



Make the most of your concessions in a negotiation situation

The challenge

In order to move forward in a negotiation, people often enter into a “give and take” logic: one accepts to give way on a point, and expects that the other party will do the same in return. This usually seems the most efficient approach to reach a compromise that is acceptable to everyone. Reality, however, is frequently disappointing! The difficulty lies in the fact that concessions are not always perceived as such, hence not leading to the expected reciprocity. Moreover, many concessions are found in hindsight to have been granted unnecessarily!

Three useful reflexes

The advice below will help you select your concessions better, present them so that they are valued as they should be, and therefore generate a reflex of reciprocity.

1 Choose your concessions carefully

Your concessions do not always have the same value in your eyes and in those of the other side. Try to suggest concessions that cost you the least but that your counterpart values the most.

- Collect information that will enable you to **appreciate the situation through the eyes of the other party**.
E.g.: Is it urgent for him/her? Is he/she acting under the pressure of certain constraints? What interests is he/she defending?
- Listen carefully to better **understand his/her expectations**. In particular, study his/her suggestions thoroughly rather than systematically rejecting them. E.g.: Ask open questions, reformulate his/her words to avoid misunderstanding, etc.
- Observe the attitudes that reveal the **emotional reactions of your contact**. E.g.: Skeptic grimace, sigh of relief, frowning, etc.

2 Advance in stages

Concessions offered too quickly easily may seem devoid of value. Learn to use time to your advantage.

- **Don't let go of your own demands too quickly**. On the contrary, underline the reasons behind them. As a result, the efforts you make will be all the more valued.
- **Offer several concessions successively**. You will show that you are listening, hence promoting trust.
E.g.: People are more likely to value two successive 10% reductions than one immediate 20% reduction—quite irrationally!
- **Don't get carried away!** Listen to the reactions of your counterpart rather than being focused on the concessions you are prepared to make. You might not need to play all your cards.

3 Create a duty of reciprocity

Granting a concession does not necessarily mean that the other side will feel indebted to you. It's up to you to encourage reciprocity.

- Underline how much a concession **costs you**. E.g.: Granting a x% salary rise obliges you to reduce another budget.
- Explain the **benefits** that your counterpart will gain, which he/she does not necessarily realize! E.g.: Reducing delivery time may be just as beneficial to your customer as cutting prices.
- Don't hesitate to **ask for compensation** for the concession granted, and explain what interests you in return.
E.g.: "We have adjusted our price in accordance with your expectations. We hope that you will be able to make an effort on payment times."
- Faced with a more challenging party, indicate that you will **only accept to make a concession under specific conditions**. E.g.: "We are willing to revise our prices on condition that you commit to a longer contract term."