

Getting What You Want



The most satisfying outcomes in negotiations occur when we prepare carefully beforehand.

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Win-win negotiations and tips from Dr. Brock can help you be more successful in business.

By Amy Grice, VMD, MBA

The nuts and bolts of negotiation were presented by Dr. Amy Grice (this author). She defined negotiation as any process where two or more parties attempt to resolve differing interests, whether they are business owners and employees, veterinarians and clients, or parents and children. She described two types of negotiations: zero-sum (or distributive) and mutual gains (or integrative).

Distributive bargaining has a winner and a loser; it is competitive and cen-

tered on competing for a fixed resource.

Integrative bargaining is win-win negotiation, and it seeks to fulfill as many of each side's needs as possible, she said.

Knowing your best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) before beginning a negotiation is critical, according to Grice. By understanding what your other choices are, you know when to walk away rather than make further concessions. Simply thinking through all of the alternatives helps you stay focused and more confident during discussions, she said.

Choosing an opening offer is tricky, said Grice, because all subsequent bargaining will take place around this anchor. Too high or too low, and the negotiation may be over before it starts. Knowing your resistance or "walk away" point before starting the discussion will help to keep you from making emotional decisions.

Every person has a preferred negotiation style. Grice reviewed the different styles and gave examples of how each style can affect negotiation outcomes. The audience had the opportunity to realize their own styles with an assessment tool developed by G. Richard Shell, a professor at the Wharton School of Business. Simply being aware of your own preferred style and the pitfalls that might arise because of it is helpful, added Grice.

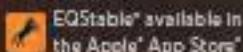
In forming a strategy for a negotiation, you should think about the importance of a future relationship with your counterpart and the degree of conflict



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¹EHV-1 and EHV-4

²Fretz PB, Babiuk LA, McLaughlin B. Equine Respiratory Disease on the Western Canadian Racetracks. *Can Vet J* 1079;20(2):58-61.

³Hanley L, Cacanes P. Retrospective Cohort Study of an Equine Influenza Outbreak in the Chilean Army in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Chile, during 2006. In *Proceedings, 12th Symposium of the International Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics*, Durban, South Africa 2009:64.

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that is likely to arise, said Grice. When you will need to work closely with your counterpart in the future, cooperation and compromise are the most important strategies. When conflict is highly likely and a future relationship is unlikely, competitive bargaining is appropriate, along with cooperation.

In work teams and friendships, accommodating the wishes of your counterparts is often a good choice, along with collaborative negotiation. The most satisfying outcomes in negotiations occur when we prepare carefully beforehand, concluded Grice.

Bo Brock's Recipe for Success

Crowds gathered to enjoy Dr. Bo Brock as he shared his wisdom. Brock founded Brock Veterinary Clinic in Lamesa, Texas. He's an adjunct professor at Texas Tech University, and he has written a book called *Crowded in the Middle of Nowhere*. Brock graduated *magna cum laude* from Texas A&M and was voted equine practitioner of the year for the state of Texas in 2007. He defined success as the ratio of what one could have done to what one actually did. In a humorous, but focused, story, he talked about "what makes one vet shine and another flop."



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When conflict is highly likely and a future relationship is unlikely, competitive bargaining is appropriate, along with cooperation.

The three things of importance in determining this were people, places and prices, he said.

When he first started practicing, he decided to write down a grade in each of these categories for every visit he made in order to increase his attention to providing the best service every time. For people, Brock considered that having a great attitude throughout the entire veterinary team was imperative to providing good service. Place meant your clinic or truck, and it needed to be clean, organized and professional. Price needed to be just right;

not too high and not too low.

Brock's grading scale was as follows:
A = Your client actively finds people to tell that you are a good vet.

B = Your client tells people that you are a good vet when they are asked.

C = Your client tells people that they use you as a vet when they are asked.

D = Your client tells people that you are not a very good vet when they are asked.

F = Your client actively finds people to tell that you stink.

Brock reminded the audience that "Perception is reality," and that leaving our clients feeling a little happier than when we arrived is sometimes as easy as just paying some attention to them.

On the subject of prices, he asked, "Could you afford to go see you?"

In order to help your practice grow, Brock suggested having a practice theme, being user friendly, laughing and helping others to laugh, and making sure you never think you are too important.

In closing, he suggested that, "People would rather be surprised than disappointed," and, "The world is full of educated derelicts."

With humor and straight talk, Brock offered a clear method for evaluating your practice's performance. ♦



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In Dr. Brock's "people" grading scale, an A grade was given when a client actively found people to tell them what a great vet you are.