



Negotiation Tips For Women in Business

I've been blessed with two heroes in life. Both are women. Jean, my mom had to finish high school and start a new life at age 39 when my dad suddenly died. Mom cried many a night coping with being forced back to high school to learn how to be a stenographer. With grit she dove into the foreign world of corporate business. Barbara, my sister sustained life changing injuries in a car accident that left her life hanging by a thread. She survived. In her early 30's she also had to start all over again. Barb too went back to high school and then on to college where she completed a Diploma in Journalism. These women showed courage and tenacity beyond belief. They taught me that anything is possible if you just keep moving forward!

Business negotiation really does not have any set rules owing to the constant change in market conditions, civility and broadening cultural norms. This makes negotiation a platform of shifting sands on the best of days for professionals of all stripes and gender. For women who were brought up in a business environment it is a little easier to see. For women who have not had the benefit of growing up in a business environment it is just another layer of challenge.

The tips I offer women in business are to help you see more clearly and stand firmly on the shifting sands of negotiation. They are designed to let you know that you are not alone as you piece together the puzzle that business negotiation offers all who engage this unique business skill. Please take special note of the following:

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| 1) Zebra Camouflage | 4) Creative Solutions |
| 2) Detail | 5) Increasing Negotiation Strategies |
| 3) Speaking Their Language | 6) Believing In Yourself |

- 1) **Zebra Camouflage** - Zebras are a brilliant wildlife design. They are strong, fast, intelligent and gifted with a camouflage shading...black and white stripes that makes them appear to blend in with their grassy surroundings. When they move on mass they look so similar it is hard for those pursuing them to separate them. If you are heading into a business negotiation environment where business men dress a certain way using certain colors or tones, mimic them. Do not be a giraffe among zebras. It is too easy to single you out. If they are wearing corporate black or blue suits, I recommend you do the same. Act like a zebra. Be conservative to the point that you look the same as them in a business uniform. If you want to accent with color go with power colors. United States President Barrack Obama has been wearing purple ties of late. Billionaire businessman Donald Trump wears red ties regularly. These accent colors are power colors. I also like the color green with a blue suite. It speaks to creativity.
- 2) **Detail** - One way to neutralize the other side and even doubters on our own negotiation team is to wow them with detail and preparation for a business negotiation. If you can un-script in the middle of a business negotiation because of your professional level of advanced detail and preparation the other side will take notice. All sides will give you greater respect.

- 3) **Speaking Their Language** - As a business person who specialized in selling to and negotiating with large multi-market retail accounts I cannot tell you how important it was to be able to speak their “retail language”. I studied under two truly dedicated senior managers in the newspaper business. Both of these managers in their previous business lives were executive managers in the retail business. Their lessons were simple. If you want to succeed at the negotiation table with top flight retailers you had better be able to think like them, talk like them and add value to their world. Otherwise, you are just another “suit” selling stuff.
- 4) **Creative Solutions** - There is no better way to level a playing field when you say “I have studied your business. I see your pain. I have great ideas to help you”. Large customers do not have the time they used to....to be more creative. They need suppliers who know their business and think ahead to anticipate their needs. This also means arriving at the bargaining table with a variety of ideas and BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiation Agreement) options. Suppliers that master this advanced thinking will move up the client food chain and gain more opportunities on a first call basis.
- 5) **Increasing Negotiation Strategies** - If you only have one or two “go to” business negotiation strategies you are vulnerable at the bargaining table. Professional buyers and sellers alike will identify your negotiation strategies and will work to neutralize them. Read about business negotiation. Seek out webinars. Take courses in business negotiation. Educate yourself. The more negotiation strategies you have at your disposal the more often you will “make and save money” at the bargaining table. Think of it this way. If you lost 2% in every negotiation you entered in a single year, how would this affect your performance bonus?
- 6) **Believing In Yourself**- Practice being your own best friend. If you saw your best girl friend berating herself over something that was just bad timing, random or out of her control...what would you say to comfort her? You’d be inclined to talk to her about her strengths and accomplishments. If you truly believe in yourself you will ‘participate in positive self talk’ as noted author Lucinda Bassett often says. Tell yourself “you are smart, bright, dedicated and professional”. I know what my heroes would do.

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