

# The Top 3 Negotiation Mistakes

*Negotiating is everywhere.*

We negotiate salaries. We negotiate real estate. We negotiate with our utility providers. We negotiate with our friends and family. No matter what you do for a living, where you live, or what kind of lifestyle you have, you can't avoid negotiating—at least every now and again.

To increase the chances your next negotiation goes the way you expect, make sure you know the top three negotiation mistakes—and what you can do to avoid them.

## Mistake No. 1: Preparing the Wrong Way



People spend too much time on research. They go to LinkedIn, they do a Google search, and they talk to their networks.

It's not that you don't need this information. But why spend a month trying to find out what you could learn in a couple of minutes over the phone? It's not the best use of your time.

**The fix:** Don't prepare for a negotiation simply by collecting data. Instead, **prepare by learning how to communicate effectively.** Know what you need to say to get the opposite party to tell you things they wouldn't tell anyone else.

Your goal should be to **make sure that you're smarter after the conversation is over**—not before it's even started. Determine what obstacles stand in the way of your desired outcome—and create a list of questions to ask that'll help you get there.



## Mistake No. 2: Relying on Common Ground



Social conventions encourage us to find common ground:

*"How about this weather?!"*

But is this really a good way to build rapport? *Not exactly.*

About 60 percent of people actually dread the classic common-ground questions. If you're talking to someone who doesn't have time for these pleasantries, it comes across as disingenuous.

Plus, common ground creates an awkward transition.

*"Hey, that's cool, both of our kids are in Little League.*

*By the way, you need to pay us \$10 million to add 15,000 new users to our system."*

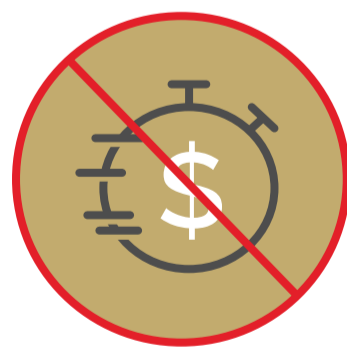
One of the primary goals of negotiation is to build trust. Is someone going to trust you more just because you both drive a red car?

**The fix:** Build trust and rapport by showing the other party that you actually understand where they're coming from. Use tactical empathy skills like labels, mirrors, and calibrated questions as a more effective way to build trust-based influence. Avoid awkward situations by not creating them in the first place.

**Leave common ground for small-time social interactions**—like exchanging pleasantries with the grocery store cashier. They're not cut out for the world of high-stakes negotiations.



## Mistake No. 3: Closing Too Quickly



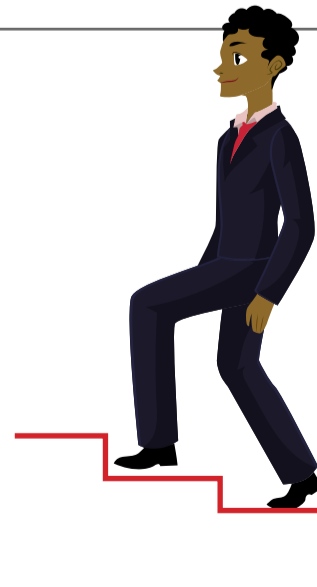
Salesmen often enter a conversation already knowing what they want the end result to look like. But if you've already decided what the agreement should be, you've made that decision with incomplete information.

People can feel when you're trying to close them. When you've got a very specific end result in mind, every communication you inject into a conversation is an effort to get the other side closer to that end result. And people can feel that.

Try to close too fast and you might get the counterfeit yes—the response someone gives just so you'll back off.

**The fix:** Consider each negotiation to be a step-by-step process. By the end of the first conversation, maybe your goal is to find out five things you didn't know going in. By the end of the second conversation, you might want to ensure the opposite party is fully aware of the loss they're facing if they don't do business with you.

However many steps you lay out, **make sure you get a "that's right" or two before moving forward any further.** That's the proof you need to know that your message is resonating with the other side.



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