

# The Good the Bad & the Ugly

## Dirty Tricks in Buying & Selling

*Four Pillars and Selling Interactions*

September 2013

### **OBJECTIVE:**

This survey was conducted in order to investigate “dirty tricks” that take place in today’s negotiations. It goes to answer the age old expression, “All buyers are liars”? And are sales people cowboys of the Wild West who can’t be trusted?

### **METHODS USED:**

143 responses were collected from business-to-business buyers (53%), sellers (23%), and those occupying both roles (23%). A wide range of professionals in multiple sectors responded to the survey. The survey itself involved asking 12 questions.

### **KEY FINDINGS:**

- When asked which approach was closer to their core belief, both professions (buyer and seller) favored ‘ethical and fair’ transactions over ‘maximum value’ for my organization.
- About a third of the respondents agreed with the statement, “Yes, ethics and commerce can be combined perfectly so there is no conflict.”
- Over 60% of the respondents saw a negotiation as “A mutual discussion to ensure a win/win outcome with fair distribution of gains.”
  - Over a third of buyers and a quarter of sellers saw the process of negotiation as “A game of tactics, of cat and mouse, where the smartest operator makes the most gains.”
- Overall, 29.4% of respondents said “bluffing and lying is all part of the game of negotiation.”
- 37.2% of buyers and 15.2% of sellers stated lying is an acceptable part of the game of negotiation.
- 16% of buyers and 42% of sales people are neutral on the use of “under the radar” methods of influence. “Under the radar” meaning actions designed to create obligation such as gift giving, flattery, and withholding information.
  - 57% of buyers and 21.1% of sales people stated they would not use the method described above.

- When asked whether they would do a deal which gave them a personal bonus at the expense of the other party, 35% of buyers and 33% of sellers said 'maybe'. While 18% said a definite yes.
- Both buyers and sellers see each other as just as bad when it comes to "delivering on agreements."
- Common tactics buyers used on sellers: giving false deadlines, over estimating usage to get better volume discounts, and use of personal and organizational power to get concessions.
- Common tactics sellers used on buyers: bribes and offers to win favor, sellers hiding behind their hierarchy to avoid making concessions, and over stating benefits of the products or service.
- Both buyers and sellers agree that buyers are more ethical than sales people.
- Overall, buyers think behavior has gotten more ethical over the years while sellers think it has gotten worse.
- The good (could be perceived as simply intelligent negotiation):  
"Trickery use of currencies and conversion rates to hide bad deals"  
"Gaining inside information from contacts"
- The bad (unpleasant if you are on the receiving end):  
"False claims, rejection of clear and obvious truths, active effort to obfuscate truth"  
"Phoning me up the day before I go on holiday at 4 pm needing a deal or something"
- The ugly (the real Wild West of negotiation):  
"A colleague once put a supplier in a hot room, facing the sun on a broken chair just to get a deal"  
"Massive exaggeration/over promising/aggression/bullying"

## **CONCLUSION:**

- Prepare before heading into a negotiation and research negotiation tactics beforehand.
- Understand your counterparts' typical way of working a negotiation.
- Respect and inspect, check what you are told from several sources without aggravating the counterpart.
- Bring in assistance when you need it. For example, a senior executive coach or an external.
- It is discouraged for counterparts to work as adversaries, but it is important to keep one eye open.

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