



THE  
**LavaConConference**  
ON CONTENT STRATEGY AND TECHCOMM MANAGEMENT

**New Orleans**

# **Negotiation Skills: The Missing Ingredient to Career Success**

by Jack Molisani  
President, ProSpring Technical Staffing  
@JackMolisani



# About the Speaker

- | **Project Officer in the USAF**
- | **Author, *Be The Captain of Your Career***
- | **President, ProSpring Technical Staffing**
- | **Executive Director, The LavaCon Conference on Content Strategy and TechComm Management**



# Overview

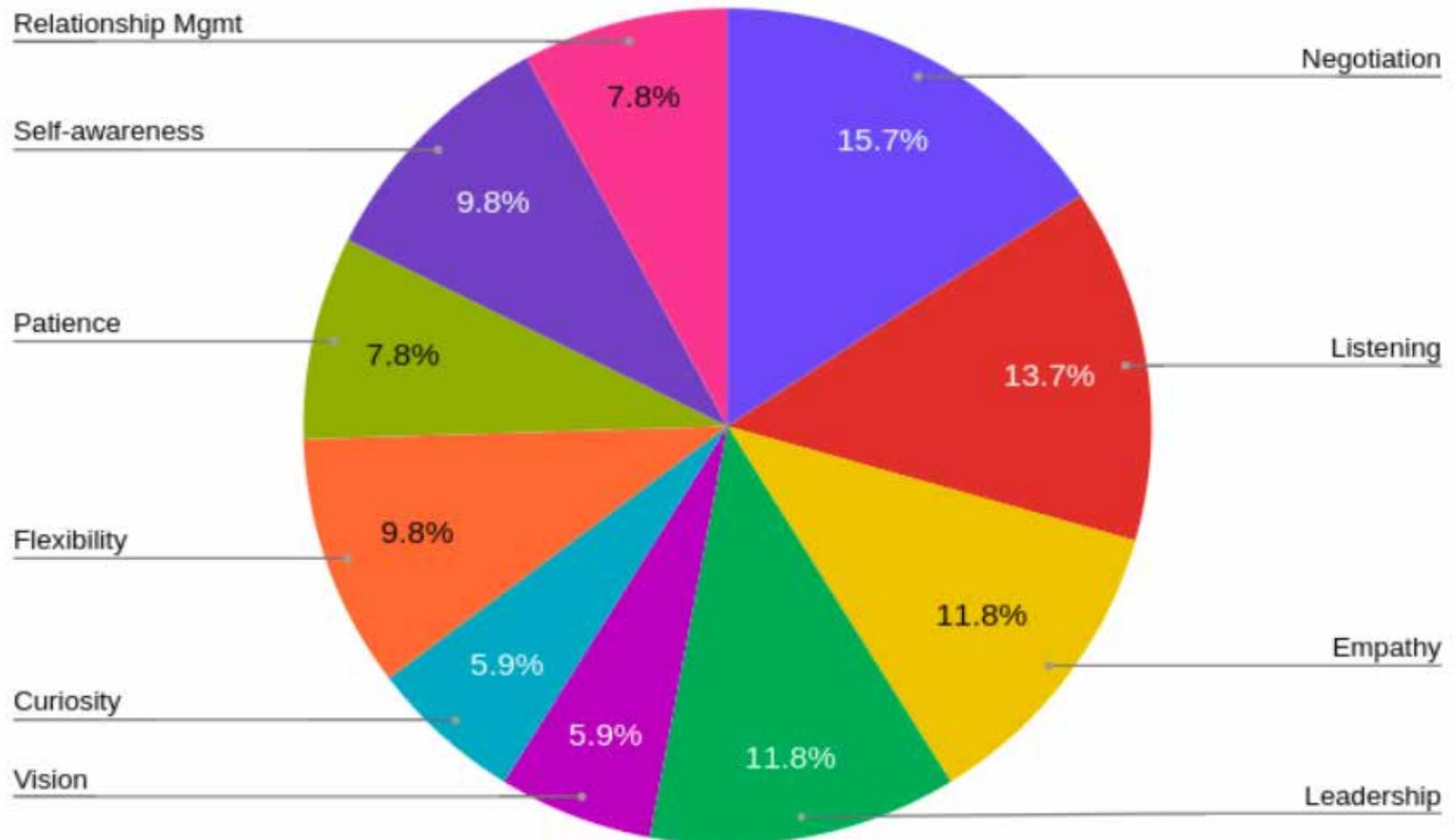
- | **This session is about soft skills in the workplace, including negotiation skills**
- | **Not how to get the best deal on a car, house or new set of luggage**
- | **Lessons learned from 30+ years as an employee, contractor, consultant, and finally a business owner**



