

April 2000

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR, Fellow PRSA Chairman

RE: Nine Steps to Successful Contract Negotiations (Wage Peace; Avoid War)

High-profile labor trouble can generate serious temporary harm. Successful contract negotiation or dispute resolution must be driven by a strategy and mindset focused on the goal of getting a contract or a useful result through principled, honorable communication.

1. **Avoid Strikes:** They are the most destructive actions companies can have happen to them. A lousy contract arrived at peacefully is generally far better than protracted negotiations with a strike. Settle. Settle. Settle. Be a better negotiator next time.
2. **Wage Peace:** The company owns the jobs, work, assets, markets, and future. All of these are jeopardized if workers are needlessly antagonized or insulted. Keep your testosterone in check.
3. **Zip Your Lip:** Most negotiations succeed because two or three crucial issues or ideas remain unsaid because it was unnecessary to say them. Focus on getting a contract.
4. **Stay Focused:** No, it's not the defining moment in labor/ management relations in America. No, the workers of America (fewer than one in 12 is a union member) are not ready to take to the streets. Stay at the table.
5. **Prioritize Your Communication:** Victims first - customers, vendors, non-union workers, retirees, anyone directly affected; employees second - yes, even those who oppose you, the only way they'll get your message is from you, directly; those indirectly involved third - suppliers, vendors, neighbors, the government, prospects; news media fourth - but only as a vehicle to reach those publics who are affected, but unreachable any other way.
6. **Be Unassailable:** Talk and act with compassion and victim sensitivity. Act conclusively; make unchallengeable, fundamentally sound decisions. Act, plan, talk, behave, and succeed with everyone's best interests in mind. Preserve your resources and conserve your energy. Act honorably at all times.
7. **Understand the Pattern:** Work against the negatives; support the positives.
8. **Foolishness and Stupidity Reduction:** Avoid the silly and serious mistakes.
 - o Begin with a "Final Offer." (There is one . . . at the end.)
 - o Try to run the entire enterprise with supervisory people and managers. (Rest and stay alert.)
 - o Call for Congressional action. (You may get what you ask for.)
 - o Ask the President for help. (He never signs labor agreements.)
 - o Claim your company will be irreparably harmed.
 - o Propose an unintelligible contract package.
 - o Buy big ads that "explain your position." (Who cares?)
 - o Let the media drive your actions. Remember, the media virtually always:

- Over-alarm;

- Over-hyperbolize;

- Generally conduct themselves

- Over-analyze;
 - Over-sympathize;
 - Over-symbolize; and
- well below the standard they set for others.

9. ***Engage the Media Selectively:*** When the media are the only way to get your message to the crucial publics who need to receive it; where the public interest requires it; and when it will help focus on negotiations.

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