

## **Basic Negotiating Tips For POLS 200 and BUS 201 Law courses:**

### **Please consider these tips if you are engaging in Group Negotiations over point reallocations, or related matters:**

We all negotiate in our personal and professional lives. We negotiate when we go to a garage sale, when we want to do something different at work, or when we are dealing with members of the public.

Sometimes it's easy to negotiate, but other times, when we have a great deal at stake or we are upset, the task can be intimidating or difficult.

Here are some tips (do's and don'ts) to effective negotiating that can help you work more efficiently with your classmates, as well as future customers, co-workers, and bosses. They are also applicable to other interpersonal situations.

### **Overview of The Negotiation Process**

Negotiating is the process by which two or more parties with different needs and goals **(points of view)** work to find a mutually acceptable solution to an issue. Because negotiating is an interpersonal process, each negotiating situation is different, and influenced by each party's skills, attitudes and style. We often look at negotiating as unpleasant, because it implies conflict, but negotiating need not be characterized by bad feelings, or angry behavior.

### **Some Negotiating Tips**

#### **Solicit The Other's Perspective**

In a negotiating situation use questions to find out what the other person's concerns and needs might be. Remember there are at least 2 sides (often more) to every story. You might try questions such as:

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- ***What do you need from me on this?***
- ***What are your concerns about what I am suggesting/ asking?***

When you hear the other person express their needs or concerns, use listening responses to make sure you heard correctly.

For example:

- ***“So, you are saying that you are worried that you will not have enough time to complete your part of the project...Is that right?”***
- ***“If I have this right, you want to make sure that the division of work on the project is fair and takes into account other obligations?”***

### **State Your Needs**

The other person needs to know what you need. It is important to state not only what you need but why you need it. Often, disagreement may exist regarding the method for solving an issue, but not about the overall goal. People are sometimes goal driven, but not everyone has the same goal... some students may be motivated to work hard to get the best grade, while others may want the best grade for the least effort. (i.e. from their perspective, they may have “better things to do”, hopefully those other things are valid!)

For example:

***“I can’t meet Tuesday due to a Dr. appointment. I want to make sure I am healthy so I can contribute better to the group effort.”***

### **Prepare Options Beforehand**

Before entering into a negotiating session, prepare some options that you can suggest if your preferred solution is not acceptable. Anticipate why the other person may resist your suggestion, and be prepared to counter with an alternative.

## Don't Argue

Negotiating is about finding solutions...Arguing is about trying to prove the other person wrong. We know that when negotiating turns into each party trying to prove the other one wrong, no progress is made. **Don't waste time arguing** (organization/efficiency). If you disagree with something state your disagreement in a gentle but assertive way. Don't demean the other person or get into a power struggle. Above all, avoid any name calling! This is the best way to create resentment, and a failure of resolution...

## Consider Timing

There are good times to negotiate and bad times. Bad times include those situations where there is:

- a high degree of anger on either side
- preoccupation with something else
- a high level of stress
- tiredness on one side or the other

Time negotiations appropriately to avoid these situations. If they arise during negotiations a time-out/rest period is in order, or perhaps rescheduling to a better time.

## Remember the Learning experience:

This class is meant to be a learning experience. You will make mistakes, but if you can learn from them, you will become a better person for it. The stakes are not that high here (although grades may seem very important from some). Try to put things in perspective and "choose your battles" carefully...there are some things that just aren't worth creating an issue to negotiate. Do your "cost-benefit" analysis before deciding what things are negotiable and what is not.

## **Barriers To Successful Negotiation:**

Negotiation need not be confrontational. In fact, effective negotiation is characterized by the parties working together to find a solution, rather than each party trying to WIN a contest of wills. Keep in mind that the attitude that you take in negotiation (eg. hostile, cooperative) will set the tone for the interaction. If you are confrontational, you will have a fight on your hands.

**Here are some things to avoid: (i.e. Best NOT to do the following things):**

### **Trying To Win At All Costs**

If you "win" there must be a loser, and that can create more difficulty down the road. The best perspective in negotiation is to try to find a solution where both parties "win". Try not to view negotiation as a contest that must be won.

### **Becoming overly Emotional**

It's normal to become emotional during negotiation, its important. However, as we get more emotional, we are less able to channel our negotiating behavior in constructive ways. It is important to maintain control. Take a break from discussions if necessary to regain your composure!

### **Not Trying To Understand The Other Person**

Since we are trying to find a solution acceptable to both parties, we need to understand the other person's needs, and wants with respect to the issue (point of view). If we don't know what the person needs or wants, we will be unable to negotiate properly. Often, when we take the time to find out about the other person, we discover that there is no significant disagreement.

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## **Focusing On Personalities, Not Issues**

All of us sometimes have a tendency to get off track by focusing on how difficult a person may seem. Once this happens, effective negotiation is impossible. It is important to stick to the issues and put aside our degree of like or dislike for an individual. Usually, we find through discussion, that the other party wants most of the same things we do.....Look for the win-win!

## **Blaming The Other Person**

In any conflict or negotiation, each party contributes, for better or worse. If you blame the other person for the difficulty, you will create an angry situation. If you take responsibility for the problem, you will create a spirit of cooperation. This will require a degree of **self-reflection** before going into a negotiation (consider reviewing the "blue book" for this. No one has a complete handle on the truth; we all share a piece of it! Remember that "Truth" is a tentative, relative, understanding through hypothesis. (Personal quote).

## **Conclusion**

Negotiating is a complex process, but one worth mastering. If you keep in mind that you are responsible for the success or failure of negotiation, and if you follow the tips above, you will find the process easier. In addition, you will also have developed a valuable skill that will be useful throughout your entire life!

Have fun in learning this important skill!

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