

HEY NEGOTIATORS...SHUT UP!

Negotiation is conflict. It's stressful and nerve racking. We've all heard someone ramble in a negotiation - verbal diarrhea (VD). Not a pleasant thought is it? Good! Does this display confidence, conviction, power? Nope.

Top negotiators understand negotiating is about silence. Yes, of course you need to speak, but it's really about listening. Displaying confidence (not arrogance), and self-discipline are key.

- When you don't know what to say...Shut Up!
- When you feel weak...Shut Up!
- When you feel not in control...Shut Up!
- When in doubt...Shut up!

Do you have the nerve to sit quietly - to make them feel uncomfortable? People will fill silence with words, which is information, which is power.

Case Story (Lose)

A client had a senior exec called into a negotiation by the other side. This exec had a history of VD and the other side knew it. So, we wrote a script for him to read when it was his turn to speak. He read it. Brilliant! Then, he kept going...ugh. His next two sentences cost the company over \$20 million in sales and upset the other side at the same time.

Question: Why does the other side call the senior exec in? Answer: To get \$20 million.

Case Story (Win)

A team with the business was subject to an RFP and of course were looking to retain it. For the first meeting, the team went in armed with carefully drafted questions. When the team asked about timing, the buyer arrogantly stated the timeline was being accelerated as one of the bidders said they could take over the business in 5 months. It was clear the buyer was just making it up on the spot. The buyer was trying to compress time to get the team to move quicker and provide price concessions. The team quickly concluded the timing was impossible for the other bidder.

"Since your new bidder can take over the business in 5 months, we will need an answer by tomorrow if you wish to retain us at the current price for another year. If not, no problem, we have a contract on the table for your production time (BATNA), which pays more. We will stop shipping you in month four, per our agreement. We are ok with either decision you make - just let us know by tomorrow. Thanks."

The next day, they received the call about having the business for another year. The other bidder couldn't meet the timing. The RFP was thrown out because buyer had VD! A complicated RFP turned into a single statement leveraging the power gained from the buyer talking.

Go into your next negotiation with a couple well prepared open-ended questions and then shut up and listen. What are they saying? What are they not saying? Why? Are they expressing a position, or are you listening for the real underlying interest. When you think you should speak....think again...and then again. Then, say something which is purposeful, with intent.