

DEVELOPMENT

Tactical Maneuvers

Successful negotiations require an arsenal of strategies.

By Peter Barron Stark and Jane Flaherty

This is part 2 of a two-article series on negotiation skills. Last month's article covered the basics of being a good negotiator. This article focuses on specific strategies and tactics training professionals can use to achieve their goals.

Using words such as “strategies” or “tactics” makes some people uncomfortable because they feel those terms suggest manipulation and dishonesty, yet nothing could be further from the truth. In business, being dishonest is

not only wrong, but also it does nothing to help you build long-term relationships or encourage your counterpart to come back to negotiate with you at a later date.

Although “strategy” and “tactic” are sometimes used interchangeably, there is a difference. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines strategy as “the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems”; tactic is defined as “a device for accomplishing an end.” When

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blending several tactics in an attempt to accomplish your goal, the combined effort becomes your strategy. In other words, a strategy consists of multiple tactics.

You should become familiar with the use of strategies and tactics for two important reasons. One, everyone uses them daily. Two, even if you choose not to use strategies, other people will use them in interactions with you. To protect yourself, you need to be able to recognize the tactics and know how to respond to them. Knowing various counters helps you to retain or regain leverage, or to neutralize the tactics used by your counterpart.

Following are 10 of the 101 tactics presented in *The Only Negotiating Guide You'll Ever Need*, adapted for training professionals.

If...then

To prevent the impression that the negotiation was too easy, avoid immediate agreement to a counterpart's offer.

Example: A potential new hire tells you that his current salary requirement is US\$56,000. If you look across the desk and tell that recruit, "Great. When can you start?" the recruit is going to wish he had said, "My current salary requirement is \$60,000." So, you offer \$54,000 instead.

Counter: Using the *if...then* tactic, the recruit can respond to your offer by proposing, "If I reach the goals you've set for me in the first six months of my employment, then will you raise my salary to \$56,000?"

Trade-off concession

Get something in return for everything that you give up.

Example: Your company's vice president of operations has asked you to create a new supervisory skills program. She expects you to have the program up and running in one month. You reply that

you're unable to complete the program in that timeframe. Using the *trade-off concession* tactic, the VP says, "I'll give you an additional 60 days to complete your other responsibilities if you can get the supervisory skills program running by next month."

Counter: If you believe that 60 days isn't enough time to finish your other projects satisfactorily, counter with the *that's not good enough* tactic by replying, "I appreciate your willingness to help me out, but I'll need 90 days to complete my other responsibilities after getting the supervisory skills program running by next month."

The Mother Teresa principle

Ask a counterpart for help. Mother Teresa was world-renowned for recruiting the help of others to achieve her goals. People found it difficult to refuse Mother Teresa. Why? One reason was that she had an unwavering passion for the causes to which she devoted her time. Another reason was the way she set up the request. She would look a person in the eye with genuine sincerity and state, "I have a problem, and I need your help."

Example: You're having attendance problems with a specific department at one of your training programs. Using the *Mother Teresa principle*, you call the manager of that department and say, "I have a problem, and I need your help. When I talk to participants, they tell me that their supervisor is not approving the time for them to attend training. Can you provide any help in arranging the schedule so that the work gets done and your people are well trained?"

Counter: The manager could simply say "no." Another option, however, would be for the manager to issue a conditional "no," stating, "I can't free up my team for training right now, but after we finish the project we're currently working on, I'll make sure they attend."

Help me understand

Ask questions to clarify a counterpart's position on issues.

Example: Jane, a difficult participant, is attending your training session on communication. She clearly doesn't want to be in your session, and she thinks she knows more than you do about the topic. At one point, Jane blurts out, "The technique you're explaining won't work with our customers!" Rather than stating the advantages of the technique to Jane, use the *help me understand* tactic by pausing to ask, "Jane, why do you feel this technique won't work with your customers?"

Counter: Jane might counter by citing standard practice or policy: "That's not the way we've done business in the past, and our customers won't like it if we change."

