SUMMARY NEVER SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE CHRIS VOSS



Summary of «Never Split the Difference» by Chris Voss

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The how-to guide for learning the secrets of negotiation from the FBI's lead negotiator, implement the techniques and learn how to always get what you want.



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Introduction

If you find yourself failing to convince your partner to go try the new restaurant in town or convincing your boss that you deserve a raise, then it's time to learn Chris Voss's tips on how to master negotiating and never compromise. As humans, we have an innate desire to want things, and when you negotiate successfully, you can always get what you want. Sounds too good to be true, right? Throughout his career as the lead FBI hostage negotiator, Chris is letting you in on the secrets on how to become the greatest negotiator and the smartest person in the room. But, it's not easy, it takes time, patience, and practice, but if you apply the techniques, you can learn to never compromise or never split the difference.

You Want What You Want

You might think that negotiating is only for those big-wigs business people that are out making million-dollar deals, or people going on Shark Tank to try and negotiate a deal to make their business take off, right? Well, you'd be wrong. Think about it, you're negotiating every day with your spouse, friends, colleagues, even your kids. You want to convince your spouse to go to the new restaurant, but your spouse wants to go to your usual spot. Or you want your kids to go to bed at 9:00, but they want to go to bed at 10:00. How do you convince the people in your life to do what you want? You negotiate.

Now, you can learn how to negotiate so you never have to settle. The first step is realizing that everyone operates with a simple, animalistic urge of I want. And sometimes when you want something, you throw away rational thought and operate solely on emotion. There are many negotiating techniques, but many become flawed because they assume that people can overcome that raw, animalistic emotion. They operate on the idea that you can separate the problem from the person. This is simply untrue because we as humans operate under what is known as a cognitive bias which makes us unconsciously irrational.

So how do you work with people that are both emotional and irrational? Accept the human condition that our brains drive us but not in the way that you are expected to think. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman proved that the brain has two systems of thinking. First is the fast-thinking, instinctual mind that deals with emotions. The second is the slow, logical and rational process. However, the first system is far more influential and affects the rational part when it eventually kicks in. In other words, the human brain is irrational.

The framing effect becomes the most powerful cognitive bias that affects how people think. People will react depending on how the situation is framed. By creating the right context surrounding something, you can get the reaction you are looking for. Think about toddlers, they are the most emotional and irrational negotiators and pitch fits and throw tantrums when they don't get what they want. Negotiating with toddlers is hard. Imagine walking around the store with toddler Penny, who finds the perfect toy to take home. She comes up to you with the "best toy ever." You know you can't get that toy for her, but you also know that if you say no then a temper tantrum will ensue in the middle of the store. So you think about your options. You calmly tell Penny that if she puts the toy back then she can have more money to get ice cream with her friend later during their play-date. You explain Penny's options and she slowly begins to put the toy back on the shelf. You succeeded! But why? Because you simply framed the situation to get the reaction that you desired.

The Power of "No"

How do you feel when you hear the word 'no'? One of the biggest fears of most negotiators is hearing that two-letter word that brings up feelings of failure and frustration. 'No' sounds like the end, there's nothing else. But, Voss explains that the short horrible word is solid gold to the world's top negotiators. Why? Because 'no' allows you to see your counterparty's comfort, and they can only move forward when they are comfortable. It instantly clarifies what the other side wants, and thus begins the real negotiations.

But hearing 'yes' too soon can be just as terrible to hear. Think about a pushy salesman trying to sell you something you absolutely don't need. Saying 'no' gives you power and control, but only temporarily. Eventually, you might give in and resign to saying 'yes' just to end the conversation. It becomes an escape route to get out of the situation as quickly as possible. So while hearing 'no' can feel like a dead-end, there is much more meaning behind hearing the word 'no' instead of 'yes.' No can mean a variety of things like "I'm uncomfortable, I can't agree yet, I don't understand, I'd actually like something else, I need more information, or even, I want to confer with someone else." Instead of getting to 'yes,' Voss learned the goldmine of hearing 'no.'

At the end of the day, 'no' doesn't mean the negotiation is over. In fact, it opens up opportunities to gain more information and build a rapport with your counterpart. Think of 'no' as an opportunity to learn more and think of a better deal.

