

Never split the difference- The art of negotiating

Author had served in FBI for over decades, it was the time when he lead a team of ten thousand FBI agents as an international kidnapping negotiator. On day an unknown man calls him and says, ""We've got your son, Voss. Give us one million dollars or he dies." now you try to imagine the situation of the author. He had negotiated with people before, people for money was a usual case. But never did he negotiate for such a personal reason and never for 1 million dollar. So he decided to go to Harvard to take a short executive negotiating course. When he reached Harvard, Robert Mnookin, the director of the Harvard Negotiation Research Project invited him to his office for a coffee. When author reached his office, there was one more man Gabriella Blum, who was a specialist in international negotiations, armed conflict and counter terrorism and he had spent 8 years as a negotiator for the Israeli national security council and the Israeli defence forces. Then Mnookin kept a tape recorder on the table " I've got your son voss, give us one million dollar or he dies". Mnookin said smiling, I'm the culprit. The Harvard professors just wanted to check the negotiation abilities of the author. Further in the book, the author shares some of the valuable tactics that he used in his negotiating career that worked wonders for him.

The Black Swan Group Tactic

In this tactic you ask the person with whom you are negotiating some questions for which he can respond but with no fixed answers. It gives you time and it forces your opponent accept your negotiation. Example: When Harvard professor Mnookin, demanded a million dollar from the author for releasing his son, author asked him, "What was the proof that his son is still alive?" Of course the professor had some random responses but he was struggling to give him a fixed answer. This made him anxious which provided some extra time to author to think about his next words.

Ofcourse you just cant start asking some rubbish questions. Author says that inorder to be a very good negotiator, understanding the other person is very important, making him feel you are understanding why he is doing all this is important. Understanding what he truly needs from this negotiation is important. There are many ways to do this, but the most effective and simplest way is to be a good listener. Yes , be a good listener. Often people misunderstand that, negotiation is just about talking, try to get what you want by breaking the other person verbally. But truth is, to be very good negotiator, along with your verbal skills, your listening skills is also very important. By listening intensely, you demonstrate empathy and show a sincere desire to understand what the other side is experiencing. Research shows that when you listen to someone intensely, understanding the emotions that they are going through, it calms you down and it gives you complete control over the words that you choose to say. Which turns out to be a win win situation to you.

The problem with most of the negotiators is that they think they know everything. They feel that their way of handling things is the only way to go forward. They never try to understand what the other person is trying to say. This leaves them on their backfoot. So always try to understand what the other person is trying to say, try to think in their point of view. This will definitely help you in getting a solution which is win-win for both of you.

The moment people hear negotiation, first thought that comes to their mind is outwitting the other person vocally. So they speak way too fast in order to outwit the other person. But the reality is speaking fast is not a skill to be gained, anybody could do that, so even he will start doing the same thing and you both will reach nowhere. Instead try to calm down a bit. Listen to the other person with attention. Let him know that you respect him and care for what he is negotiating. By doing this you will avoid the war of words and there is a very fair chance that the negotiation would turn your favour.

One more mistake people make is that they focus all their energies on what to say or do but research says that negotiation is not always about what you say, most of the time it is important that how you say things and the emotions involved in it. This is because, your brain not only processes what you hear, instead it also processes the emotions and feelings behind that voice. Have you observed when a person talks to you adding certain feelings to his words, you connect with him even more when compared with that who is talking just because he wants to talk. It is just because your brain grasps emotions and feelings better than words.

Importance of voice and smile

Author says that nothing is more important than your voice for negotiation. You should be using a positive playful voice while negotiating. This shows that you are a good natured, easy going man who is light and encouraging. Always try to smile not only while you are negotiating but also when you talk to a person casually. Smile is a powerful tool that completely changes the mood of a person. When you smile while talking to someone, subconsciously you will leave that person in a comfort zone with you which would seriously help you while you are negotiating. You should have observed this that when you talk to a person on a phone, if he smiles you will notice it with his tone. That's how powerful a smile could be. So always make a habit of smiling when you are talking to anybody.

Mirroring:

I think the word mirroring is self defined. It's just that you try to imitate the other person. It could be words, sentences, nodding head when he is doing . For example: In one of the hostage situations in a bank, the hostager told author, "The other vehicle's not out there because you guys chased my driver away . . .". In response to which, author mirrored, "Did I chase your car away?". The conversation continued and the hostager started giving some very valuable information unknowingly. Just like this even you can use mirroring while you are conversating with someone. It helps you in disclosing certain information that you really want to know. Sometimes you need to say the entire sentence to mirror him and most of the time just the last three words is enough. You should have observed that whenever people who are deeply

connected with each other like close friends, people in relationships; while they walk their leg movement will be synchronised and when they talk they both will be nodding their head synchronously. This is because when you love a person, your brain subconsciously starts mirroring him. Its converse is also true, when you start mirroring someone, their brain subconsciously starts liking them.