Feel, felt, and found

Use empathy to show understanding for a counterpart's concerns and to explain your point of view.

Example: The VP of sales is considering a training program in negotiation. He's known for being strict with time and wants you to squeeze a two-day program into one day. You know that shortening the program will make it ineffective. Using the *feel, felt, and found* tactic, say, "I understand how you feel. Your time is valuable. Many of the leaders I design training for have felt that they didn't have the time to allocate for sales training. But, eventually, they found that the return on their two-day investment paid off in great sales results."

Counter: The VP of sales could counter with the *facts and statistics* tactic and reply, "You bring up a good point. The challenge I have is that the volume of work for our sales reps will increase 60 percent next quarter, and extra time will be a scarce commodity."

You've got to be kidding.

Express disbelief to encourage a counterpart to make a better offer.

Example: After performing a training assessment, you determine that there's a critical need for more training than you budgeted for, so you ask your supervisor for an additional \$50,000. Your supervisor looks at you in stunned disbelief and, using the *you've got to be kidding* tactic, says, "Fifty thousand dollars? You've got to be kidding me!"

Counter: Use the *funny money* tactic to counter your supervisor. Break the large money request down into smaller amounts so that your supervisor forgets he's dealing with such a large sum of money: "For only \$100 each, we can train 500 participants, who will undoubtedly make up for that expense in greater sales. Without the training, we're wasting money."

Conditional "no"

Offer less than a counterpart is asking for, hoping to make her go away.

Example: A customer asks you to squeeze in one more training session next week. Because of time constraints and physical limitations, you can't meet that request. Rather than say "no," use the *conditional "no"* tactic and respond with the following: "I'm happy to do an additional session. I'm not able to do it next week, but I could do it the week after. Will the following week work and still meet your goals?"

Counter: The customer could use the *say "no" and stick to your guns* tactic by replying, "We're too busy in the following weeks. Next week is the only week that will work for us."

Higher authority

Consult someone else before accepting an offer.

Example: The VP of customer service has asked you to provide three additional sessions over a weekend as make-up sessions for participants who chose not to attend the regularly scheduled training. Invoke the *higher authority* tactic by stating, "I don't have the authority to schedule additional training sessions over the weekend."

Counter: The VP of customer service

Most people use three to five strategies over and over in their life's quest to get their needs met. But successful negotiators have an arsenal of strategies to ensure success in future negotiations.

may use the same higher authority tactic on you by stating, "Would it be helpful to you if I spoke to your supervisor or, better yet, the president of the company to get approval?"

Refer to an expert opinion.

Cite the opinion of an authority to gain clout.

Example: You know your entire organization would benefit from a weeklong time management program that the CEO has attended. However, you're getting resistance from several managers because they feel the time lost won't be worth the time invested.

Use the *refer to an expert opinion* tactic and say, "After attending this training, our CEO, John Jones, told me he believed our future success depends on each team member learning and applying the skills it teaches."

Counter: The management team may refer to an expert of their own and say, "We understand, but according to our largest customers, their biggest complaint is that we're not available when they need us. We can't possibly commit that much time for training for our entire organization."

Would you like the meal deal?

Take a tip from fast-food restaurants: Attempt to "up-sell" a counterpart by offering extras.

Example: A sales manager asks you to conduct a training program on leadership. You know that that particular program is

most effective when the participants take a personality inventory in conjunction with the training. As soon as you get the sales manager to agree to the program, use the *would you like the meal deal?* tactic and up-sell her on the inclusion of the inventory.

Counter: The manager might say, "Why don't we do the training program first and then talk about the personality inventory at a later date?" Or she could say, "So, what you're telling me is that your training program can't be effective without this add-on item."

Most people use three to five strategies over and over again in their life's quest to get their needs and wants met. Successful negotiators, however, know dozens of tactics to use in different situations. By adding these tactics to your arsenal of strategies, you ensure success in future negotiations.

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