

## How to be an exceptional negotiator

When it comes to topics that are difficult to talk about, there is one clear winner: money. Whether it's discussing personal finances, haggling for a salary increase or negotiating fees, it's a challenging conversation and one that many consultants shy away from, often choosing to send their terms over an email rather than talking directly to the decision maker.



For senior recruitment consultants, the power to negotiate effectively is a vital tool in the armoury. With time and experience, it is one that they become more accustomed to and less fearful of but for many, it is still awkward territory, which means they are probably not always getting enough bang for their buck.

If your stomach starts to churn a little at the thought of a negotiation, if you know that you don't always push for an extra 2% or if you feel as though you don't always stand your ground, then follow my tried and tested tips for exceptional negotiating that will bring you the outcome you want every time.

**Remember** - The negotiation process needs to be treated carefully.

When a client approaches you, never launch straight into the negotiation. There are a few key preliminaries to handle beforehand. Remember they are just doing their job and looking for the best deal for their company:

- Explain the difference and benefits of your service and demonstrate its value. Provide conversion ratios and statistics to give your words more impact.
- Mention other companies that you work with in the same sector as this will offer comfort and enhance your credibility.
- Explain the process of how you fill roles and emphasise that the process is thorough and rigorous (assuming it is of course).

Once the scene is set, the negotiation can begin in earnest. To carry out a negotiation to maximum effect, you must:

## HAVE THE CORRECT MINDSET

Tell yourself:

- I will stand my ground
- I fully understand and believe in my value
- I believe in the process and the service I have to offer
- I won't get too excited - I will remain in control
- I am happy to walk away and let go if necessary

**Negotiate on the phone or in person.** This is the one and only way you can guarantee success. Starting a negotiation or sending terms via email is not going to have any impact. Emails are more likely to get lost in the sea of daily correspondence and quite possibly end up being ignored. Always reach for the phone and either carry out the negotiation there and then or schedule a face-to-face meeting.

**Close the deal there and then** while it's fresh in the mind of both parties. If the person you are negotiating with needs approval, a 'cooling off period' isn't necessarily a bad thing. You can also say you need approval and then go back with the same terms, standing your ground.

**Feel happy with the outcome.** Both parties should come away feeling satisfied, not shortchanged.



To sum up, here are my hot tips for honing your negotiation skills so that you perform like a pro:

## NEVER

- Just send your terms via email - a big no-no! The same goes for responding by email to any communications you may receive during the process. Always pick up the phone.
- Use vague, ambiguous language that gives the other party the impression that there is wiggle room. Your terms should be watertight.
- Sell yourself. Remember it's the service and the process that you are selling. This is not a friend-making exercise.
- Cave instantly!
- Start talking money at the outset. It's the value of the service you should focus on first.

## ALWAYS

- Follow up via email when you have reached an agreement to confirm the details.
- ALWAYS go for exclusivity. Exclusivity = certainty. This may require some quick thinking and creativity. You don't have to follow the same set pattern. Come up with a one-off to prove your worth, eg offer a discount on one role but revert to terms of business after that.
- Uncover the point of pain. If you understand how the outcome will affect the other party - what the cost is to their business and their team - you will have struck gold. This is another fantastic reason why you should always clearly outline the process. In doing so, you are demonstrating how you can make things pain-free and highlighting your value to their business.

Follow these guidelines and I guarantee you'll start to notice a difference...and you might even start to enjoy the process, too!

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