



4 out of 5 Suns



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Getting to Yes

The Ninth in the Second series of: ***An Executive Summary for Busy Managers.***

Negotiation, it occurs everyday. Whether you are negotiating with your customer, boss, subordinate, peer, spouse, child, etc... sometimes the “process” involved is so stressful and painstaking that slamming the door on the conversation seems to be the most logical solution.

So this month there is no information about the Big Green Machine, Starbucks. My interest is on the insane American obsession with television; yes I'm a sucker for cliff hangers. With Fall Premier Week underway, it's incredible how fanatical and creative networks have become with increasing their ratings. We can TiVo, download to our iPod, view on the internet or buy entire seasons “uncut” on DVD. American's will never miss an episode again. In retrospect, it all circles back to Starbucks because they are thankful for the working couch potato and keep us up for the Late Late Show.

Have you attempted to use the standard strategies of negotiation, and still, somehow, fall short of your expected result? Are you forcing your opinion on the other party involved to the point that negotiations become stalled? Or, do you give in to your opposition because somewhere down the road you hope this “kind” response will be remembered?

Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In by Roger Fisher, William Ury and (for the 2nd edition) Bruce Patton have written a must read for anyone that answered affirmative to these questions.

If those situations do not sound like you, the book will provide a concise step-by-step process that will reaffirm your negotiation skills.

There are several great aspects to this book. First, just read the table of contents – it provides a road map of how the authors will take you through to better negotiation skills from the problem to the method to the what if scenarios. *It is your cheat sheet or Cliff's Notes when you need to refresh if you veer off course in the future.*

For a more detailed refresher, the authors highlight the important points within each chapter in the book – another great scheme to enhance their strategy.

Getting to Yes quickly points out the problem with most negotiations; we bargain based on position. Positioning ourselves causes a multitude of problems including agreeing to unwise and less than optimal solutions making it completely inefficient. In the complicated world of business partnerships, positional bargaining can sever the head off of a relationship with one clean chop. Why? Each party becomes committed to a position and ignores the interests of the other party and creates a battle of wills.

This book suggests that the best form of negotiation is through **PRINCIPLED NEGOTIATION**. This form is broken down into four areas, which the authors suggest as guidelines to success.

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Step 1: The most difficult part in negotiation is removing your personal feelings and the feelings of others from the issues at hand. Breaking down these problems by perception, emotion and communication is the first key to successful negotiation. In short, discuss each other's perception on the issue, don't react to emotional outbursts and communicate by actively listening and clearly stating your purpose.

Step 2: Defining your interests is as important as understanding the oppositions. A strong negotiator will look through the eyes of the other party and understand what needs, desires, concerns and fears that person(s) may have. Are they focused on security, stability, good relationships, etc? By defining these interests, a better solution can be formed.

Step 3: Inventing options for mutual gain is achieved through brainstorming. (*The refresher course on how this all works is a little long winded for my taste.*) Here's the brief version of how to brainstorm: what's the specific problem, diagnose the problem in general, what should be done in general to correct it then determine specific actions. Keep in mind "mutual gain" for both parties.

Step 4: By negotiating on the objective criteria, fair standards and fair procedures are created. The authors argue this creates a solution that is reached more amicably and efficiently.

I have two small issues with this book... First, the authors state the obvious and then tell you that they have stated the obvious and that's why this technique works. Second, they tell you how a real world negotiation would have been more effective with their technique – really now, hind sight is 20/20.

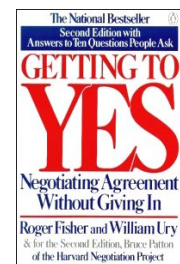
Overall, this book is a reminder of good negotiation techniques you probably learned somewhere in formal education. I know it just helped in my negotiation with my spouse over the purchase of a new mattress vs. a high definition flat screen TV – he'll be dreaming of the flat screen a little longer.

In short:

- 1) Separate the people from the problem
- 2) Focus on the interests, not positions
- 3) Invent options for mutual gain
- 4) Insist on using objective criteria

The world is full of opinions, and this is just mine...

Thanks
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