in negotiations with several hotel staff members may feel overwhelmed. Attempt to get the decision maker alone for the negotiations so he/she will rely less on the “it’s the hotel’s policy” statement, and there will be no show-off or bully factor.

m. Develop a situation of predictability and comfort for the sales staff. Your credibility will help move the negotiations along.

n. Most decisions are not set in stone even if they are in writing. If there is a change in the program and you and sales person have developed a good working relationship, concessions can sometimes be made.

o. Separate the issues and deal with each one on an individual basis if the hotel cannot agree to all of the terms. When there is a road block, find a more

creative path.

p. If the negotiations get “hot” on one item, table it and move to the next one on the list. Go back to that “hot” item at the end of the meeting to see if middle ground could be found.

q. Don’t be the first one to make an offer.

r. Timing is everything. Time always works against the person who does not have it.

s. Disarm the other side.

t. When all else fails, try the unconventional.

u. Never lie.

v. Don’t get emotional!

w. Dress for success!

x. Take notes and review them with the sales staff after the item has been negotiated. If you are unclear about the final decision, ask for a review or clarification.

y. Leave something on the table. It may provide an opportunity to come back later and renew the negotiations

z. Always remember to be yourself!