

Negotiations (2): Positions and interests

Aims:

- To discuss techniques for planning and preparing for a negotiation;
- To examine the differences between positions and interests;
- To teach some useful phrases for stating your opening position;
- To provide practice and feedback of the situation of stating your position in a negotiation.

Level: Intermediate (B2) and above

Introduction

The key to successful negotiation is preparation and research. This means finding out exactly what you want from the negotiation, and why you want it. Without this information, you will not be able to make informed decisions during the negotiation. You need to have a plan for each variable, and also a more general understanding of what overall outcome would be acceptable to you, and what would happen if you walked away without reaching a deal. The negotiation will also be much more likely to result in a win–win situation if you both focus on your underlying interests, rather than simply your positions.

1. Lead-in: Discussion

Write the following questions on the board:

- In what way is negotiating like mind-reading?
- What can you do to prepare for a negotiation?
- How honest should you be with the other person about what you really want?

Students work in small groups to discuss the questions. After a few minutes, open up the discussion to include the whole class.

Suggested answers: See Reading text.

2. Key terms

Students work in pairs to match the key terms with the explanations. When you go through them with the class, make sure everyone fully understands all the terms. You could elicit examples of each, based on students' own experience of negotiations. (Note that the terms are all explained more fully in the Reading text).

Answers: 1i 2g 3j 4f 5a 6e 7c 8d 9h 10b
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3. Reading: Positions and interests

Students work alone to read the text and insert the words from exercise 2. They discuss their answers in pairs and then check with the class. For each word from exercise 2, discuss with the class what the text said about it. You

may need to check some other words and phrases from the text (e.g. *cash flow, an adversary, to cover your costs, hypothetical, to deceive somebody*).

Answers: 1. positions 2. split the difference 3. variables 4. interests 5. deadlock 6. reservation point 7. target point 8. opening point 9. BATNA 10. giveaways

4. Stating your position

Go through the background information and the questions with the class. Students then read the extract and discuss the five questions in small groups. After a few minutes, open up the discussion to include the whole class.

Suggested answers:

1. Redundancies in the production department, outsourcing some functions, unfair dismissal of colleagues, and pay rises
2. This depends on many factors, but it's fair to say they are unlikely to be accepted by management without some compromises.
3. The union representatives will have to sell any deal to the workers, so they are under pressure to come away with something of value. They may have included some variables simply because their members have insisted, rather than because they consider them all reasonable. There is a threat of a strike, but this is in neither side's interest, so they will probably work hard to find a solution. At the same time, they want to show management that they have reasonable and justified expectations, and that they will not accept bad treatment. Their main underlying interest is to protect the livelihoods of their members. This may mean protecting their jobs, but there may be other ways of protecting them (e.g. through retraining, compensation) if redundancies are inevitable.
4. They could go on strike, in the hope that they could get a better deal later.
5. Possibly the unfair dismissals and the demand for an apology.

5. Useful language

Students work in pairs to complete the table with useful phrases. Point out that there is not always a clear distinction between some of the categories (e.g. introducing and justifying, insisting and urging). Go through the answers with the class, and elicit more examples for each function.

Answers: 1. see 2. resolve 3. issue 4. aware 5. understand 6. know 7. need 8. guarantee 9. would 10. insist 11. expect 12. promise 13. expect 14. towards 15. balance 16. accept 17. prepared 18. happy

6. Practice

Students work in pairs to complete the second extract. They could do this first without looking at the table of useful language in exercise 5, and then check their answers in the table. Point out that they will need to work out the function of each phrase in the extract in order to know where to check in the

table. When they have finished, go through the answers with the class. As a follow-up, you could go through the five questions from exercise 4 again, this time focusing on the management's position statement.

Answers: 1. identified 2. correspond 3. know 4. Otherwise 5. conducted 6. shows 7. expectation 8. region 9. policy 10. firmly 11. afraid 12. negotiable 13. do 14. can 15. regard 16. said 17. appreciate 18. propose 19. accept 20. depend 21. point 22. isn't 23. separately 24. cannot 25. work 26. priority

7. Problem-solving

Divide the class into two teams, with the same number in each team. With large classes, you could have more teams (e.g. four or six teams). Allocate roles to the teams and make sure they understand what they are supposed to do. Allow around ten minutes for them to plan their new position statements.

Background note: In a real-life negotiation, this second statement of position may not be necessary – see next workshop, Negotiations (3), for a more typical procedure. However, as the aim here is to practise the language of stating positions, this additional stage has been added.

8. Role-play

Put students into pairs (or groups of three / four), making sure there is at least one representative of both sides in each pair/group. They then take turns to present their new positions to their partners. As a follow-up, you could allow the negotiations to continue, in order to find compromises and reach a deal. Alternatively, you could discuss with the class how the negotiation might develop.