

*Entelechy's Newsletter for Trainers, Managers, HR Professionals and Others  
Responsible for the Performance of Others*

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WRITING MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

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Writing multiple-choice questions is part art and part science. I wrote a 14-page document outlining the rules that will help you write more effective multiple-choice questions – whether paper-based or for web-based training. Go to our Performance Tools section at <http://unlockit.com/tools.htm> (scroll down) to order the full document for \$5.00.

When you write multiple-choice questions, follow these guidelines:

- Stem should be meaningful by itself
  
- Stem should be free from irrelevant information
  
- Avoid negatively stated items
  
- Responses should agree with stem
  
- Only one correct/best answer
  
- Alternatives should be plausible

- Avoid verbal associations between stem and answer
- Test at a meaningful level
- Avoid lengthy responses
- Responses should be similar
- Responses should be listed in a logical sequence
- All opinions are valid
- Keep the number and type of responses consistent

### *Testing Terms*

Stem: The question or statement containing the information and preceding the responses.

Response: Any of the choices available; includes the answer and alternatives.

Answer: The correct or best response.

Alternative: An incorrect response. Also called a distracter.

Item: The stem and all responses.

### *Explanation Sample of the Guideline: Stem Should Be Meaningful By Itself*

The stem should be meaningful by itself and should present a definite problem.

Example:

HealthCo is different because:

- a. it was the first organization to offer IPA coverage.
- b. it focuses on the Blue Cross/Blue Shield marketplace.
- c. it is growing so rapidly.
- d. of its commitment to its employees.

Explanation: In the above example, if you were to ask the question, “Why is HealthCo different?” you would get a wide variety of responses. While it is not always possible, the stem should lead the reader to a correct answer irrespective of the printed responses. This increases the reliability of the question.

Better example:

When differentiating HealthCo from its competitors, the HealthCo sales rep should focus on HealthCo’s:

- a. size
- b. implementation of the App Pricer
- c. services and commitment to Members
- d. history

The explanation above of the first test-writing guidelines is a sample of the detail found in the *Writing Multiple Choice Questions* guide at <http://unlockit.com/tools.htm>. You may also want to check out Entelechy’s *Designing Training Based on Five Content Types* and Entelechy’s *Practical Design and Development Tips* for additional training design tips. These and other eGuides are available at <http://unlockit.com/eguides.htm>.

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## COLLABORATIVE NEGOTIATIONS – PART 2 OF 3

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Most of us negotiate routinely without thinking about it since negotiation – “to confer with another so as to arrive at the settlement of some matter” – happens throughout our day. At the same time many of us can think of times when we’ve felt like we’ve been taken advantage of, that someone got the better deal, that someone out-negotiated us. Whether it’s a colleague negotiating schedules with us, a client negotiating a contract, or the car dealer negotiating the price of our next vehicle, we can easily be out-maneuvered if we don’t know how to negotiate.

Negotiations is a complex subject, one that is covered in Entelechy's *Collaborative Negotiations* training (<http://unlockit.com/HPS-CN.htm>). For simplicity, we're going to focus on three important areas in *The Key*:

Power – The Key to Negotiations

Negotiation Strategy – Do's and Don'ts

Negotiation Tactics

In the last issue we covered Power – The Key to Negotiations. In this issue, we'll cover Negotiation Strategy – Do's and Don'ts. While we will use sales negotiations to illustrate concepts, the tips featured here are equally effective for all forms of negotiations.

## NEGOTIATION GOALS

Negotiations requires that you determine or review the goals you have set for this account. You could be looking for long-term financial (bigger payoff later; possibly forego short-term), short-term financial (quick hit now; possibly sacrifice long-term), or relationship (get into a difficult account, department, or division). In a non-sales situation, your goals may be to get what you need at all cost (to ensure the success of the project, for example), to build the relationship (to ensure the success of future projects), or some other goal.

Your goal in negotiations should always be clear and conscious. You should also have a clearly defined “best alternative” strategy in case negotiations doesn't proceed as planned.

In preparing for a negotiation, it is absolutely critical that you reflect on the goals of the customer/other person. What short- and long-term financial and relationship goals might they have set? Anticipating the other party's negotiations goals allows you to prepare appropriately, put yourself in the mindset of the other person, or even reconsider your own position.

Ideally your customer/the other person will share your goal of maintaining a long-term business relationship with you. But, in negotiations, sometimes the long-term is sacrificed for the short term. The other person may use negotiation tactics on you in order to gain power and negotiate. It is your job to recognize and diffuse these negotiation tactics and work towards a win-win outcome.

## HOW TO CONCEDE WHEN NECESSARY

The basic tenet of negotiations is “never give something without getting something.” But what about those times when you absolutely must concede? Or when you want to concede something of less value to you to obtain something of greater value?

Let’s first look at how NOT to concede and why. First, let’s look at what happens when you concede without asking for something. Let’s say that you are negotiating the price of a used car. You offer the seller \$1000 less than the price they have listed in the advertisement. The seller concedes and says, “It’s a deal.” If you took the deal, chances are that you are feeling like you could have done better or there might be something wrong with the car. If you didn’t take the deal, you would want to make more demands.

Let’s look at another response to a demand: the counter demand. Let’s say you are negotiating the price of a set of bedroom furniture. You offer the seller \$500 less than the marked price. The seller says yes IF you buy the standing lamp for \$150 (the marked price). You really don’t need the lamp but you agree to the deal. The demand – counter demand describes a competition rather than true negotiation. The GAME of negotiating is more important than the OUTCOME.

There are two basic steps that you must follow when conceding:

The first step is that the concession MUST be grudging – that is you must respond as if the concession is difficult. As we saw in the previous example, if you respond too quickly and agreeably to the demand, the other party will feel cheated. Therefore, regardless of the demand, always respond grudgingly.

The second step to follow when conceding – or refusing – is to give a plausible rationale for your concession. The concession must make sense and not be a whim. The days of “I’m going to give you a good deal ‘cause I like you” are long gone. A more appropriate rationale may be: “We’ve been wanting to earn a shot at your business and are willing to forgo some of the profit on this first deal just to prove our capabilities to you.” If you’re going to give the customer a good deal it must be for a good reason.

To get something more tangible, you can sandwich a counter-demand between your grudging concession and your rationale. An example of this technique is when a customer asks for a 10% price concession and you are prepared to offer the discount. You grudgingly concede based on some plausible rationale – you expect future business

or you expect fewer problems – IF the customer concedes to your counter-demand of net 15 terms instead of net 30.

This information comes from *Collaborative Negotiations*, a supporting module in Entelechy's *High Performance Sales* program. You can purchase the source files to this training and customize the training to meet your company's specific needs. Check out all you get at <http://unlockit.com/HPS-CN.htm>.

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Send this newsletter to your friends and colleagues who may be involved in training and the performance of others and could benefit from FREE performance tips, tools, and techniques.

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