

## **Relationships**

### **Relationship Rules for the Road**

In terms of managing relationships at the negotiating table, remain cognizant of the following:

1. A good relationship is one in which you can have an open, honest, and candid conversation. It does not mean the other party is entitled to an endless stream of concessions that manifest in the form of better prices or more favorable terms and conditions.
2. Separate the relationship from the substance of the negotiation. It is possible to maintain a good relationship with the other party and remain principled, disciplined, and fact-based during the negotiation process.
3. Make every attempt to understand the style, personality, motivation, and interests of the party with whom you will be negotiating. Your success hinges upon your ability to work collaboratively with that party to reach an agreement.
4. Establish some level of affiliation with the other party so you see them as a person and are more inclined to collaborate with them.
5. Build trust, acceptance, and respect.
6. Remain unconditionally constructive and rational. Attack the issues and the problem not the people. Even if the other party acts emotionally, balance your emotions with reason.
7. Be honest and communicate clearly.
8. Say what you mean and mean what you say. You must be viewed as reliable if you want to influence the other party.
9. Be nice.
10. Do not coerce or threaten the other party and be open to persuasion.
11. When negotiating, try to find the balance between empathy (seeking to understand the other party's perspective and expressing it in a non-judgmental manner) and assertiveness (expressing and advocating for your own needs, interests, and perspectives).
12. Do not be afraid to have a difficult conversation.
13. Use inquiry versus advocacy. Check your bias at the door.
14. Be a good LIAR – listen, inquire, acknowledge, and respond.
15. Evaluate and reality test the strength of your relationship with the other party.

16. To have a trusted advisor relationship with the other party, differences must be resolved based on mutuality, collaboration, and reciprocity. The parties must understand, trust, and rely on each other and there must be mutual acceptance, rationality, and equal power to persuade.
17. Before agreeing to make a concession for the “relationship,” ask the following:
  - How committed will the other party be if the point is conceded?
  - If the point is conceded, will a bad precedent be set? What if the next “relationship” concession is larger or more impactful?
  - What type of relationship would conceding establish between the parties? Will it evolve into a master/servant relationship where the other party continues to make an endless stream of demands with the expectation of quick acquiescence?
  - Will the relationship ever evolve into one built on trust and collaboration?
  - Does the other party really want to have a good relationship? If so, why would they threaten or coerce you to comply with their requests?
18. Do not accommodate unreasonable requests to “buy” a good working relationship.
19. Address substantive issues on their merits by understanding each party’s interests, exploring legitimacy, and brainstorming.
20. Seek to understand versus seeking to be understood. Your willingness to listen to the other party demonstrates your commitment to a mutually beneficial relationship.