



# Top Tips & Hints for Negotiating Virtually





# Telephone Negotiations

## ADVANTAGES

- Fast
- Easier to hide reactions
- Easier to say NO
- There's a greater expectation of resolution
- It's easier to stop or defer

## DISADVANTAGES

- It's difficult to read the other parties reactions
- Easier to lose focus
- More difficult to understand the other party
- More difficult to be creative
- Don't necessarily know who is present



# Phone Call Preparation

- Select a convenient time for you:  
Some people are morning/ afternoon people
- Secure a location where you can conduct the negotiation without interruption
- Prepare a checklist of topics to be covered and prioritise
- Prepare a checklist of information needed and therefore questions to be asked
- Prepare checklist of information to be shared
- Prepare objectives: Intends, Musts & WL/CL.
- Ensure that you have full authority for the objectives set and be clear on what you're prepared to commit to in the call
- Identify and prepare backup material that you need, and those to be sent to the other party in advance
- Agree agenda with other party (including sequence of topics)
- Agree time frame of call with other party

# The call



- Confirm who is on the phone. Introduce the participants from your end
- Opening statement: use to reaffirm the agenda(ensure nothing else to add) and set direction (as you would normally)
- Ask lots of questions: based on your preparation. In particular identify their priorities
- **LISTEN:** particularly important as you don't get to read other signals,
  - ! Don't interrupt
  - ! Don't prepare your response until they've finished
- **SILENCE:** get used to silence it can be very powerful for telephone negotiations. If the other party feel obliged to fill the airways you will learn more
- **SIGNALS:** more difficult but not impossible e.g. Order of topics for discussion from other party, hesitation, tone of voice, rambling evasive answers
- Keep your responses simple and succinct. Be specific about what your interests are
- Summarise regularly to ensure you understand them, are on the same page and should the negotiation meander off track, use summaries to demonstrate progress made.

# The call (cont.)



- **MIRROR:** where possible use their language and numbers (e.g. percentage or absolute numbers) to demonstrate that you're listening and understanding them, and to make it easier for them to understand you.
- Make detailed notes of both what they are doing (e.g. threatening you) and the narrative.
- **BUILD RAPPORT:** look for an opportunity to have "non task" chat. Share some personal information that will help build rapport but be careful of derailing the conversation from the key business issues

## ENDING THE CALL

- **MONITOR TIME:** Typically people are less keen to let phone calls over run than face to face meetings
- **END OF PHONE CALL:** summary, sweeper question & structure expectations



# Don'ts

- ! Enter into unscheduled phone calls if you are not prepared. Defer the call but always make sure you agree a mutually acceptable time to re-engage.
- ! Feel obliged to continue a call if it's not working. If it's not working, make it clear and give warning signals. If no change, identify the sticking point and suggest an adjournment. Agree how & when to re-engage.
- ! Feel obliged to carry on if you are unclear or don't understand. Stop clarify and don't move on until both parties are in agreement on understanding
- ! Don't try to multi-task



# Video Conference Negotiations

## EMPOWERED TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

We are confined to thinking about how we adapt our current means of negotiating to a new environment, so let's turn the whole thing inside out and think about how video conferencing platforms empower us to do things differently.

# Before and after the online meeting



## USE THE TIME BEFORE AND AFTER THE MEETING WISELY

With virtual meetings you know who is on the meeting beforehand and you can try to use that time wisely, perhaps asking a question or two ahead of the meeting to test assumptions that can be applied to the rest of the meeting.

The same may apply at the end, perhaps the individual is more likely to give you accurate feedback whilst not in front of colleagues.

Separately someone who wishes to make a parting shot privately may hang around and do so.

# Questions



## DIRECT QUESTIONS TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Questions can be effectively directed at an individual you feel may be most likely to divulge information or provide a positive response, so sometimes asking questions to a specific person when they can no longer look around the room for support, will allow you to watch their reaction to the question and see if anyone jumps in to answer on their behalf.

The dynamics of the meeting are simplified by the other party's inability to interact and this can be applied to your advantage.

