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Tactic # 19 - Moving the
Goalpost

May 20th, 2010



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Tactic # 19 - Moving the Goalpost

Summary: Adjusting goals when it appears the original goals are unobtainable.

Sometimes you may be unable to accomplish your negotiation goals. In those instances, it may be best to quickly switch goals. For example, if you are buying a house and the seller wants a price that is unacceptable to you, you may first try the tactic of [YIKES! You've Got to Be Kidding!](#) If that doesn't work, you may try to support your offer with [Facts and Statistics](#). But if both these tactics are unsuccessful and you realize your original goal is unobtainable, you may need to change your goal.

Example

An individual buys a two-thousand-dollar couch from a furniture warehouse. When the couch is delivered, the buyer finds out that its springs make exceedingly annoying squeaks whenever anyone sits down. The initial goal of the buyer is to get the furniture warehouse to replace the couch with a new one. But when the buyer calls, the manager states that the company is going out of business, so all sales are final. All the tactics the buyer has initially planned to use (e.g., stressing the value of a long-term relationship, threatening to report the company to the Better Business Bureau) will be useless since the seller has no commitment to the relationship. So the buyer decides to switch her position and asks, "If you will not replace the couch, will you at least come to my home and see if there is anything you can do to fix the squeaks?" The seller agrees. After examining the problem, the manager puts the buyer in contact with the manufacturer, who agrees to send out a service technician to fix the problem or replace the couch.

Counter

The most effective protection when a counterpart switches positions on you is to have a very clear picture of the outcome you need to create a win-win situation. When you have a firm bottom line, you cannot be taken advantage of. In the example above, agreeing to send someone to look at the couch is not a problem for the seller, so a counter is not needed.

Do you have any negotiation questions? If so, then send them to us by hitting the "reply" button. We'll do our best to address them in upcoming issues.

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This tactic is one of 101 strategies and tactics featured in [The Only Negotiating Guide You'll Ever Need](#), by Peter Stark and Jane Flaherty.



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