



## **You or Your Kids, Who Should Have the Last Laugh?**

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You should all know by now that even if you are not involved in the sales world, you need to negotiate (please refer to [www.progressu.com.hk/ezone-sales-2008-8.htm](http://www.progressu.com.hk/ezone-sales-2008-8.htm)) somewhere, sometime, perhaps even every day.

Whether you like it or not, you simply cannot avoid negotiations: it is like death and tax.

Is it difficult to do? Well, who said life is easy?

Yet if there is life, there is a way. As the late Dame Anita Roddick (British businesswoman, founder of Body Shop, 1942 – 2007) once said, "If you can figure out whether a 4 year old or a 6 year old should get the last toffee, you can negotiate any contract."

Then the question is, what should the outcome be? Is there a winner and a loser? Who has the last laugh? You or the 4 year old or the 6 year old?

Whether it involves settling on the price of a product or service, agreeing to the terms of a job offer, or simply deciding on the last toffee, there should only be five possible outcomes: (1) lose/lose, in which neither party achieves his goals; (2) lose/win or (3) win/lose, in which one party achieves her goals and the other does not; (4) no outcome, in which neither party wins or loses; and (5) win/win, in which the goals of both parties are met.

Then it is easy to see that numbers 1 and 4 are less than ideal, as is number 2 if you are the one who loses! But what about the other two outcomes? Isn't win/lose just as desirable as win/win, as long as you are the winner?

Problems occur when the two parties look out for their own interests, with little consideration for others or the longer term impact of their actions. Negotiations result in one party getting their ideal result, but at the expense of the other party. As time goes on and further negotiations are required, the natural human behavior throws in, and if one or other party always losing out, or at worst, both parties losing out, then who would like to deal with each other anymore? You eating the toffee may be a lose-lose outcome for the children! And how do you think if your kids always lost to you in situation like this? How do you think your relationships with your kids from now on?

Now imagine if that's your most important client, and that is how they are feeling after the negotiation with you.

You've got the picture, and you will have no pictures at all, when the client walks away from you.

Scary moment, isn't it, when your kids start to walk away from you, too?

Well, when there is a will, there is a way. Perhaps now you know that there is a more useful and successful approach to negotiation is to think about win-win solutions. What possible solution would mean that both parties can come away from the table feeling victorious? It may take a leap of creative faith to see the win-win solution – outcome (5), particularly if you've had prior bad experiences with the party, but it's a good habit to develop.

The best outcome for almost all negotiations is win/win, when both parties walk away with a positive feeling about achieving their goals. But how do you accomplish this ideal situation? There are some keys:

1. Avoid narrowing your negotiation down to one issue. When you focus on just one issue, often, there can be only one winner. A common example is arguing over the price of something. To avoid creating a win/lose outcome, you can bring other factors into the negotiation, such as delivery fees, timing, quality, supplemental goods and services, and so on.

2. Realize that the other party does not have the same needs and wants you do. If you think the other person's goals are exactly the same as yours (for instance, a "good" price, which may mean different things for the two of you), you will have the attitude that the other party's gain is your loss. With that attitude, it is virtually impossible to create a win/win outcome.

3. Don't assume you know the other party's needs. Negotiators often think they know what the other party wants. Salespeople may assume that buyers want to pay the lowest possible price for a product. But many buyers have other needs that may influence their decision to buy. By asking questions, a skilled salesperson may find, for example, that a buyer's biggest concern is not that she pays the lowest price, but that her boss perceives the purchase decision as a good one. This knowledge allows the salesperson more negotiating room.

4. Believe point number two in your heart. Most novice negotiators acknowledge that the other party probably does not have the same goals they do, but once the actual negotiation commences, this acknowledgement vanishes from their mind.

So, what win/win scenarios can you think of for you and your children?

- Can you split the toffee in half?

- Can one child split the toffee in half and the other chooses which half to take?
- Can the 4 year old have the toffee now and the 6 year old get two toffees when they get home in an hour?
- Can you have the toffee and both children get two toffees each when they reach the shops?

The main point is to understand what everyone needs and set out options. In a win/win negotiation, all parties involved feel they have reached a successful outcome, and get what they really want.

The last thing you want is have screaming showdowns with your children. Through successful negotiations, you and all your kids will always get the last laugh ... together.

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William is a senior veteran in the business world, also helped to attract and confirm investors to set up overseas companies; and was involved in a few merger and acquisitions throughout his career. He earned his stripes through his practical experience in the actual market.

He is keen to help and coach companies to explore their own potential, understand their core competence, and ride through the adversity of the economy. He is especially interested in situation where companies have to deal with constant changes, new market developments, multicultural environments, fierce competitions, and leadership development, particularly in sales. His expertise lies in building and managing sales and marketing teams, key account management, tactical negotiation and closing deals, forming alliances and partnerships through training and coaching within the organization to develop a sales- and subsequently results-oriented culture.