People are less likely to confer during a digital meeting. They cannot simply put their heads together, and you may identify more easily where differences of opinion exist in the other party.

# In-meeting adjournments



## SCOPE FOR IN-MEETING ADJOURNMENTS CAN BE ENCOURAGED

We all know the situation where the other party is close to an agreement but they just want to go away and talk it over. Perhaps two people are in and one is reticent, and you sense that the deal is close if the two can speak to the one who is blocking process.

Why not suggest that whilst there is still time they take a break in the meeting and set up a break out room. This gives them privacy but they remain attached to the discussion as opposed to having them walk away and requiring that they arrange a further meeting.

The probability that you will be given a right of response to any blocking issues will be increased.



# The opening statement

## THE NEW IMPORTANCE OF THE OPENING STATEMENT

The opening statement takes on even more importance with digital meetings.

Think about using chat or sharing a screen to present the agenda in a manner that takes control, encourages a positive response, gently outlines the elements of sanction and incentive that bring you power (whilst placing yourself in the position of the other party), flatters the relationship current or intended, focuses on the big picture and outlines a desired outcome.

A person's face is visible through a white fabric barrier, looking towards the camera. In the background, a whiteboard is partially visible with some text and a drawing of a motorcycle. The overall scene is brightly lit and slightly out of focus.

# More contributors

## **MORE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THOSE ORIGINALLY SUPPRESSED BY STRONG PERSONALITIES**

In a collaborative virtual meeting the white-boards or iPad usage lends itself to ensuring that ideas are invited and incorporated.

People are largely visual in their thinking and inviting their ideas alongside others when building an argument, clarifying what was agreed or establishing issues that will influence a decision, is a useful tool that can be instantly shared within and outside the meeting.

This takes on particular importance when it is decided that the result of the discussion needs to be referred to a third party outside the meeting.

People who are being suppressed by the strong personality in an onsite meeting are more likely to contribute in this way.

# Misinterpretation



## AVOID MISINTERPRETATION AFTER THE MEETING

People have the ability to share screens and should be encouraged to do so when arguments are complicated or when the disclosure is to your advantage and you wish to capture it.

You can grab screenshots and review them post-meeting, which may open possibilities and avoid misinterpretation after the meeting.

These screen shots can be appended to meeting summaries/minutes or brought to the agenda at a subsequent meeting.



# Control

## GREATER CONTROL OF THE MEETING

Hosting a meeting creates an element of control you don't necessarily have in face-to-face meetings, even when held at your office.

Annotation tools bring additional focus to the displayed content and give the host greater control of the meeting.

You can also stop the sharing of others' screens, a method that can be used in emergencies like a colleague sharing purchase price instead of sales price or, even when somebody is distracting or misdirecting the meeting.

# The ability to walk away



In tough negotiations, parties who are apt to leave the table tend to wish to meet at your office because it allows them the unique power of walking away when they wish or holding you captive in your own venue when you do not wish the discussion to continue.

In a virtual meeting room both parties have the ability to walk away and that ability lends itself to techniques such as out of bounds, “but before I leave, consider these areas where we could be flexible”.




# Background display

## MAXIMISE YOUR BACKGROUND DISPLAY

In a sense you are being invited into people's homes, so there are opportunities to build empathy by referring to what you see, and opportunities to invite it by positioning yourself in front of personal items that will entice questions and perhaps encourage empathy.

Also, if you have a message or agreed a client mission that you wish to keep in peoples' minds, try projecting this behind you as a backdrop.

Your voluntary association with that statement could be a useful if subliminal tool..



# Send private messages

If you have someone on the other team who is gunning for you and you are confident that your interests are aligned, can you judiciously send a meeting chat message to that individual?

For example, “is there anything we’ve missed?”, “what do you think?” or “what aspect are they least happy with?” can be helpful and can improve the meeting in a way that cannot be managed face-to-face.



# Introduce polls

## INTRODUCE POLLS TO PURIFY RESULTS

When we ask a group of people a question in a face-to-face meeting we get one response and a load of adopters.

