

7 Negotiation Secrets EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

Adapted from techniques of FBI Negotiator Chris Coss

Voss argues that most people have two basic emotional needs: to feel secure and to feel in control. Successful negotiators are those who can navigate these emotional truths and use them to tap into their counterpart's real desires and fears.

1. USE STRATEGIC SILENCE

Stop talking after your key point and count to 10 slowly.

Most people panic in silence and fill it with better offers. The first person to speak after stating terms usually loses negotiating power.



Tip: State your position clearly, then go completely silent.

Example: "Our valuation is \$50 million." (Complete silence. Count to 10. Let them speak first.)

2. ASK HOW NOT WHY

Replace every "why" question with "how" or "what" instead.

"Why" makes people defensive. "How" makes them solve your problems while thinking they're in control of the negotiation.



Tip: Turn accusations into collaboration with "how" questions.

Example: "How do you see us moving forward with these budget constraints?"

3. ADDRESS THEIR FEARS

Name their biggest worry about the deal before they do.

When you voice their concerns first, they feel understood and drop their defenses. This builds immediate trust and credibility.



Tip: Start with "You're probably worried that..."

Example: "You're probably worried this acquisition will destroy your company culture and eliminate jobs..."

4. MIRROR THEIR WORDS

Repeat their last 2-3 words as a question to make them elaborate.

People love hearing their own words. When you mirror them, they explain more and reveal their true priorities and constraints.



Tip: Use upward inflection to turn their words into questions.

Example: Them: "The timeline is too aggressive." You: "Too aggressive?"

5. GET THEM TO NO

Ask questions designed to get a "no" answer first.

"No" makes people feel safe and in control. Starting with "no" actually opens up the real negotiation and honest dialogue.



Tip: Frame questions to trigger protective "no" responses.

Example: "Have you given up on making this partnership work this quarter?"

6. CONFIRM THEIR CONCERNs

Paraphrase their position so accurately they say "that's right."

When someone says "that's right" (not "you're right"), they feel truly understood. This creates momentum and psychological agreement to move forward.



Tip: Summarize their needs, constraints, and concerns completely.

Example: "So you need board approval by March, gradual integration, and your team protected?"

7. LIST THEIR OBJECTIONS

State all their negative assumptions about you upfront.

Listing their worst thoughts about your company first disarms these objections. They can't use weapons you've already taken away.



Tip: Be brutally honest about their likely criticisms.

Example: "You probably think we're another tech startup that overpromises, burns cash, and disappears..."