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## Negotiate Like A Car Salesman: 5 Tactics To Help You Win Every Time

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**Whether you want a raise, different responsibilities, or more resources, knowing how to negotiate is vital. Here are 5 (non-sleazy, promise!) tricks straight from the car lot that will help you get what you want at work.**

The image of the sleazy, greasy car salesman is (kind of) unfair, at least based on my recent experience buying a car. The car dealers I worked with came across as neither; that said, it was clear they knew what they were doing and they weren't afraid to employ some tricks of the trade to reach a mutually acceptable price. These weren't even necessarily dirty tricks, just the tools of a skilled negotiator--the ones you would use, too, if only you knew them.

So let's be nice and just say car dealers are practiced and aggressive negotiators. If they didn't know how to maintain the upper hand, they'd be out of business. And a big part of keeping that upper hand isn't about the details of the deal itself, so much as controlling the emotional balance of a negotiation. If they can pull your heartstrings and define the emotional context of a negotiation, the deal will fall into their hands.

Take your average car buyer: Let's assume he or she is not a practiced negotiator. In fact, the prospect of a lively negotiation makes him cringe. The balance is already beginning to tip into the other party's favor. The less tolerance you have for the emotional stress of negotiating, the quicker you're likely to settle, says Michel Tuan Pham, professor of business at Columbia

University. “It pushes you to seek closure to get rid of those bad feelings,” says Pham.

This isn’t to say we should seek to eliminate emotions altogether. “Emotions are critical to how we negotiate,” says Lee Miller, author of *UP: Influence, Power and the U Perspective--The Art of Getting What You Want* [2]. “Traditional negotiating theory said that the goal of being a good negotiator is to take emotion out of the negotiation and find the best objective solution. The only problem is it ignores human behavior. You can’t take emotions out of negotiations. And there’s no one objective solution--it depends on how each party sees things, which depends in part on what they’re emotionally attached to what they’re motivated by.”

If properly understood, the emotional subtext of a negotiation can be used to your advantage. It’s important because negotiating is crucial to professional advancement. Every day we seek to influence colleagues, clients, managers, and vendors, hoping we get what we want. If you’re not prepared to negotiate for your interests, rest assured others will for theirs, and you’ll get played like a fiddle. However, becoming more familiar with the tactics of negotiating and how your emotions and those of others come into play can help tip the scales back in your favor.

### **1. Understand the Process**

“The first way to not fall prey to others manipulating your emotions is to understand the process and what the other person’s going to do,” says Miller. “If you can anticipate it, it has no impact.” For example, a common tactic in negotiating is using the “good cop, bad cop” routine. One party will entice the other with a promising deal and then bring in someone else to play hardball. “You think you have a deal. You become emotionally attached to that deal. And then he takes himself out of the picture and brings in someone brand new that has no emotional attachment.”

Sure, this happens at most car dealerships (“Just let me check with my manager!”), but it’s also used in the workplace. Supervisors often use the guise of getting a higher-up’s approval so they can remain in your good grace while still not budging. The key is, if you can anticipate this, you’re less likely to make emotional, knee-jerk reaction, says Miller. “You won’t be emotional about it because you’ll know it’s just part of the negotiating process.” And when it happens, redirect the discussion to the negotiation instead of focusing on who’s making the decision.

### **2. Always Be Negotiating**

In a work setting, people often make the mistake of not realizing they are in a negotiation, when in fact they are. With your guard down, you stand to lose ground to others. “When you’re in a meeting, there are people at that meeting who go in there with the mindset that this is all negotiating--an opportunity to get x, whether it’s resources or support,” says Miller. “Another party goes into that meeting with no agenda or goals. The party that’s treating it as a negotiation is very likely to get what they want and the party going in there viewing this just as an exchange of information is likely to wonder, ‘How did we reach an agreement on something I really didn’t want?’”

That’s because they weren’t prepared for it. Miller suggests employing a practice called anchoring, which is simply determining the best-case outcome before entering a negotiation. It’s just a starting point, but it will keep you from being pulled too far from your interests. And with the mindset that everything is negotiable, you’ll be a better self-advocate.

### **3. Watch Out for Inflated Emotions**

While shopping for a car, I was amazed by the knack car salesmen have for setting the tone of the conversation. As I lobbied for a lower price, better financing, or even free floor mats, I was met not just by a counter-offer, but an emotional response as well. He would appear upset by my gall, seemingly perturbed by my “unfair” demands. Had I offended him? Did I cross an invisible line? Well, in this case, it’s more likely that he was exaggerating, hoping I’d retreat. “People tend to like human interactions to be pleasant,” says Pham, “so negotiators will inflate their emotions hoping the other party will seek closure.”

Important to consider is the relationship you have with the other party to determine whether their emotions are likely genuine or feigned, says Pham. “If you’re negotiating within a couple--negotiating the division of labor within the household--I think you should pay attention to those emotions and if the person is really offended by certain requests. Where you have to pay attention is whenever you’re dealing with people who can fake them. That’s the difference between dealing with a car dealer who does that for a living versus the normal negotiations that we do in everyday life.” Professional relationships are tricky because they fall somewhere in the middle. Even if you have a personal relationship with your boss, when it comes time to negotiate a salary increase, he may still feign the distress your demands are causing.

#### **4. Don’t Fall in Love**

The first thing a car salesman asks when you walk onto the lot is, “Do you want to take a test drive?” That’s because once you fall in love with the heated seats and surround-sound audio system, he can play to your emotional attachment to the car instead of the facts and figures of the deal. “The worst thing you can do is become emotionally attached to a deal because then it feels very hard to walk away,” says Miller. “If you’re not willing to walk away from a deal, you really can’t negotiate effectively.”

To avoid having your emotions toyed with, have a backup plan for whatever it is you’re negotiating--a raise, a course of action, a new role in your company. “If you know you can get the same car at a dealer that’s a mile away, then you’re not going to be as emotionally attached to buying this car from this dealer,” says Miller. And that alone might help you get a better deal.

#### **5. Beware of the Empathy Trap**

A trick some men use when negotiating with women is to make them feel guilty simply for negotiating, says Miller, by putting their relationship in the balance. “They use their friendship or their relationship to get women to agree to something they might not otherwise agree to. I call this the empathy trap.” This isn’t exclusively something that men do to women, of course, but because women often put more value on relationships, some negotiators will exploit this.

However, reaffirming that it’s okay to negotiate will put you on stronger emotional footing. For example, you may feel uncomfortable asking for a higher salary than the one that’s offered, but managers likely expect you to negotiate (and may even see it as a lack of confidence if you fail to do so). “When [people] learn that it’s not only acceptable to negotiate, but expected at a certain level, they become very good negotiators. Initially, some of them are afraid to negotiate and therefore pull their punches.” Miller says a negotiator’s mentality should always be that “I’m happy to give you what you need, as long as you give me what I need.”

Seeing what happens when you don’t negotiate should also motivate you to lobby for your interests. “You see that people take advantage of you if you’re not negotiating. Once that happens and you recognize it, emotionally, you say that’s not going to happen again.”