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## **Jim's Profit Accelerator 29:**

### **Seeing Is Winning: Five Fallacies That Will Undermine Your Success in Negotiations**

Unless we're hermits, we negotiate with other people every day. Leadership, selling, resolving personal differences, problem solving, and risk management frequently require negotiation. When we don't label these activities as negotiation, our odds of success can drop sharply. The results can be equally disappointing when we operate on autopilot because we "know how to negotiate." Fortunately, mindfulness has a major impact on negotiation outcomes, and you can use it to enhance your power to negotiate effectively.

One of the major ways to increase your mindfulness in negotiations is to understand and avoid five common negotiation fallacies. Winning negotiators avoid these blunders:

**Fallacy 1: Successful negotiation means win-win.** It doesn't. It means acceptable lose-lose. Most of us enter a negotiation focused on what we will win. Even when we've outlined what we're willing to give up in our preparation, we're still not ready for the reality that everyone in the room will give up something to achieve a solution, and that we are included in the losers. Further, research has shown that bad feelings about losing are twice as powerful as good feelings from winning. It may be surprisingly hard to give up something you're attached to in order to gain a bigger objective.

**Tip:** As you prepare, review not only what you're willing to give up, but picture yourself giving it up. Then allow some time and space to process the intense feeling of loss. Denying these feelings risks that they will show up as anger or resistance in the negotiation, blocking the success that you seek.

**Fallacy 2: Negotiation is a secondary leadership skill.** It is a primary skill, because leadership is about influencing behavior. Negotiation goes on constantly in an organization, well beyond activities usually branded as "negotiation." For example, goal setting is primarily a negotiation, not an analytical process. The real-life question is, "What high-value objective can we choose to go after?" It's never "What's the highest payback goal for us right now?" The difference is defined by limits to skills, resources, personal interests, and the like.

I've made the mistake of negotiating goals with the folks who would have to own them, without ever stopping to ask this critical question: "How are you thinking about moving toward these goals?" My enthusiasm for defining the goals blocked me from checking in with reality to see what was actually do-able.

**Tip:** When negotiating goals with those you are leading, discuss their beliefs about limits. Help them to picture a path to success that they can embrace comfortably.

**Fallacy 3: Analytic preparation is the primary foundation for a successful negotiation.** It isn't. The primary foundation for success is emotional awareness of yourself and the others in the room. Preparation is essential, but limited emotional awareness makes it likely that you'll miss the cues in other people that will lead to an acceptable conclusion.

**Tip:** Practice *three-feeling tracking*: observe feelings in others, in yourself, and in reaction to each other. This active mirroring is the real currency of negotiation, and often it is a critical path to success. Look in people's eyes for their feelings, and look in your gut for yours. Note feelings in phrases as you negotiate. Maybe even write down a few words. Whatever you do, don't try to escape from feelings. In doing so, you will miss the cues you need and undermine success.

**Fallacy 4: Negotiation is more about the mind than the heart.** Our brains are built to first check to see if an appeal is safe and simple. The so-called "reptilian brain" (brain stem and cerebellum) is our keeper, charged with spotting danger and keeping us safe. Virtually all input passes through it for a "gut check." If your proposal fails the gut check, the brilliance of your approach won't get to the other person's analytical brain, and your effort likely will be wasted. Here's how to get past the reptilian brain:

1. Start simple and clear.
2. Use illustrations, drawings, or charts to show emotional benefits.
3. Watch for signs of continuing attention, or lagging attention.
4. Continue to work to find an answer that works for the other people.
5. If attention lags, return to #1.

**Tip:** Put yourself in the others' shoes. Present your proposal in ways that enable the others to remain engaged long enough for them to want to spend the time and energy to think it through.

**Fallacy 5: "I know what success looks like."** This one is subtle but dangerous. A common part of preparing for a negotiation is to "visualize success." That means picture it, in some detail. It's an organizing technique that can be useful, but it also can derail the success you seek. The problem was described by French impressionist Claude Monet, who is quoted as saying, "I wish I had been born blind and then suddenly gained my sight so that I could have begun to paint without knowing what the objects were that I could see before me."\*

Our brains train us to "see" based partly on what we think we ought to see. Those who teach drawing routinely instruct novices to notice that the eyebrows on their human subjects aren't symmetrical. This is often a surprise to students, who usually draw symmetrical eyebrows because that's what they picture in their minds (as opposed to what they notice right in front of them). We don't always see the truth of what is in front of us.

**Tip:** Remain in the moment, open to possible solutions that you haven't thought of. Focus on your skills instead of your fear of loss.

As you approach your next negotiation, keep these fallacies in mind, as a framework to hold your instincts in place. Both you and the others in the influencing process (negotiation) will appreciate your stable, helpful, and successful approach. After all, "success" means that all of you are mostly pleased with the outcome.

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Jim Grew is an expert in CEO-level strategy and executive leadership whose clients refer to him as the Business Defogger and Accelerator. Jim helps leaders swiftly discover the hidden opportunities within their businesses and exploit them for dramatic results. Nearly three decades of success as a COO and CEO coupled with his experience running nine thriving businesses provide the foundation for his consulting work as president of the Grew Company. He presents regularly to industry groups, mentors business leaders, and shares insights on his blog, BizBursts.com: <http://bizbursts.com/>. He holds BA and MBA degrees from Stanford University.

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