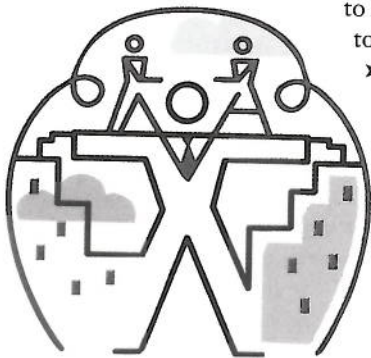


The 'Softer Side' Of Good Negotiators

In the December issue of this column, we discussed how certain inherent attributes of women may give them an advantage when negotiating. We pick up that train of thought here.

WOMEN SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRANSFER THEIR LONG history of dealing with emotions into successfully working with others in order to achieve a healthy negotiation.

Knowing how to deal with your — and their — emotions can keep the negotiation focused on solving the problem and not focused on the people. Look for the cause of the emotion and try to diffuse it. Some reasons why people become upset during negotiations include unmet expectations, an intended plan that goes awry, or an issue with communication. If you can pinpoint where the upset is coming from, you can try to alleviate it and get back to negotiating. Here are some things to try:



- **Use symbolic gestures.** By nodding your head, for example, the other side can see that you understand what they are saying. Understanding what is said is not the same thing as agreeing.
- **Acknowledge when things are getting heated and take a break.** Try to inject humor if appropriate.

- **Don't blame the other person for your problems.** Just say how the problem is affecting you. If you are getting edgy or being too tough and the tactic is not working, tell the other side (that also may throw them off a bit). You can say, "I know I am being tough on this issue, but here is where I am coming from." Then see what they have to say; they may appreciate your candor.
- **If the other side is venting, let them finish and do not react.** When they are done, guide them back to the problem by restating their issues in a factual manner.

Communication

Women are natural communicators. We like to ask questions, talk about our experiences and ourselves,

and we appreciate others' stories. Negotiation is all about communication because if you do not talk about it, you are not going to resolve it. It is not just talking about your side, it is talking about the other person's side. If you spotlight their case and their issues, they see that you are a good listener and may develop more respect for your side. This is a good starting point for brainstorming solutions.

Speak with purpose and speak to be understood. Figure out through what filters the other side is listening to you. Can you bypass that to have a factual exchange of ideas and thoughts?

Listen. Men seem to be better about getting to the point and stopping. As women, do we know when to be silent? When you listen, are you thinking of your next sentence/rebuttal or are you actually listening?

Enrolling/Enlisting

After we get through the perceptions and emotions, we need to enroll the other side to help find solutions. If you both can agree on the definition of the problem, it will be easier for the rest to fall into place. Brainstorming and sharing ideas is key. Men tend to be solution-based and see things in black and white. Women often operate in gray and can come up with ideas that will get both parties to their goals. Let go of ego issues and don't be afraid to put bad ideas "out there." You'll find the more ideas — good or bad — that are communicated, the better the chance of finding one that will eventually work. Above all, before and during the negotiation, focus on how to connect with the other side. In this endeavor — and this industry — the relationships you establish will help determine your success. ■

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