Author gives us 4 simple steps to use mirroring in our daily conversation:

1. Use the late-night FM DJ voice: Playful and soft voice
2. Start with "I'm sorry . . ."
3. Mirror.
4. Silence. At least four seconds, to let the mirror work its magic on your counterpart.
5. Repeat.

Example: One of the students of author, Jane, had a boss who was a complete psychopath. He used to come randomly to the cabin of one of his employee and he used to assign them a task that was not theirs. When his employees started arguing that the task could be finished in a shortcut and it could be done with much more efficiency that way, he used to fire them saying that they were lazy and hence trying to find a shortcut. One random day he came to Jane's cabin and asked her to make two copies of all the paper work. This was a headon one week task. Unable to say no to her boss for obvious reasons, she decided to use the mirror technique. She mirrored, "I'm sorry, two copies?". Boss replied, "Yes, one for us and one for the customer". Jane said, "I'm sorry, so you are saying that the client is asking for a copy and we need a copy for internal use?". Boss said, "Actually, I'll check with the client—they haven't asked for anything. But I definitely want a copy. That's just how I do business." Jane asked, "Where do you want me to store those copies?". Boss said, "Its fine you can store it anywhere." "Anywhere?" Jane mirrored again. Boss was pretty intimidated by now, so he said He would get a new assistant for that work and there is no need for her to worry about it.

This is the power of mirroring. When you mix mirroring with other basic negotiation steps mentioned by the author, the magic happens.

Tactical Empathy:

It is understanding the feelings and the mindset of the other person in the moment and also hearing what is behind those feelings. By doing so you will increase your influence on all the moments that follow.

One day, there was a hostage situation in one of the harlem apartment. To worsen this situation, there was no telephone number to call into the apartment. Because of this, six hours went away without notice. Having no idea what was going inside, the author decided to use the tactical empathy formula. He said, "It seems like you worry that if you open the door, we'll come in with

guns blazing. It looks like you don't want to go back to jail." After couple of hours, front door of the apartment opened slowly and the fugitives surrendered themselves. When they were asked why they surrendered after six hours of silence, they said, "We didn't want to get caught or get shot, but you calmed us down," they said. "We finally believed you wouldn't go away, so we just came out." In this situation, author tried to understand what was going on in fugitives mind and told them the same in his soft voice, which made the fugitives to rethink what and why they were doing it and it forced them to trust the author.

In this situation, if you closely observe author's words, "It seems like you worry that if you open the door, we'll come in with guns blazing. It looks like you don't want to go back to jail." Here he employed tactical empathy by recognizing and verbalising the predictable emotions of the situation. He spotted their feelings, turned them into words, and then very calmly and respectfully repeated their emotions back to them. This technique of verbalising the emotions of the other person is also called as labelling.

The art of labelling:

Bella was one of the students of author used to work as fund raiser for Girl Scouts. She was a master negotiator and she used to easily convince her donars to write a cheque of \$1,000 to \$25,000. One day she met a potential donar with whom negotiating was quite tough. She was rejecting to donate to any project that Bella proposed her. Frustrated but still somehow managing to control her emotions, Bella decided to use a label. She said, "I'm sensing some hesitation with these projects," . The woman replied, "I want my gift to directly support programming for Girl Scouts and not anything else." This helped to focus the conversation but still when Bella was proposing the projects based on donars interest, she was still rejecting them for some unknown reasons. Looking at the donar's increasing frustration, Bella labelled again, "It seems that you are really passionate about this gift and want to find the right project reflecting the opportunities and life-changing experiences the Girl Scouts gave you."

Surprisingly the tough woman signed her blank cheque and said, "You understand me. I trust you will find the right project." This happened because there was an obstacle that was stopping the woman from donating. That was she was worried that her money would not be used the way she wanted it to be. Hearing Bella's second label, she believed that Bella knew how important it was for her to donate to this project. This is the beauty of labelling. The moment you start using this strategy, people start believing that you are understanding their emotions and they'll start trusting you more making your job of convincing them easy.

