

Win win negotiation skills apply at home and in the boardroom, and this negotiation article tells you how.

By Lyndsay Swinton

"If you can figure out whether a 4 year old or a 6 year old should get the last toffee, you can negotiate any contract," says Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop. Win win negotiation skills apply at home and in the boardroom, and this negotiation article tells you how.

Win Win Negotiation or Tit for Tat?

Problems occur when the two parties look out for their own interests, with little consideration for others or the longer term impact of their actions. Negotiations result in one party getting their ideal result, but at the expense of the other party. As time goes on and further negotiations are required, the natural human behaviour is a tit for tat approach, with one or other party always losing out, or at worst, both parties losing out. Mum eating the toffee may be a lose-lose outcome for the children!

Win Win Negotiation Grid

The 4 potential outcomes from negotiation are summarised in the grid below.

I Win, You Lose	I Win, You Win
I Lose, You Lose	I Lose, You Win

Real Win Win Negotiation - I'll cut, you choose!

A more useful and successful approach to negotiation is to think about win-win solutions. What possible solution would mean that both parties can come away from the table feeling victorious? It may take a leap of creative faith to see the win-win solution, particularly if you've had prior bad experiences with the party, but it's a good habit to develop.

What win-win scenarios can you think of for mum and her children?

- Could you split the toffee in half?
- Could one child split the toffee in half and the other choose?
- Could the 4 year old have the toffee now and the 6 year old get two toffees when they get home in an hour?
- Could mum have the toffee and both children get two toffees each when they reach the shops?

The language and idea of win win solutions comes from mathematical gaming theory. A win win outcome is called a "non zero sum" game, where all parties involved finish the game positively. The flip side of this is a "zero sum" game, where some people finish the game positively, but others finish negatively, and the positives balance equally with the negatives. This is the win-lose scenario. Find out more about gaming theory in the [ice-breakers ebook](#), which contains the classic Prisoners Dilemma game.

In a win win negotiation, all parties involved feel they've reached a successful outcome. With increasing complexity and specialism in the workplace and in relationships, it pays to play a non zero sum game and look for the win win solution. Avoid needless screaming showdowns with your children and develop the habit of win win negotiation.

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