Be the Mirror

Listening. Ah, the critical key to communication. Sounds easy, right? But it's not. You do it all the time, you hear what you want to, you get distracted, and you consistently think of a response as another person is talking. You aren't fully listening, and once you can admit that, you'll realize that listening is one of the hardest techniques a negotiator must master.

In pressure-cooker situations, Chris Voss found himself becoming distracted by chaos. There are many distractions when negotiating in hostage situations including trying to follow protocol, listening to the frightened cries of hostages, and listening to police issue orders, So, Chris figured out a listening technique to make the other party feel comfortable and feel truly heard. Think about it, how do you feel when you know someone is not listening to you? You feel frustrated, you have to repeat yourself, and you feel like what you have to say isn't important. Well, Chris developed a mirror strategy to become a top negotiator and build trust with his counterparty.

Mirroring is simply matching the body language, speech tempo, word choice, and tone to build a rapport with your opponent. By mirroring, you are telling your opponent that you are both alike, that you can be trusted. Chris says all you need to do is repeat the last three words your opponent said which instantly makes the opponent feel heard and understood. For instance, when negotiating in hostage situations, Chris listened to a robber as the robber explained that his vehicle was gone. His driver had fled the scene. Hearing this, Chris repeated, "Your driver was chased away?" Through mirroring, Chris could keep the opponent talking and gather as much information as possible, eventually leading to the arrest of the driver in this situation.

Psychologist Richard Wiseman decided to set up his own pressure-cooker situation to test the mirror theory. In a busy restaurant, Wiseman instructed one group of waiters to use positive reinforcement when taking orders from customers, saying words like "great" or "excellent" while the other group was instructed to use the mirroring technique. Turns out, the group that repeated the customer's orders earned 70% more tips than the group who used positive reinforcement proving that mirroring makes customers feel heard and understood.

Labeling Empathy

If you think mirroring is all you need to a successful negotiator, then you are wrong. It takes a lot more than just repeating words to build trust and rapport with your opponent. Here's where empathy comes into play. How can empathy help you in negotiating? Well, empathy is simply recognizing another's perspective and seeking to understand that person. Empathy doesn't always come easy for people, but luckily Chris has a tactic to help you.

Labeling. Labeling or identifying the emotions of your opponent shows that you're understanding. Take out all the judgments and your own opinions, instead, understand what your opponent is feeling and verbalize that emotion. This technique helps to calm the counterparty down and helps begin effective negotiating. For instance, Chris tells the story from 1998 when he was called to negotiate with four prison fugitives. The fugitives were hiding in a Harlem apartment, supposedly armed with automatic weapons. During this negotiation, Chris imagined exactly what the fugitives were feeling and verbalized those feelings to them. He explained that he knew they were scared of going back to prison and that if they opened the door to the apartment they feared they would be shot.

So, they sat in silence for six hours. The fugitives only listened to Chris as he confirmed their feelings of fear and worry. However, they surrendered explaining that Chris had helped calmed them down. He understood their emotions, he acknowledged them, and he was able to negotiate a positive outcome in the end.

When acknowledging the emotions that your opponent is feeling, it's also important to avoid saying the word 'I' because your focus should be entirely on your opponent, not yourself. Whenever you say 'I' you make the counterparty think about your needs and not theirs. For instance, in the negotiation with the fugitives, Chris avoided saying phrases like "I want you to surrender or else the cops and myself will have to enter by force." Instead, he said things like "You must be feeling scared and that you've got a bunch of cops out here that are aiming to harm you." He understood them and avoided using 'I' to ensure their emotions were valid to get the outcome he desired.

"That's Right"

When negotiating, you love to hear the word 'yes!' It means you won, right? Well before you can get the outcome you want, you must learn how building a rapport through empathy and mirroring isn't the end of your negotiating tactics. Now, you must convert that rapport into influence to finally get that 'yes' that you are searching for. But how can you do this? Simply by summarizing the opponent's objections until you hear a phrase that is more powerful than 'yes.' What's that phrase? 'That's right.'

It sounds simple, but hearing your opponent say 'that's right' is the key to unlocking influence and guiding them to agree to your terms. However, you mustn't confuse 'that's right' with 'you're right.' How can one word change the entire meaning behind this simple phrase? Simply put, think about the last time you said 'you're right' in a conversation. Perhaps you were venting to a friend about your unhealthy relationship and seeking advice. Your friend probably pointed out all of the unhealthy aspects of your relationship, but not wanting to hear anymore and simply wanting to end the conversation, you just respond 'you're right.' It's similar to resigning to 'yes' just to get that pushy salesman to stop selling to you.

