



# NEGOTIATION ESSENTIALS

## NEGOTIATION Essentials of Preparation and Practice

### STEP 1: Information Gathering

What are the basic facts of the request? What are the basic facts of what is actually needed? Don't assume you - or they! - genuinely have a clear picture. The more information and context you have about the request, the person, and the situation, the more comfortable you will be negotiating for outcomes that suit you both. **All good negotiation discussions start with great questions.**

### STEP 2: What do YOU want out of this conversation?

It's critical that you pause and understand what would make this request work for you - your team - your action plan. Do you need more time? More money? More resources? What would make the request easier? Worth doing? More reasonable? Is it possible to have someone else take the lead? **Make sure you are clear on YOUR needs and their general boundaries.**

### STEP 3: What do THEY want out of this conversation?

How do they see this request? What do they actually need? What are they willing to do, give up, or help with to get what they need? How flexible is the request? **Make sure you are clear on how you understand THEIR needs and their general boundaries.**

### STEP 4: How much room to maneuver do you have?

What, if any, risk is there for you in this request? What, if any, opportunity is there for you? What authority do you have? What authority do they have? Whose support do you need to say no? Are you unsure of your room to maneuver? Who can you ask for help? **Do not confuse the authority they are displaying with the actual authority they have.**

### STEP 5: What are your minimum conditions to say yes?

What must be true for you to feel good about saying yes? For example: "For this to work, we need two extra weeks and for another team to cover the XYZ project." - or - "If we can eliminate the XX portion of the request, we can have the project complete by mid-July." **Before proceeding make sure you think through what you need to say a positive yes.**

### STEP 6: Find your ZOPA - Zone of Possible Agreement

The Zone of Possible Agreement is the magic of negotiation! Where is the overlap between each of your needs and requests? Where can you find common ground? This is your positive negotiation zone.

**Remember, they need you to do this work - you are not without options.**

### STEP 7: We We We all the way Home\*

Whichever way you navigate the Zone of Possible Agreement, the magic word is WE. This is not about someone winning or losing the negotiation; this is about managing the business priorities across people and teams. **Wherever you can, ladder up to the bigger picture for the team and the company.**

\*Stacey Vanek Smith, NPR Planet Money

## The Power of Open-Ended Questions

A critical part of negotiation is the power of an open-ended question. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a yes, a no or one word. They often start with WHAT or HOW. Open-ended questions prompt people to answer with sentences, lists, and stories, giving deeper and new insights. The respondent has no alternative but to provide some thoughtful detail. For example: "How did you arrive at that particular approach?" Open ended questions can also shift the energy from a one-way conversation (you being told something) to a two-way dialogue (us discussing something). This transfer of energy, in and of itself, can lead to new insights and possibilities.

Open questions tend to be viewed as less threatening because they give respondents space to reflect on the information they are sharing. They encourage detailed answers rather than one-word responses. Some examples and how they encourage discussion:

- How do you think we could resolve this situation? **Asks the respondent to participate in the solution instead of you solving it for them.**
- If this solution was not possible, what would you do? What is your Plan B? **Asks the respondent to participate in the solution instead of you solving it for them.**
- What do you think is the most challenging part of this request and why? **Helps clarify how much the requester understand what they are asking for.**