



A New ICON[®] For Negotiating: From Clashing to Collaborating

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Manipulation. Misdirection. Defensive posturing. Game playing.

Results from negotiations that head down these negative paths are rarely satisfactory and never creative. Yet all too often negotiations begin down the slippery slope of negativity and never recover. Clashes like these typically have a winner and a loser, and even the nominal winners often do not get what they want.

The word has spread that collaborative negotiation has produced amazing outcomes in business situations – much better results than the old-style negotiation battles we all used to see (and sometimes still see too frequently). Thus, many executives seek not only to improve their skills and how often they may win in negotiations, but to learn a new mindset about negotiation that can create as large a set of positive outcomes for all parties involved.

To help executives apply this new mindset that they gain through training programs such as our **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** seminar, we've created a simple, memorable, and effective negotiation framework called ICON[®] (see model below). Applied successfully, the ICON framework can help to create breakthrough results in any negotiation situation by helping negotiation participants move away from clashing and toward collaboration. In this article, we outline the ICON framework and how you can begin to use it to create breakthrough negotiation results.

Applying a Collaborative and Principled Approach

To improve your negotiation skills, you must quickly access collaborative and principled negotiation tenets and apply them appropriately to resolve real-world problems. The conflict resolution classic, *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury, provides a succinct prescriptive framework for turning rivals into collaborators.

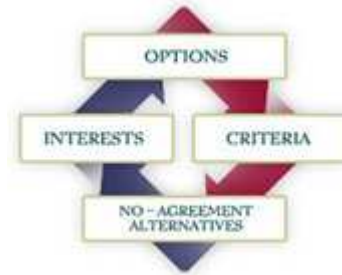
Yet, even when parties begin from a collaborative perspective, they risk resigning themselves to eventually “playing the game,” according to a non-collaborative set of assumptions. Without a framework to drive our discussions, manipulative and positional behaviors can re-emerge.

Two challenges – 1) helping executives to acquire critical skills, and 2) employing principled negotiation strategies even when under attack or facing other barriers – define our approach.

A New ICON for Negotiation

For our new book, *Expand the Pie*, we set out to identify a simple, memorable and effective negotiation framework. By focusing on four essential components – **I**nterests, **C**riteria, **O**ptions, and **N**o-Agreement Alternatives (ICON) – we found a rigorous and useful template.

- **Interests**
- **Criteria**
- **Options**
- **No Agreement Alternatives**



Each point of ICON relates directly to its adjacent points. For instance, parties about to engage in a negotiation have specific needs of *Interests* they want met, and these may underlie the positions they come to the table demanding. The parties' *Interests* will help them generate possible solutions or *Options* to resolving the dispute.

Their *Options* can be further refined through the filter of neutral *Criteria* – objective standards or benchmarks. Their *Interests* may also help them to develop or strengthen *No-Agreement Alternatives*, or steps each party will take if they do not reach agreement.

While many experienced negotiators begin with *Interests* when thinking through a negotiation process, ICON's four facets work in any order. For instance, a set of *Criteria* can help spark ideas for *Options*. Alternatively, a list of *No-Agreement Alternatives* may help a side clarify its *Interests*.

Approaching Negotiations with ICON

For negotiation success, you must first know what you what you want. Take an honest inventory of your underlying *Interests* when you engage in any negotiation. Arguably, these are your subjective *Interests*, tailor-made to your side given your situation, expectations and experiences. Likewise, each side must anticipate and analyze the other side's potential *Interests* in order to work out realistic *Options*.

Balanced against the *Interests* are objective *Criteria* with which one can evaluate the fairness of demands. Examples of *Criteria* include market rates, past pay increases, and federal regulations. For instance, an agricultural workers' union negotiating with farmers might rely on federal court decisions and EPA rules to argue for better safety equipment for its workers.

Criteria are neutral precedents that both sides to a negotiation can use to develop and benchmark *Options*. In negotiations, we want to see our objective needs met, to know that the agreement is fair, and to be able to explain to stakeholders the key factors upon which decisions were based.



If *Interests* and *Criteria* help articulate what we desire, *Options* and *No-Agreement Alternatives* are proposals for concrete ways of getting it. We sometimes refer to *Options* that meet some or all of each party's *Interests* as the on-the-table solutions, that is those *Options* we believe have some chance of meeting both parties' *Interests*. When both sides contribute to putting *Options* on the table, this can lead to greater choice and creativity in coming to an agreement.

In many instances, the most influential factors determining the outcome of a negotiation are the parties' alternatives to a negotiated agreement. Parties are often significantly motivated to find common ground by their knowledge of what will happen if no agreement is reached. A *No-Agreement Alternatives* is an important baseline for both parties to evaluate the merits of various *Options*.

Although *No-Agreement Alternatives* can be disappointing, they provide an emergency stop to spiraling losses that can occur in negotiations. Armed with *No-Agreement Alternatives*, each side has a clear idea of when they should walk away from the table and what will happen if they do.

A New ICON, a New Mindset

Collaborative negotiation is the new mindset. The ICON framework is a visual model you can use for actually applying collaborative and principled negotiations. Remember:

- Deftly probe for *Interests*.
- Use *Criteria* to understand and persuade rather than bully.
- Brainstorm for *Options* without the positional habit of focusing on only one option.
- Identify *No-Agreement Alternatives* wisely can help you understand what you might do if no agreement is reached.

As you approach negotiations with this new mindset, keep the ICON framework visually present. By doing so, you will avoid positional behavior and clashes that do not lead to creative solutions to problems. At the same time, you will have the compass you need translate your new collaborate mindset into actual improved negotiation results for all.