By saying 'you're right' the opponent is acknowledging that you are right, but it's not about you at all. It's about them. By getting your opponent to change their wording to 'that's right' you recognize that you have evoked an epiphany in your opponent. Your opponent has recognized that you have been able to empathize with them without judging them.

So, how can you get your opponent to respond with this powerful phrase? Use labeling to identify their emotions, then paraphrase their position. The combination of the two creates a summary that is either correct or not. Either your opponent says 'no' or they nod their head and say 'that's right.' Once you hear that phrase, you hold the power and your opponent will let you further guide their thinking. They're ready to make the deal that you want.

Calibrated Questions

Imagine walking into a department store and becoming bombarded with questions from sales associates. Questions like "Are you looking for a specific item today?" "Can I help you find something?" "Have you heard about the sale we have going on?" This bombardment of questions becomes frustrating, and you can simply respond with 'yes' or 'no' and move on with your shopping. Was the sales associate successful in helping the customer? Probably not. The simple mistake is that the sales associate asked only Yes/ No questions that didn't allow her to get to know the customer at all or build trust.

Yes/No questions aren't about building a rapport, they are instead designed to make a point and become counterproductive when negotiating. So, what kind of question is the most productive? Open-ended questions that force the opponent to think. The art of open-ended questions encourages your opponent to participate and actively seek a solution with you. Chris likes to use "calibrated" questions to focus the opponent and get them to speak and really engage in the negotiation.

For instance, the department store sales associate from earlier, whose goal is to make a sale, could ask questions that engage the customer and get them to engage in a conversation. Questions like "What are you looking for today?" and "What do you like/dislike about this?" are much more effective for getting a sale. By getting to know the customer, and their likes or dislikes, the sales associate can quickly build a rapport with the customer and determine exactly what the customer is looking for, which increases the associate's chance of making a sale.

Voss described a hostage situation disaster in 2001 in which Abu Sayyaf kidnapped 20 hostages in Manila, including three Americans. The U.S. forces were unable to communicate effectively with the rebel leaders and eventually, the Philippine government and army declared war on the

terrorist group which led to even more confusion. The situation ended with several hostages being killed, including two American captives.

Voss reflects on their negotiation strategy and realizes their strategy was based on retaliation rather than approaching the rebel leaders with collaboration and cooperation in mind. Instead, each side demanded something and became focused on defeating one another. Conversations were stagnant and ended in disaster. This situation is a great example of when calibrated questions could have been used. Calming the opponent and cooperation could have potentially led to a more favorable outcome.

Throw Out the Golden Rule

Treat everyone the way you wish to be treated. Sounds pretty good, right? Well, that type of thinking will get you thrown to the wolves in any negotiation. You don't get what you want by revealing how you wish to be treated, instead, you want to treat others the way others want to be treated and reveal the other side's negotiation style to drive the best bargain. But how can you do this?

In any deal-making agreement, you want to come out swinging and begin with Extreme Anchors. Opening with an extreme anchor means beginning with an outrageous price that you know your opponent will never accept, but by doing this you get an edge. You can now determine the negotiation style of your opponent, which is the real gold in any negotiation, and use it to your advantage. Let's take a look at the main negotiation styles and the traits associated with each one:

- Accommodators: these negotiators love to build relationships, exchange information, and are seeking a win-win. They love to talk, aren't overly prepared, and their silence is anger.
- Assertive: these negotiators believe that time is money, and they enjoy getting things done. They believe respect is important, they need to be heard, and they speak through silence.
- Analysts: these negotiators are methodical, they take the time to get it right. They hate surprises, they are skeptical, and they enjoy silence so they can think.

The most important thing to remember is that you cannot force your negotiation style onto your opponent. Thinking your opponent will be just like you will become detrimental when trying to make a deal. Instead, take your time and study your opponent, anticipate what your opponent is going to do next and you'll surely walk out sealing the deal you want.