We can now introduce an online poll which purifies and allows people to think without being contaminated / influenced by the first answer or by strong personalities. Announcing the poll as anonymous will encourage an objective response.

Reading back the result can be powerful when the strong personality suddenly realises they are not aligned with their team.

# Meetings are shorter



## MEETINGS ARE SHORTER AND TO THE POINT

Virtual meetings can be shorter, more to the point and can clarify deals on the spot.

For the speaker to keep attention, keep it short, and for the other parties, wait, summarise and ask questions later.

Virtual discussions are less interactive than face-to-face and there is a danger of tacit consent if people are allowed to speak at length without alternative opinions being raised.

Summaries and getting a response take on greater importance.

# Observer role



## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OBSERVER ROLE

One thing we miss with this type of negotiation is the ability to see an obvious reaction in the non-active participants of the other party.

Whenever the active party departs from their pre-agreed strategy or speaks out of turn (perhaps) sharing critical information that was not anticipated, in face-to-face meetings they would turn to look at the speaker but in virtual discussions we have to watch more carefully to note when they make notes or reach for chat.

An observer role takes on greater importance in this respect.



New message



To

---

Subject

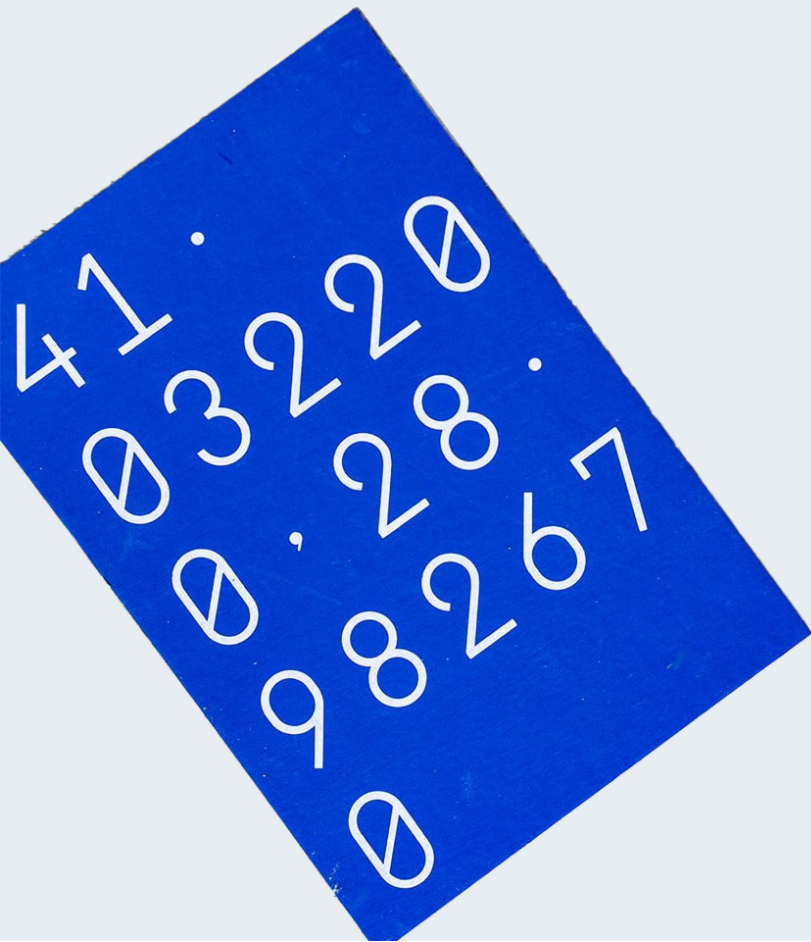
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# Negotiating via Email

SEND



# Sharing information via email



## RECOGNISE THE OTHER PARTY'S STYLE

Are they detailed? Or do they prefer headlines?  
Understanding the other's party style will allow you to adapt accordingly.