# Soft Skills Survey

- | I posted on social media a survey about what soft skills do content strategists need to be successful**
- | We received almost 100 different answers**
- | We organized them by commonalities**
- | Here are the top 10 answers**

# Soft Skills Survey Results





# Soft Skills Top Answer: Negotiation

- | **Workplace Negotiation Skills**
- | **Diplomacy**
- | **Conflict Resolution**
- | **Relationship Building**
- | **Finding Common Ground**
- | **Influence Without Authority**
- | **Managing Project Scope**



# What is Negotiation?

# What is Negotiation?

- | **To attempt to come to an agreement on something through discussion and compromise** (Dictionary.com)
- | **The process of achieving agreement through discussion** (Wiktionary.com)
- | **Conferring, discussing, or bargaining to reach agreement** (Websters)



# What is Negotiation?

**Latin *negotatio* < Latin *negotatio*  
 (“the carrying on of business,  
 a wholesale business”) < *negotari*  
 (“to carry on business”)**



# What is Negotiation?

**Negotiation is the art of giving up  
as little of what you *have* in order to  
get what you *want*.**

**Jack Molisani**



# What are You Negotiating?

- | **Your Compensation**
- | **Project Scope**
- | **Project Deadlines**
- | **Resources**
- | **Headcount**
- | **Budgets**



# Basics

- | **One negotiates to get to a common agreement**
- | **I think all negotiations have to be either Win-Win or Lose-Lose to be considered “successful”**

**A sale: The buyer got the product (or service) they wanted at a price they could afford, the seller still made a profit**

**A war: Split the territory in dispute. Neither side is happy, but it's better than fighting**



# Before You Start

- | **Chellie Campbell, author of *Zero to Zillionaire*, talks about doing business with “Your People”**
- | **Your People value your services and are happy to pay your rates for a quality product or service. They *want* to strike a deal that is good for both parties.**
- | **Find Your People and negotiate with them.**



# Before You Start

- | **Do your homework**
- | **Find out what the going rate is on the market (buying or selling)**
- | **Set your success criteria: what's great, what's acceptable, when to walk away**
- | **More on these later in the presentation**



## At the Start

- | **Don't just start with numbers. Try and build some rapport first.**
- | **Find out what is important to them, and let them know what is important to you.**
- | **Then try and come to an agreement where you both win.**



# Opening Offers: Theirs

- | **When possible, let the other side make the opening offer.**
- | **That is the first insight you get into what they have in mind as a fair price.**
- | **This lets you know if the deal is even worth pursuing.**



## Opening Offers: Theirs

- | **Warning: People who try to talk you down to some ridiculous price saying “you’ll make it up in volume” or “I can pay you more on the next job” are *not* Your People!**



# Opening Offers: Yours

- | **There will be times when you will have to make the opening offer, such as stating your bill rate or salary expectations in an interview.**
- | **I have a rule of thumb: The better the interview went, the higher the number I quote when they ask for my bill rate.**



# Opening Offers: Yours

- | **However, I always add a qualifier in case I needed to backpedal.**
- | **I say, “My *normal* bill rate is \$xx/hr...” and then watch their reaction.**



# Opening Offers: Yours

- | **If they accept my rate without hesitation, I make a mental note to raise my rates!**
- | **But if they react negatively, I can quickly add, “...but I’m flexible given that this is a long-term contract [given the state of the economy, etc.]”**



## Opening Offers: Yours

- | **If they react negatively and I have to backpedal, I *also* add, “What bill rate did you have in mind...?”**
- | **I have found that even when people say they didn’t have a bill rate in mind, they really did. They just didn’t want to tell me until they heard what I was going to say first.**

