

How do you create a win/win situation in a difficult environment?

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What a tough business environment we find ourselves in today. But, you know what? We're in it, and we'll play with the hand that is dealt.

It reminds me of when my daughter Abby was getting ready for her basketball league finals last year. A new transfer to the school arrived a month before the big game ... Maggie, and became a teammate as well. Abby had to change positions in the biggest game of her life, and move to Forward. Maggie was to take over the Guard position, and together they were to make things happen to win this game. I remember saying to my daughter ... "Abby, you have to find out what Maggie needs from you and the team to make her play the best Guard position she can play for the benefit of the team. And you have to figure out how to now play the best Forward position you can play to win, but also feel satisfied that you're delivering for the team ... you've got to find the win/win here for both of you."

And that's the same kind of challenge we have today in this tough business environment today. Your prospect still needs you ... still has needs for development ... still needs your expertise.

Q: How do I create a win/win situation in a difficult environment?

A: Creating a win/win situation produces rewards for both sides that pay long term as well as short term benefits. Any situation where parties agree to act both in their own interest, and the interest of the group, can be a win-win situation. The basis is that compromise and cooperation must be more, or at least, as important as ego and competition.

For a negotiation to be win-win, both parties must feel positive about the negotiation once it's over. This helps people develop good long term working relationships. A true win/win scenario is when both parties' needs have been met, and both feel like they have won.

Create A Relationship: In order to create the environment for a win/win situation, the process is as important as the result. Without creating a feeling of trust between both parties, a win/win is difficult to obtain.

And the only way to find out what the other person needs, is to ask questions. It's OK to ask questions, but be cautious to use 'softening statements' as a prelude. A softening statement is a compliment ... it's a statement of agreement that they've been heard. Like, "I understand why you feel that's important," or "I agree we should prioritize that first, but let me ask you something." A softening statement precedes the question.

Bond and Build Rapport Early On:

Make the other party feel OK throughout the process ... set aside your ego and a 'must win at any cost mentality'. Try to listen at least 70% of the time ... understand what they're trying to say ... be receptive to new ideas ... put yourself in their position.

What Are The Attributes of Crafting a Win/Win Agreement?

- * Goals: What do you want to get out of the negotiation? What do you think the other person wants? What do YOU have to need to make it work ?
- * Trades: What do you and the other person have that you can trade? What do you each have that the other wants? What are you each comfortable giving away?
- * Alternatives: If you don't reach agreement with the other person, what alternatives do you have? How much does it matter if you do not reach agreement? Does failure to reach an agreement cut you out of future opportunities? And what alternatives might the other person have?
- * Relationships: What is the history of the relationship? Could or should this history impact the negotiation? Will there be any hidden issues that may influence the negotiation? How will you handle these?
- * Expected outcomes: What outcome will people be expecting from this negotiation? What has the outcome been in the past, and what precedents have been set?
- * The consequences: What are the consequences for you of winning or losing this negotiation? What are the consequences for the other person?
- * Power: Who has what power in the relationship? Who controls resources? Who stands to lose the most if agreement isn't reached? What power does the other person have to deliver what you hope for?
- * Possible solutions: Based on all of the considerations, what possible compromises might there be? You know, Abby and Maggie won the final basketball game 52-48. They finished the season 21-0, and I'm proud of her. But, I know Abby also learned a valuable lesson about win/win to secure that final game. Both parties have egos, and have needs - those needs have to be met. Both people need to feel like they won ... contributed ... delivered. Selling today is more about meeting people's emotional needs, and less about your features and benefits. Find their need ... help them find it with your expertise ... make them feel they won working with you and your expertise - you'll turn those prospects into clients, and go to the bank at the same time!

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