## COMMUNICATE IN THE OTHER PARTY'S STYLE

Once you know the other party's style, use it to communicate with them. If they use bullet points, then use bullet points to give them information. If they prefer a narrative complete with details, then give them that. The more you communicate using their style, the more comfortable they will become communicating with you.

## WHEN IN DOUBT, BE SUCCINCT

If you have no idea what their style is, then default to being succinct. Headline people will not zone out, and the more verbose will ask for additional detail.



# Using time

## **INSTANTANEOUS DOES NOT MEAN IMMEDIATE**

Just because you can respond quickly doesn't mean you should. Take your time and respond when you're ready. Don't succumb to the pressure of an instantaneous response.

## **GAIN PERSPECTIVE**

Before you respond to the email, gain perspective so that you can provide a thoughtful response that will further your position and move the negotiation forward.

## **STAY IN CONTROL**

Email does allow for a certain amount of control. Taking your time to respond will slow a negotiation's pace — just be careful not to stall it. Sending rapid replies can speed up a negotiation's pace — just be careful not to miss opportunities. Either way, by remaining in control of your responses, you can also control the negotiation's tempo.

# Managing tone



## **EMAIL IS TONE-DEAF**

People can very easily misread or misinterpret your intended tone. Therefore, write your emails as if the other party is tone-deaf. Don't assume that they will know how you feel — assume that they know only what you write.

## **TONE IS IN THE EAR OF THE LISTENER**

Often, tone carries on from previous communications, and it can snowball rather quickly. It can also be influenced by the recipient's mood as they read the email. If you detect a tone issue, move quickly to rectify it.

## **AVOID DELICATE OR NUANCED MESSAGES**

Simply put, there are some exchanges that are better left for verbal conversations. While it may be easier to deliver bad news via email, having an actual dialogue may save you a lot of time and unnecessary emotion later in the negotiation.

195  
when man boasted in his own self-  
God's laws, God's tone immediately  
loses on Mount Sinai, "You shall set  
d, saying, "Take heed to yourselves that  
tain or touch its base. Whoever touches  
put to death. Not a hand shall touch him,  
ed or shot with an arrow; whether man or  
Exod. 19:12-13).  
the law of the old covenant. Just take a moment  
e foot of Mount Sinai. See it as it is described in  
Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because  
on it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke  
whole mountain quaked greatly" (Exod. 19:18).  
ere the Ten Commandments were given.  
place to be at. Don't take my word for it; read for  
documented for us in the book of Exodus. "Now  
nessed the thundering, the lightning flashes, the  
mpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the peo-  
rembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses,  
us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us,  
Exod. 20:18-19).  
venant of the law was a covenant that was void of rela-  
was a covenant of distance and separation from God. The  
ed by fear, didn't want God to speak to them. That was  
the effect of the law.  
God's people presumed on their own righteousness (reflect-  
ride in every person's heart, making them believe they can  
do all that God demands), God unleashed upon them His  
ous standards and immediately a division and distance came

# Words matter

## CHOOSE WORDS CAREFULLY

Be mindful of what you're saying, as you may not get the opportunity to correct a mistake via email. Worse yet, you may not even be able to see that a mistake was made until later in the negotiation. So choose your words carefully.

## QUALIFYING WORDS ARE SIGNALS

We often use soft language to come across as nice or gentle. But that soft language will be viewed as a signal. You can be firm and be nice. Writing "I could do around 10%" signals to the other party that 10% is not what you need at all. Instead, just write, "I can do 10%." By getting rid of the qualifying words, you're getting rid of the signal.

## BEWARE OF THE WRITTEN WORD

Once you've sent that email, it will become a matter of historical record within your negotiation. Anything written will be far more difficult to change or correct than anything verbal. If you're concerned about putting it in writing, then pick up the phone and have a conversation.



# Reacting

## **BEWARE OF EMOTION**

If email is tone-deaf, it can also be emotionally detached. In other words, the emotion you receive from others via email may actually have nothing to do with the emotion of the deal. Likewise, your emotional reaction may have more to do with what's happening to you in the moment than what the other party is doing. Recognize your own emotional state before responding.

