

# THE MASTER NEGOTIATOR

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Tactic of the Week #63

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President**

Peter and his team of expert negotiators train leaders, sales professionals and procurement specialists in the art of negotiation.

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## *Tactic #63 - Playing Stupid*

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Summary: Feigning ignorance to test a counterpart's honesty and the accuracy of his information.

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Playing Stupid sometimes pays off. You may ask a question even when you already know the answer in order to verify the accuracy of your counterpart's information or to test his honesty. This tactic works because people tend to want to help you more when they think you are handicapped by a lack of skills, knowledge, or information. In other words, there are times when playing dumb is smart.

### Example

Last year we were in the market for a new refrigerator for our office. Wanting to make a good investment, we went to six different stores looking at three different brands of refrigerators. After about three stores, we began to realize that we knew more about the models than the salespeople waiting on us. But because too much knowledge would probably intimidate the salespeople and cause them to keep their guard up, we began Playing Stupid, saying that we just weren't sure what type of refrigerator we needed for the office. We didn't volunteer the fact that we had already shopped at several other stores.

Finally when the sixth salesperson had concluded his presentation, we narrowed the focus to the model we were interested in and told the salesperson that if he could sell us that refrigerator for \$950, we would make the purchase right then and there, without even checking at another store. This was \$70 off his asking price and \$135 off the lowest price we had found at the other stores.

### Counter

In the scenario above, the salesman responded, "I can't give this refrigerator to you for \$950, but I can let you have it for \$980." It was still a great deal, so we agreed.

Remember to keep your guard up in every negotiation. Realize that any information you yield may be used against you. Helping a stupid person is a good thing, but it is devastating to help a smart person dig a grave for you!

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

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"forward email" below.*

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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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