# Opening Offers: Yours

- | **Perhaps the number with which you opened was out of range for a Technical Writer but might be in range for a Senior Technical Writer.**
- | **In that case you are now negotiating seniority and title, not just salary!**



# Handling Objections

- | **There will be times when the other party objects to your estimate, your prices, etc.**
- | **The trick to handling objections is to discern *why* they are objecting and respond accordingly.**

# Handling Objections

- | **Be able to defend your numbers:**
  - What value do you add?
  - Have you saved your company money?
  - Have you *made* your company money?
  - Increased customer satisfaction?
  - *Why* should a company pay you what you want?
  - The employer's viewpoint: WIIFM?



# Handling Objections

- | **Be able to defend your numbers:**
  - **Project plans**
  - **Prototypes**
  - **Historical data**
  - **Other sources of hard data**

# Handling Objections

- | **If you can show *exactly* how you came up with your numbers, the negotiation will swing away from your numbers and onto the *scope* of the project.**
- | **Example: If your bid is 20% more than what the client has budgeted, you can say, “What if we replace the installation guide with a quick-start guide and move the reference information onto your website later...?”**

# Handling Objections

- | **Notice in that example you are now negotiating *scope* not your bill rate to or hours get the project under budget.**
- | **Bonni Graham did a great presentation at LavaCon on “How to Create a Database to Track Historical Data and Bid Future Jobs.”**
- | **Email me and I’ll send you the link**

# Handling Objections

- || **Another way to “handle” an objection is to just give them what they want.**
- || **I once had a client say, “We want to bring you on, but your bill rate is \$75/hr and the max we can pay is \$72.50.”**
- || **\$2.50/hr was absolutely in the range of what I was willing to give up to get that contract, so all I had to do was agree!**



# When to Walk Away

- | **There are times when the other party will ask for something that is simply not acceptable.**
- | **If you absolutely cannot get them to change, then one option is to simply walk away.**
- | **Indemnification story**



# The Importance of Listening

- | I've heard it said that all salesmen talk too much. The same thing can be said for negotiators.
- | You should *listen* more than *talk*.
- | Find out what is important to the *other* side and respond accordingly.

# Negotiating: Give and Take

- | **Most people consider making and receiving concessions as part of the negotiation process**
- | **Some people would rather say, “Just give me your best offer” and take it or leave it.**
- | **But most people expect you to give up something, or they won't feel you are negotiating in good faith.**

# Negotiating: Give and Take

- | **So add things to your “wish list” that you are willing to negotiate away.**
- | **That way you can make concessions while still preserving what’s important to you.**
- | **What do you think would happen if you asked for only the exact things you want?**
- | **Plus, they might just say “OK” and give you everything you asked for!**

# Keep Your Options Open

- | **Part of your homework can include getting bids/offers/estimates from other parties**
- | **You can then say, “XYZ offered me \_\_\_\_\_, can you match that?”**
- | **That can be used as a good closing technique.**
- | **It is easy to walk away from a negotiation if you have a better offer elsewhere.**



## A Caution to Buyers

- | ***Before you start negotiating, do your homework and decide how much time, effort and money you are willing to invest in the process.***
- | **Then stick to your plan, and be willing to walk away if you are not getting what you want.**



# Exercise

- **Identify what you need.**
- **Decide what would be great, what would be acceptable, when to walk away**
- **Tell the other party why you are there, but also build some rapport**
- **Find out what is important to *them***
- **Use that data to handle objections (if any) and negotiate an acceptable deal**



# Recap

- | **Negotiation is the art of giving up a little of what you have in order to get what you want.**
- | **Take time to build rapport with the other party.**
- | **Decide before you start what you want, what you are willing to give up, and when to walk away.**



