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Negotiation tips: The 3 moves to make

Negotiation Tips: Flinch, Reflect, and Go Silent. A simple technique to get a concession.

There are plenty of standard **methodologies and techniques** people rely on when it comes to **handling negotiations**, in everything from haggling over a yard sale purchase all the way up to buying a company. You've probably seen the ads for seminars to teach these time-tested techniques.

Through my own experience, I've come to rely on a simple three-step process that delivers almost every time: Flinch, reflect, and go silent. While each of these techniques alone can help move the needle in a negotiation, the real magic happens when you layer them all together.

Let me explain how it works—and how you can use it to gain some significant concessions in your next negotiation.

1. Flinch

It's human nature that when someone **quotes a price**, many of us don't want to be embarrassed and therefore respond by saying, "That's reasonable." But if your goal is to negotiate that price down, that's the worst possible response to lead off with. Rather, when someone shares a price with you, you're better off by displaying some kind of "flinch"—perhaps reacting as if the person somehow slapped you. My preference is to make some kind of verbal response, saying "oomph" or sucking air through my teeth to indicate my physical displeasure at hearing that price quoted. The point is to communicate your discontent with the price in a clear, nonverbal

manner. What's important is that you flinch no matter how reasonable the price. This is a time to remember your drama class and go big on the flinch.

2. Reflect

After showing your physical displeasure with the initial quote, your next move is to repeat back to that person what they said in a way that reinforces how steep you think it is. Let's say you're trying to buy a rug at a flea market, and the vendor quotes you a price of \$100. After flinching, you might then say something like: "\$100 for *this* rug?" or simply "\$100?" The point is to communicate how shocked and displeased you are by the price they are quoting to you.

3. Go silent

The last step in negotiating for a better price is to go silent. Be warned: This is extremely uncomfortable for both you and the other party. But it's also extremely effective because at some point someone will be moved to break the silence. Remember the rule: Whoever speaks first, loses. Your goal is to ensure that you keep your mouth closed, even if every second seems like it drags on for minutes at a time. Just staying quiet for 20 seconds can seem like an hour. But, remember, don't speak up. One tip that I use is that I will literally bite my tongue (softly) to ensure that I don't break the silence. The prior two steps set up this powerful final move in gaining a concession.

Winning concessions

If you can pull off these three steps—flinch, reflect, and go silent—you'll find that you can win some significant concessions from the person you are negotiating with. As I mentioned earlier, deals can range from the small and insignificant like a yard sale coffee mug all the way up to a high-stakes negotiation to buy a company. I have had success in all of these scenarios.

I remember one case where I even used this technique to reduce the escrow on a deal from 24 months all the way down to 12 months. While it was difficult, especially the remaining silent part, it resulted in a big win. My suggestion is to try it somewhere small to learn the technique, so you are practised when it really matters.

The next time you find yourself in a negotiation of any kind, give this three-step technique a try and see what kind of amazing results you get.

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About the Author

Jim helps leaders grow companies. He specializes in the issues that fast growth firms experience in their business models, talent, processes and systems as they reach higher levels of performance. Jim and his team at the **Inc. CEO Project** work with over 100 CEOs of high growth companies to identify and obliterate the things that stand between them and continued organizational success.

With 30 years of leadership in business strategy, technology businesses, process improvement, organizational development, mergers and acquisitions, engineering, sales and marketing, he brings experience in leading global organizations in both public and private environments across many functional areas to the table. Jim has been quoted in *The New York Times*, *Time*, *The Huffington Post* and *National Public Radio*. His ideas have been translated into 9 languages and he has done business in over 26 countries.

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