

Just say "NO"!

Negotiation has similarities to the game of chess.

Chess is a great game and one of the main appeals to me is that there is no element of chance as there is no roll of the dice, it is brain versus brain.

However, in one aspect it feels particularly close to negotiating. Chess goes beyond simply brainpower as there is a fair amount of psychology in the mix too, just look back at the proxy cold war of the 1970s in Iceland with Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky.

With this in mind, and as a chess player since the age of 5 (some years ago) in my experience games of chess are frequently not so much won but lost, as something that one side does unnerves the opponent or a certain something about their style and demeanour simply grinds away at their counterpart, causing them to play poorly or certainly not as well as the winner.

It can be the same with a negotiation.

Sometimes you will start off by rejecting the offer put to you but often you know that this is going to have to change, somehow, somewhere along the way. In the meantime, you have to continue saying "no", not once or twice but repeatedly, perhaps ad infinitum.

This will of course greatly increase the chance of deadlock but if you are prepared to countenance this it can throw your counterparty off balance and you are more likely to get what you want as long as the other circumstances are palatable to your opponent, however much they may not have wished to concede the point that you are sticking fast on.

Continuing to say "no" may well lead the other party will see you as unreasonable and unbending , therefore causing them to walk away, or they will finally get the message that this matter is so important to you that they are going to have to introduce flexibility to accommodate you if they really are serious about a deal. They will climb down, not you.

An entrenched "no" makes a bold statement that you are negotiating from a position of strength, but only you really know whether you are bluffing or standing firm on a point of principle that is too dear to you to compromise.

Or perhaps you are saying "no" to a matter that is really not so important to you and you are planning to concede at the last minute as long as the other party moves on a point that really is more important to you, although they don't know that.

From "no" to checkmate"