



# THE WIN-WIN

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*“Great negotiators  
always find a way to  
help the other party  
save face.”*

– Jim Hennig

## ARE YOU CONSIDERED AN EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATOR?

Assess your ability to negotiate effectively with this puzzler. Two people are standing in a room. There is a line on the floor that separates each person. Both people are given the same instructions. Get the other person across the line on to your side and you win a prize. You have one minute.

Deceptively simple, this puzzle sheds light on a critical aspect of business leadership. It illuminates a sometimes-dim capacity to think and negotiate effectively beyond the shadows of personal self-interest.

Effective negotiations don't always require hard tactics or cold strategies. Successful negotiations are often grounded on an understanding of the other party's interests, a novel approach that can expand the realm of potential solutions and positive outcomes.

## WALKING THE LINE

The exercise described above, developed by a Boston lawyer, demonstrates the limits of effective negotiations to maximize value.<sup>1</sup> Most people use one of the following four solutions.

- **Persuasion.** Each person attempts to develop a compelling argument about why he or she deserves the prize and why the other person should cross the line.

Click [here](#) to visit the online white paper archive.

Outcome: Unless you are extremely persuasive, this strategy results in a failed deal with no one receiving the prize.

- **Tricks.** Use deception to lure the other party across the line. Example: shake hands and pull the other person across the line.

Outcome: Chicanery might bring short-term financial success for one person, though the cost will be a loss of trust.

- **Intimidation.** Use threats or actual force to coerce the other party across the line.

Outcome: An appropriate strategy if your last name is Capone. Otherwise not recommended. Rather than trying to bully the other party, experts suggest there is a strong correlation between successful negotiations and a negotiator's conscious effort to secure a "win-win" agreement.<sup>2</sup>

- **Compromise:** Both parties agree that if one person crosses the line, the prize would be shared equally.

Outcome: An effective tactic that produces a deal. However, you only receive half the prize. Best to find another solution.

*“When a man says  
that he approves  
something in  
principal, it means he  
hasn’t the slightest  
intention of putting it  
in practice.”*

– Otto Van Bismarck

## COMPLEMENTARY INTERESTS

Searching for a compromise is admirable but not always possible, or desirable. A compromise usually requires a trade-off: you give up something to get something. To achieve an effective solution, look for common ground or complementary interests.

Consider, for instance, a power company that proposed a dam project opposed by farmers and environmentalists.<sup>3</sup> In cases where positional interests appear entrenched, the time and financial implications associated with securing a settlement may be untenably high.

Where no obvious common ground exists, negotiations framed as a mystery can yield rewarding outcomes. Proponents of the dam project, in this example, explored the underlying interests

of the farmers and environmentalists and discovered that the dam *per se* was not the actual source of contention.

The main concerns were water supply protection and wildlife habitat preservation. With this information, the proponent successfully reconfigured the project to ensure each party's interests were represented and protected.

The parable of an orange is a common example of thinking outside the negotiating box to find complementary interests.

Two people are squabbling over a single orange. Discussions are at an impasse until it is discovered one person wants to make juice and the other party wants rind to make a cake. Dig deeper to verify assumptions about what the other party wants and a solution will often reveal itself.

Now, back to the original puzzle about two people, a line and "the prize". A compromise nets each party half the prize. The highest value solution is for both people to cross the line and step into the other person's space. In this way, each person would receive a full prize.

#### **FACTS OF INTEREST** <sup>4</sup>

**300%**

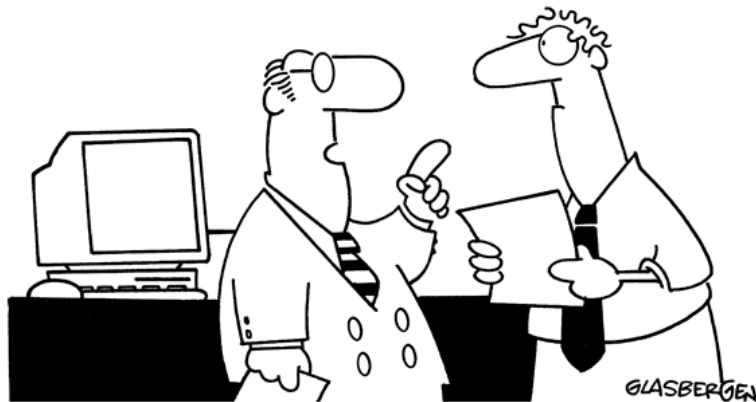
Additional time effective negotiators spend looking for common ground compared to average negotiators.

**200%**

Additional time effective negotiators spend long looking at the long-term compared to average negotiators.

**500%**

Frequency which average negotiators use "irritators," off-putting, annoying phrases like, "you must, you should" or "you never" compared to effective negotiators.



**“Things always get better after they get worse.  
So it’s good to make things worse as quickly as possible.”**

*“Quite often, your  
indifference can be the  
greatest negotiating  
weapon you have.”*

– Max Markson

### **SUGGESTED READINGS**

- *Bargaining for Advantage: Negotiation Strategies for Reasonable People* - G. Richard Shell
- *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* - Roger Fisher, Bruce Patton William Ury
- *Hardball for Women: Winning at the Game of Business* - Pat Heim and Susan Golant

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Diane Levin. <http://mediationchannel.com/about/>

<sup>2</sup> Seven Deadly Sins of Negotiation. [www.amanet.org/](http://www.amanet.org/)

<sup>3</sup> "Negotiating in Three Dimensions." Harvard Business School Working Knowledge <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/5497.html>

<sup>4</sup> Seven Deadly Sins of Negotiation.

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