

Principled based Negotiation

(negotiation not war to win but problem to solve)

1. Separate the People from the Problem

Conflicts often mix up personal relationships with the substantive issue. Principled negotiation stresses that negotiators should deal with the problem, not attack each other. This means showing respect, managing emotions, and improving communication so that relationships don't sour even if positions clash.

2. Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Positions are the demands people state ("I want X"), while interests are the underlying needs, desires, or concerns that motivate them ("I need security" or "I want fairness"). By uncovering interests, negotiators can find more flexible and creative solutions instead of locking into opposing demands.

3. Invent Options for Mutual Gain

Most negotiations fail because parties see it as win-lose. Principled negotiation encourages brainstorming multiple possibilities before deciding, looking for solutions that benefit both sides. This creates "win-win" outcomes where each party feels satisfied and invested in the agreement.

4. Insist on Objective Criteria (Standards as sword to attack and shield to defend)

Instead of relying on power plays or subjective opinions, decisions should be anchored in fair, independent standards—like market value, legal precedent, expert opinion, or industry benchmarks. This makes the outcome feel justifiable and reduces bias, making agreements more durable.

5. Know Your BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)

Negotiators should always be clear about their best fallback option if talks fail. A strong BATNA gives confidence, prevents accepting a bad deal out of desperation, and ensures that you negotiate from a position of strength.

6. Commit to Communication and Relationship-Building

Principled negotiation is not just about agreements, but also about trust. Maintaining open communication, acknowledging perspectives, and building long-term relationships help ensure that agreements last and conflicts don't escalate in the future.