

Four Steps to Principled Negotiation

Here's how to apply principled negotiation approaches to on-site meeting dilemmas to get a positive result

PRINCIPLED NEGOTIATION MEANS DECIDING ISSUES through their merits and not through a haggling process. In their book *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, Roger Fisher and William Ury developed four key ingredients to principled negotiation.

1. Be hard on the problem and soft on the people.

DILEMMA: It is 10:00 a.m. You walk into the meeting room and the crew is just about to start the room set. You are horrified. It will take four hours to finish the elaborate audiovisual setup; the meeting starts in two. Yes, the contract should have listed times for setup time, completion time, and program time and yes, you should have reviewed this at pre-con. Too late to look back. Focus on the problem and not who's at fault.

SOLUTION: Pull all the trained staff to turn the room, call freelancers or other hotels for staff, see if the meeting can be delayed with a lunch in a separate room. Have any extra costs confirmed and approved in writing before services are rendered.



2. Focus on interests, not positions.

DILEMMA: You hear through the grapevine that the hotel may be in an oversold situation — and most of your attendees have not checked in. You forgot to add the “walking clause” in the contract. You can either focus on the fact that your folks should not get walked (position) and not listen to anything the hotel has to say or you can focus on making sure that your folks have the best stay possible (interest) with as little inconvenience to them. Ideally, the contract should have listed all the options in case there is an issue.

SOLUTION: Pinch hit on site and start booking rooms now, move your staff to the local hotel, ask the local hotel for upgraded rooms and free transportation to the meeting, ask the hotel to move as many transients as possible as you have more revenue coming to the hotel.

3. Invent options for mutual gain.

DILEMMA: You have 16 VIPs that will attend the meeting. The hotel will only offer you six upgrades as you do not have enough revenue to justify more upgrades. Your budget won't allow you to pay the difference.

SOLUTION: Focus on the things you can negotiate to make sure these VIPs receive special treatment, such as free concierge privileges, free amenities, free spa, or golf.

4. Use objective criteria.

DILEMMA: You want to have a certain square foot and ceiling height in the meeting space because you need rear-screen projection. The hotel is giving pushback and wants to assign you to a smaller room that will fit your group, but that room has a 12' ceiling clearance.

SOLUTION: State that the PCMA standard is for the screen to be 4'-5' off the ground. The AV manager said that with your size group, you need a 9' x 12' screen. That means you need 9' for the screen length, 4'-5' feet off of the ground; 1' for staging, and 1'-2' extra room on the top of the screen for a valance. A 15'-17' clearance would be ideal. The more factual you can make it, the better. If the other side comes back and has a different industry criteria, look for a third criteria. ■

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