## **RECOGNIZE THE TRIGGERS**

If you know that you're more terse before your first cup of coffee, then recognise that trigger and don't respond to emails until after that first cup. Look for those same triggers in the other party and manage accordingly.

## **BE CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT'S BEHIND THE EMOTION**

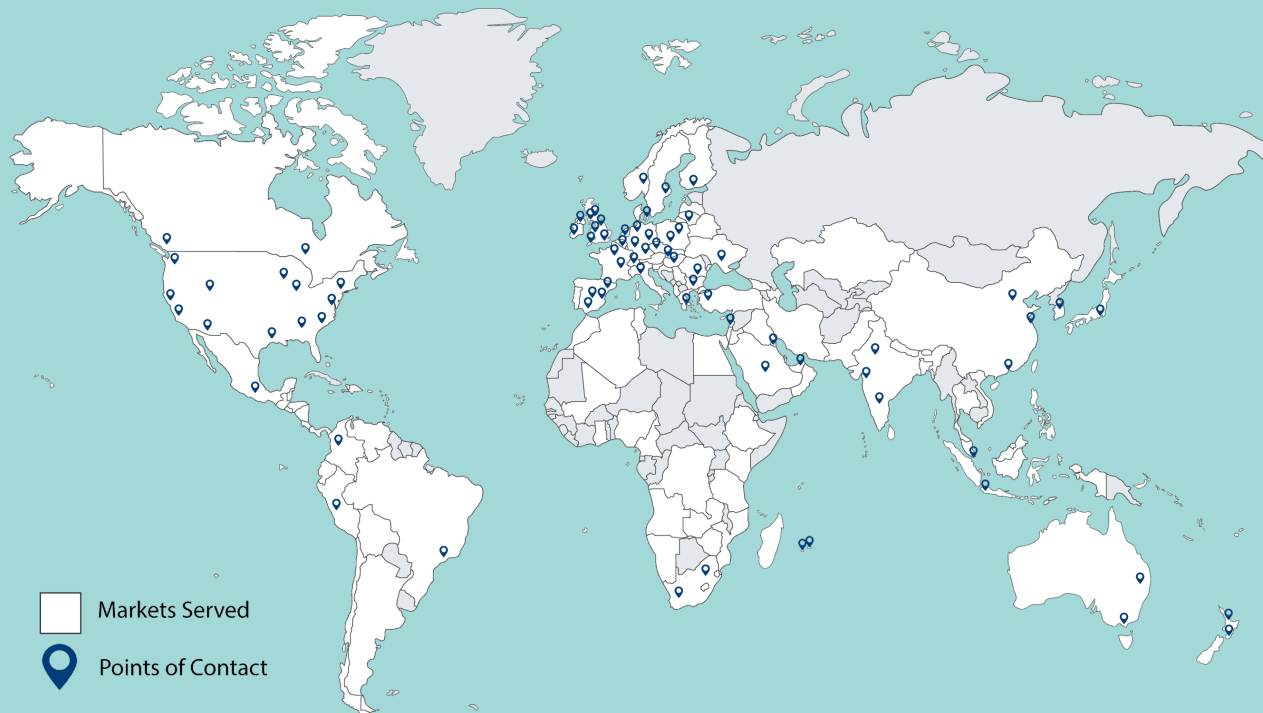
If you're met with an emotionally charged email, don't react with your own emotional tirade. Instead, get curious as to what caused the emotion. No need to be defensive—just ask good questions and get to the real issues.

# About Scotwork

Scotwork®

## MAKING A REAL IMPACT WORLDWIDE

Scotwork has coached hundreds of thousands senior managers in 29 languages. We have grown into the world's number one independent negotiation consultancy, operating in 46 countries. We work with organisations large and small across all sectors. After more than 45 years we are still giving people powerful skills that transform their lives, and handing businesses more successful futures.



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Indonesia  
Ireland  
Italy  
Japan  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Kuwait  
Lithuania  
Lebanon  
Luxembourg  
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Mexico  
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