

## Book Review

# Shake Hands with the Devil How to master Life's Negotiations from Hell

Author : Frank L Acuff

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Frank Acuff is an internationally known speaker, trainer, author and consultant, who in his book 'Shake Hands with the Devil: How to Master Life's Negotiations from Hell', shares the methods one can use to deal with toughest negotiations and thorny confrontations. Frank considers the thorny confrontations and getting through such situations as "hellish negotiations" and the people involved as "Devils". The nine most hellish negotiations as enlisted by the author are: Surviving the boss from hell, Getting work out of slugs, Bargaining for a higher starting salary, Gaining leverage without authority, Negotiating with a strategic partner who always screws, Dealing with attorney, Getting real estate agent on our side, Finding common ground with different people and e-negotiating. After detailing of these he comes out with tips on how to tame the flames of any conflict one can face in or out of the workplace and avoid reoccurrence of such incidents.

The two new terms the author discusses are Innies and Outies. Innies, or the hellish negotiations within the organization, such as dealing with a hellish boss or an employee who is a procrastinator. Outies, or hellish negotiations outside the organisation in dealing with difficult customers, suppliers and every other people of one's daily life who bring in a quarrel or a conflict. In the concluding part, the book also covers "e-negotiating" or negotiating electronically.

The book also focuses on how to plan for negotiations, decide on strategies, to handle

issues in an agreeable way and how to build trust. The solutions are provided by the author in the form of seven steps, such as, Do your homework, Help others get what they want, Go for it and let them beat you down, Confront the issues most important to you in an agreeable way, Use the rules of persuasion, Build trust at any cost, Make persistence and patience an obsession, which are the basics of negotiation in hellish situations.

**Do your homework:** It is all about planning. One can gain advantage in negotiations by having a proper plan and knowing how and what should be the next move. The author suggests a negotiating planner which records the information of both the parties which are into hellish negotiations. It begins with identifying all the issues, prioritizing the issues, establishing a settlement range, developing strategies for settlement. By adopting such a procedure during a negotiation deal, one has a check on what went wrong and what other actions can be taken to strengthen the agreement in future.

**Help others get what they want:** Under this topic, the author focuses on win-win negotiations, where both the parties consider each one's interests and thereby both of them win. This is explained through his personal experience of negotiation with his seventy five year old mother regarding her second marriage to a person whom she met just a few days back. The importance of focusing on the interests of the other people is emphasized.

**Go for it and let them beat you down:** The author shows the link between logical need and emotional need in a negotiation: a bargain which fetches both the parties a kind of satisfaction of fulfilling their needs wherein for one it can be an emotional need and for the other it can be a logical need.

**Confront the issues most important to you in an agreeable way:** According to the author, in a negotiation, one should not think of it as a negotiation but instead as a problem solving exercise. When confronted with others, the bottom line is a change which one expects from other, though sometimes it looks like a compulsion. The author explains the different methods of handling it in a pleasurable way.

**Use the rules of persuasion:** The three rules discussed under this are: Using appropriate emotions while persuading, logically justifying the emotions with facts, focusing on the other side's interests and keeping the arguments as less as possible.

**Build trust at any cost:** The importance of trust is reflected under this topic. Most of the negotiations are won over with the trust both sides have in each other. Even in situations of loosing out the deal at times, one should not loose trust.

**Make persistence and patience an obsession:** Here, with an example of a child, the author refers the essentiality of two P's: Persistence and Patience to win over devilish negotiators. People with patience and persistence turn to be the best negotiators.

The above mentioned seven steps are used by the author in different combinations to get out of the nine hellish situations as stated earlier. On the whole, the book seems to be brief, entertaining and is a practical guide to get the best deal out of any negotiations. The steps given by the author to handle the life's most difficult negotiations are specific, clear and in a no-nonsense style. He makes

clear that one doesn't have to sell oneself to strike a deal with a tough negotiator and also suggests different ways to get an upper hand in any fiendish negotiation and make friends with the "enemy" in the process. Knowing what is in this book makes "the difference between being shrewd and getting screwed".

*Reviewed by:*

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