Identify the Black Swan

On the morning of June 17, 1981, thirty-seven-year-old William Griffin left his parent's house in Rochester, New York, but not before he grabbed his shotgun, issuing three shots that killed his mother and a handyman and injuring his step-father. As he jogged the streets of the city, he shot a workman and two bystanders before he entered the local bank. Taking nine employees hostage, he ordered the customers to leave. While on the phone with negotiators, the bank employee stated that Griffin wanted the police to come to the doors and kill him or else he would start killing hostages by 3:00.

Griffin gave a deadline. Negotiators at the time knew that never in the United States history had a hostage-taker killed a hostage at the deadline. Instead, hostage-takers wanted something. They wanted money, power, something. So, negotiators had thirty-minutes to respond but their calls into the bank were futile, Griffin never picked up. At 3:00 Griffin ordered 29-year-old Margaret Moore to move to the front of the bank and aimed his shotgun. With no remorse, he issued two shots into Moore's stomach leaving police and negotiators stunned.

This had never happened before, what did Griffin want? Incidents like this are what Chris Voss considers Black Swans. The term has become synonymous with information that is outside our expectations and predictions. In the Griffin case, they didn't predict that Griffin was on a suicide mission, they assumed he wanted money, but they were wrong and it cost the life of single-mother Margaret Moore. To ensure situations like this don't happen again Chris believes we must search for the Black Swans or the unknown unknowns.

How can you find these Black Swans? By looking at the world through your opponent's eyes. What is their world view? Their religion? The answers to these questions can unlock the key to identifying the Black Swans and making a successful negotiation. By identifying these unknown unknowns,

you can increase your leverage in a deal. Once you know more than the other side thinks you know, you can leverage those black swans and put yourself in the position of power.

Put yourself in your opponent's shoes, know their morals and their missions, and you can determine the unknown unknowns of any deal.

Bend Their Reality

How many times have you found yourself walking out of deal unhappy with the outcome? Perhaps you wanted to get that car for a few thousand dollars less, or you ended up compromising more than you intended. Why do you make these deals that you aren't necessarily happy with? Maybe you felt rushed, you became tired and resigned to a compromise that was less than desirable. Chris wants to remind you to never rush and never compromise. When you compromise, you split the difference, you never want to split the difference. Instead, you want to bend the reality for your opponent.

Timelines and deadlines are crucial elements of any negotiation and are a great way to bend reality for the counterparty. Why do you think businesses always offer deals that include a deadline? If you feel rushed, you'll become more likely to do or say impulsive things that are not in your best interest. Deadlines make you worry about potentially losing out on a great deal. In reality, deadlines are mostly subjective and almost always flexible. Negotiators like Chris resist the urge to give in to the pressures of a deadline and use its power to influence the opponent.

Another way to bend reality is through the concept of "fairness." What makes you accept the deal from the salesman when buying a new car? Because you think it's fair, if you didn't think it was fair, you would simply walk away, right? For example, Chris describes the "proposer and accepter" theory to prove his point. Assume a proposer is given \$10 to split between himself and the accepter. If the accepter refuses the offer, the \$10 is returned to a third party, and neither the proposer nor the accepter receives any money. Results show that any offer less than \$5 each is usually rejected. If the offer is less than \$2, the accepter becomes insulted and will more than likely turn the offer down.

So what does this prove? That our emotions play a role in decision-making. Both the proposer and accepter started without any money, and if thought about rationally, accepting \$1 is better than nothing. However, since the deal seems unfair, both parties would rather walk away with nothing rather than get \$1 and the proposer leaving with \$9.

At the end of the day, remember that compromising is an easy, safe choice. But safe and easy isn't what makes your dreams come true. Instead, be empathetic, connect with your opponent, ask questions, make your opponent see your side, and never split the difference.

Final Summary

Through the key tools that Chris Voss has spelled out, you can become a negotiating master in all areas of life. Whether you're negotiating with your boss, your partner at home, or with the local car salesman, you can employ these techniques to ensure that you never have to compromise. Remember to stay calm, be empathetic, and get to know your counterparty's views. If you can establish trust and rapport, then you can always get what you want and never split the difference. To quote Chris Voss "one can only be an exceptional negotiator, and a great person, by both listening and speaking clearly and empathetically; by treating counterparts - and oneself - with dignity and respect; and most of all by being honest about what one wants and what one can - and cannot - do. Every negotiation, every conversation, every moment of life, is a series of small conflicts that, managed well, can rise to creative beauty. Embrace them."



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