# Recap

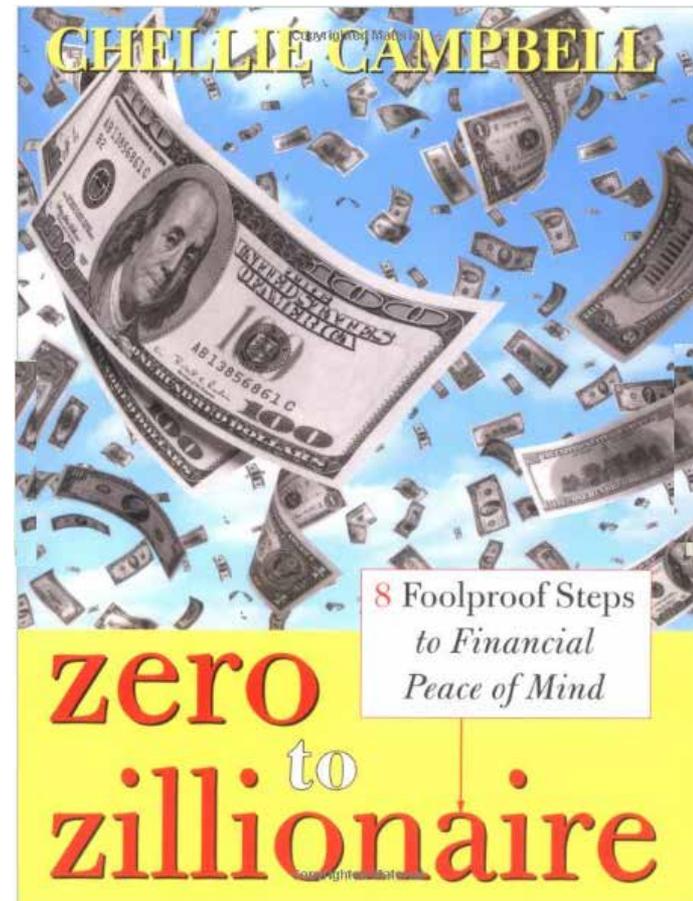
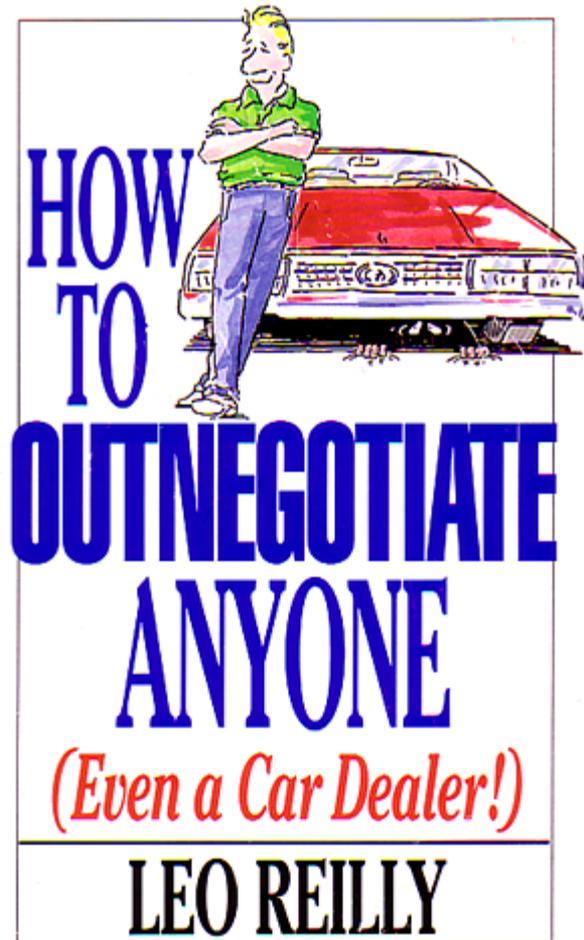
- | **When possible let the other party make the opening offer.**
- | **Be able to defend your numbers and estimates.**
- | **When possible, negotiate project scope, not your bill rate.**
- | **Go for a Win-Win agreement.**



# Recap

- | **Remember to ask questions in a negotiations (including interviews).**
- | **You cannot address their concerns unless you know what they *are*.**
- | **Find and negotiate with Your People.**

# Recommended Reading





# Contact Info

**Jack@lavacon.org**

**www.LavaCon.org**

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