

keep your eyes on the prize

✱ How to Avoid Being Derailed by Small Details

EDITORIAL | MARC FREEMAN



MARC FREEMAN

Marc Freeman, author of *Renegotiating with Integrity: It's Not Business, It's Personal*, has worked with companies all over the world, helping them to renegotiate hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts. A recognized expert in his field, he has developed a unique, practical approach to renegotiating based on the simple principles of respect, honesty, creativity and clear communication. For more information, he may be contacted at marc@marcfreeman.us or at 641-472-2727.

Every transaction has myriad details that are part of the deal. Many times people seem to get bogged down in small details or get derailed by sensitive issues, and this stalls the process. Every detail will have to be addressed, but **you will be surprised at how far you can get by keeping your goal in mind and not getting bogged down by those details.**

During the process, some things that were once considered important will become irrelevant, and others that weren't an issue suddenly become a deal breaker. This is normal and does not have to mean the end of any negotiation. It just means that you need to change your tactics so that each party walks away from the negotiation table happy with the results.

Here are several tips that will help speed up the process of any negotiation by transcending the details.

Create a List

Every project or transaction has a beginning, middle and end. It is important to lay out all the details that need to be checked off in order to finish. Write a list of everything you could hope to get out of the deal. During this step, you don't necessarily need to be practical. Things that may seem far-fetched to you might be run-of-the-mill for the other side. Then make a list of everything you absolutely must have in order to reach your goal — in other words, your deal breakers.

Walking into any negotiation without these lists is like going to an exam without studying. You will be unprepared and won't be able to accomplish everything you need to do to be successful. Having a list gives you a path to follow so you don't forget anything.

Rate Your List

Give your list a rating system based on importance and simplicity to get through each detail. By identifying your

main goals, you will have a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished. Realize that you might have to concede on some points in order to gain others. You can even make a big deal about some irrelevant point that seems to be important to the other party but not important to you, and then concede. This will give the other party the idea that you are being more than flexible, thereby requesting the same from them. If you don't rank your list, you won't know which details can be sacrificed to achieve the more important goals.

Keep in mind that the importance of each item on the list will change as the negotiations progress. Be sure to listen to the other party so you know what their concerns and details are. As they outline theirs, it might make some of yours irrelevant. You need to be prepared to reassess your ratings as you go.

Start Small

Don't jump into the negotiations with the biggest item on your list. You will only end up overwhelming the other side and will actually decrease the likelihood of getting what you want. The idea is not to strain. Start with a few of the easy things on your list. This is a great way to break the ice and create a common ground for moving forward. As you reach agreement on smaller issues, each subsequent discussion will go a little easier.

Know When to Bring Up the Big Issues

Don't overwhelm the other parties with a list of a million small details. Save some of them for the end of the negotiations. Since you have already dealt with several simpler details smoothly, you can now work together to deal with these more critical details. This is when you should begin to address your most important issue. If you do too many small issues first, by the time you get to the larger, more important items on your list, the other party will feel like they have already given too much and will be much less likely to want to help you achieve your large goals.

Don't Just Focus on Yourself

As you work through the process, you will need to continually listen to the other side. This will provide an opportunity

“Things that may seem far-fetched to you might be run-of-the-mill for the other side.”

“Having a list gives you a path to follow so you don’t forget anything.”

for you to find out what their big issues are. If you don’t pinpoint and address their main goals, you will constantly run into roadblocks when trying to accomplish your own list of goals.

By creating an environment of give and take, each side will be much more willing to listen to the others goals and needs. You want to be sure to address their main issue, and once this is cleared up for them, the rest of the negotiation will proceed much more smoothly. You never know, their big issue may be very easy for you to accommodate and thus make them much easier to deal with.

Come Back to Some of the Smaller Issues

After you wrap up some of the larger issues, you can go back to the smaller, unresolved issues on your list. After

reaching an agreement on each party’s main goal, the smaller objectives won’t present a problem to reach an agreement. Many times, they are so invested that they will be willing to concede the smaller issues just to wrap up the deal.

Don’t forget to constantly reassess your list as you progress through the negotiation. Each agreement you reach will have an affect on the remaining items on your list. It may even make some irrelevant. Stay focused on the bigger picture. Walking into any negotiation with a clear plan and a flexible mindset will prevent both parties from getting bogged down by smaller details. Transcending the details can be a great way to form the partnership that you envisioned when you first started the negotiation process.

And remember — **don’t let the details hold you back!** 