

The Art of Negotiation



While dozens of books and articles address the subject of bartering during a SHTF scenario, few delve into the nuanced skills required for effective negotiation. Understanding these dynamics is essential for successfully navigating exchanges when resources are scarce and stakes are high.

In the world of prepping, if bartering were a movie, then the art of negotiation would be the prequel. As preppers, it is great to have “stuff” to potentially barter with in a zombie apocalypse, but if one lacks negotiation skills, it is the same as having a vehicle without the car’s keys. Sure, you are in the driver’s seat, but can you operate the car to get from your origination (your need) to your destination (your need being fulfilled).

Having worked for two Fortune One Thousand Companies and one Fortune 50 company as a National Account Executive, I have learned over 20 years of sales negotiations that if anything can go wrong, it most certainly will. Murphy’s Law always gets a say in the matter. While some deals go smoothly, others – despite initial promise – may fall apart quickly. This volatility highlights the importance of adaptability and situational awareness throughout the negotiation process, as even well-laid plans can slowly unravel.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRANSACTIONAL AND RELATIONAL SALES:

In sales, people do not realize there are two vastly different forms of selling; Transactional and Relational. Transactional is just that. Very quick transactions between two parties. Hard Closers fit into this category. Relational sales are where both parties have an exchange, and it could lead to future transactions. Meriam-Webster Dictionary definitions are as follows:

TRANSACTIONAL SALES:

are short-term, low-risk, and low-value deals that focus on the product features, price, and speed of delivery.

RELATIONAL SALES:

are long-term, high-risk, and high-value deals that focus on the customer needs, benefits, and relationship building.

For the sake of this article, there are three major categories of what people would be bartering with / for during an SHTF / WROL / TEOWAWKI event and that is:

- Essentials - Food, water, clothing, medicine
- Manual Skills
- Knowledge

WHAT ARE SKILLS OF NEGOTIATION:

- **Planning:** Understand and mentally prepare what your wants and needs are and what you have to offer
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Understand the other party's potential needs to build rapport.
- **Spatial & Situational Awareness:** Understand your surroundings and assess the people with whom you are meeting.
- **Communication:** Articulate your willingness to barter clearly and calmly
- **Listen:** Understand others' opinions and retain crucial details of the conversation
- **Body Language:** Watch and identify non-verbal cues.
- **Patience:** Think objectively, not subjectively.
- **Critical thinking:** Intercommunicate and analyze the direction in which the conversation is going.
- **Value proposition:** Keep a concise focus on why the transaction will be a win-win for both parties.
- **Instestinal fortitude:** Know when to walk away from a bad deal and follow through.

If you are depending on someone else to do this for you in your group, make sure you are available to role play different scenarios. Because the last thing you want to do is practice negotiating in a life-or-death situation and get it wrong...

SCENARIO:

Z Day has finally come. Power's out. Cell service is gone. Emergency alerts scream mandatory curfews. You and your family pile into the truck—food, bug-out bags, weapons... and yes, even the cat—and head for your off-grid cabin.

Ham radio static reports roadblocks on every major highway. You know the back roads, past two tiny towns. Almost there. Then a makeshift checkpoint appears.

A man in camo and full battle gear signals for you to roll down the window. Ten armed men circle the truck.

"It'll cost you to pass. Cash is useless. We have what we need. How badly do you want through?"

You list your skills—ex-military, Airborne FO, combat lifesaver, licensed ham radio operator. He shrugs. "We have a Ranger medic and two Elmers. What else?"

A rifle clicks behind your head. Panic and calculation collide. Then it hits: no internet. No cell.

"I've got a flash drive library—over a thousand survival pdf books and munitions guides. If you can download it, you'll thank me later," you say calmly.

Silence. Tension stretches. Finally, he nods, grabs the drive, pulls off his balaclava, and asks, "Where you headed?"

You exhale. Your family is alive.

10 STEPS TO NEGOTIATING TRAINING

1. **Self-Awareness**
Know your negotiation style and personality type (MBTI or Big Five). Understanding your own limitations helps you adapt under pressure.
2. **Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**
Learn to read emotions in others while controlling your own. Spot frustration, fear, or eagerness before it becomes leverage against you.
3. **Resilience (AQ)**
Negotiations rarely go smoothly. Train to stay calm and steady when your back is against the wall.
4. **Big Picture Thinking (AQAL)**
Weigh issues from multiple angles—short vs long-term, individual vs group needs—so you do not get trapped in tunnel vision.
5. **Trust & Performance Matrix**
Quickly size people up. Are they dependable allies, dead weight, or threats? Adjust your tactics accordingly.
6. **Reading the Room**
Study body language, posture, micro expressions, and vocal tone. People leak more truth through signals than words.
7. **Listening with Intent**
Practice silence, mirroring, and tactical questioning. The more the other person talks, the more you learn.
8. **Bartering Basics**
Train by haggling in low-stakes settings—garage sales, flea markets, pawn shops, or even friendly trades—to build comfort in asking for value.
9. **Scenario Training**
Roleplay negotiations under pressure: limited time, fatigue, or uneven power. Stress training builds real-world readiness.
10. **Debrief Every Exchange**
After each negotiation, review what worked, what did not, and what to improve. Keep a log to track your growth. Teach others about your progression and your findings.



CONCLUSION:

The Art of Negotiation as a tertiary prepper skill is going to take time to learn if you have never done it before. Practice makes perfect, and there is no time better than the present to start getting comfortable with negotiating with others. You may thank yourself down the road that you made this a priority in your preparedness plan.

Stay frosty, keep learning new tertiary prepper skills, and enjoy learning the art of negotiating!

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