

The Art of the Real Deal

“Getting to Yes”

We hear a lot these days about some great deals proposed by great deal artists... or maybe not!



It can be helpful to go back to a classic that talks about how to really negotiate a deal: “Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton. The book introduces a systematic approach to reach mutually beneficial agreements in both professional and personal contexts. Let’s have a good look at the key teachings and principles:

Soft on the people, firm on the problem

Negotiations involve human beings with emotions, values, and communication challenges. Separating the interpersonal dynamics from the objective issues allows parties to address concerns without damaging relationships.

- Focus on perceptions, emotions, and communication.
- Be soft on people but firm on the problem.

Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Positions are what people say they want, but interests are the underlying reasons for those positions. Exploring these interests often reveals creative solutions, so ask *why* or *why not* to uncover true motivations and look for shared and compatible interests.

Invent Options for Mutual Gain

Avoid thinking of negotiation as a zero-sum game, there’s a lot of win-win solutions to be explored. Brainstorm solutions that benefit both parties rather than settling prematurely for compromises. And you might want to explore ways to expand the pie before dividing it.

Use Objective Criteria

Basing agreements on objective, fair standards (like market value, legal precedent, or expert opinions) help avoid arbitrary demands and ensures fairness. So before going into battle, try to agree on criteria for a successful outcome and go for reasoning based on evidence rather than pressure.

Know when to walk away

Your negotiating strength is not defined by your power, by how much money you have or what resources you can deploy. It's based on the alternatives you have! If you don't have any, you need to compromise. If you have alternatives, you can resist any pressure and just walk away if needed.

Insist on Fair Play

If the other party uses dirty tricks, aggressive tactics, or refuses to cooperate, bring the focus back to principles rather than reacting emotionally. Stay focused on mutual interests and objective standards.

If you have learned these principles, then any negotiation is possible – and you will get a good deal!