Beauty of negativity:

Well probably you are thinking that how can negativity be a beauty. Well if used well everything is a beauty in this creation. According to this strategy, you are supposed to put out every possible negative thing about you related to that situation as possible. Eg:

Consider 2 companies A and B which partnered and signed a government contract according to which company A would get 60% profit and company B would get remaining 40%. Company A was a higher capital company and B was a medium capital company. Company A decided to go

against the agreement and planned to take all 100% profit from the contract. Eventually company B came to know about this and they lost all hopes and trust on the company A. Since they had to make a huge amount as initial investment for the contract and if company A takes all the profit, Company B would go bankrupt. So they decided to quit and moved out of the contract. After certain calculations and change in certain regulations by the government, Company A realised that let alone 100%, even if they wanted to get 60% profit, investment from company B was mandatory. Since company B had already lost trust on company A, they refused to invest. In this situation, company A had to come out with a negotiating tactic to gain trust of company B and had to convince them to continue with the contract. This is where company A decided to use the magic of negativity. During the meet with company B, representative of company A who was the student of the author, started saying every negative thing about company A that company B could have possibly thought. Eg: You might be thinking that we tried to cheat you or may be we tried to take all the profit to ourselves and leave you under loss and many more. By doing so, Company A had already mentioned everything that company B could have possibly complained of. By doing so an illusion of fear that was there in company B was removed and they slowly started trusting company A again.

This happens in our daily life as well. The moment you realise that someone is trying to avoid you for some reason, try to understand why they are doing it and tell it to them. By doing so, you remove that illusion of fear that was there in that person and that person will start trusting you again.

Art of saying "NO":

"No" is a word that most people hate and is considered as rejection. Even when the author asks his students what is that one word that they fear the most, The answer is always "NO". But this is not reality. Actually "No" could be life saviour or career savior for you in many situations. U might have gone through certain situations in your life where saying "Yes" is the only way to get out of it and you do it. But it doesn't mean you agree to it or you want it to continue. Author says being negotiator is not only about making a person say yes to your claims, sometimes you need to deliberately make them say "No" just to stay in the negotiation. Billionaire Mark Cuban says, "Every "No" gets me closer to a "Yes". Adding to this author says that it not only about making the person say "No" , instead you should also create an illusion that he is in control.

Marti was a FBI Crisis negotiation coordinator who was extra ordinary at her job. So much so that she managed to earn huge respect within the team and among the local police. But one of her higher official who was jealousy of her and was insecured that she might take away his position in near future, fired her giving her some random silly reasons. Knowing this she could have done many idiotic and violent things against him. Instead she chose to use her negotiating skills. She went to his office, sat with him and said, "Do you want the FBI to be embarrassed?". The obvious answer was "No" . Now she asked, "What do you want me to do?" . After thinking for some time in a swagger he said, " You can keep your position."

What a surprise? This happened because, Marti had asked a question to him which's answer was an obvious "No" . Following she asked one more question that created an illusion that he

was in control and he was the superior. You can implement this in your daily life as well. When you get rejected or any related issues happen, Ask an obvious "No" question following which make that person feel that he is superior or make him feel that he is in control.

The magical two words: That's right

There are two magical words in the art of negotiation that every negotiator will try to make his counterpart say: it is "That's right". Abu Sabaya was a Islamist terrorist who had kept a Columbian named Schilling as a hostage and demanded millions of dollars in return. Author and the US government knew that this man was a psychopath and he would definitely kill his hostage if his demands were not fulfilled. But the main problem was that this man was not ready to speak and all he wanted was money. Even after months of negotiations, this man was not ready to give in. So the author wrote a two page document that contained the process that he needed to use while negotiating with Sabaya next time. The process included:

1. Effective Pause:

Silence; yes silence is one of the most powerful tools to use while negotiating. So the Author decided to keep quiet and let Sabaya speak. By doing this he was letting him to drain out his emotions.

2. Minimal Encouragers:

This includes using some phrases like "Yes", "OK", "I see". The main intention is to make Sabaya realise that the author was listening to him with complete attention.

3. Mirroring:

This includes listening and repeating back phrases tactically what Sabaya said.

4. Labelling:

5. Paraphrase:

Paraphrasing is a way of repeating the same sentence what the person said but in your own words. This makes the person understand that you are understanding his concerns and not just parroting him.

Now the last one is Summary:

In simple words paraphrasing + labelling = summary. Its just listening to whatever the person has to say through out the conversation and and telling it back to him in your own words with some emotions added to it. This would force that person to say " That's right".

In the next negotiation session, Author used all these techniques. As a result at the end when the author summarised every thing, Sabaya was forced to say "Thats right". With that the call ended. From that point forward Sabaya never mentioned money again. Without any further demand he released the man Schillong that he had captured. This is the power of that's right approach. "Thats right" approach is a vast field that still has to be explored. If you want me to make separate video on this topic, dont forget to comment down below.

All these negotiation tactics were shared from a wonderful book called "Never Split The Difference, The Art of Negotiating like your life matters on it." by Chris Voss. I'll give the link to buy this book in the description box below.