



COLORADO REAL ESTATE JOURNAL

THE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL OF THE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE COMMUNITY

JULY 18-JULY 31, 2007

Become a strategic negotiator to succeed

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part one of a multipart property management series.

If I were to choose but one skill from the grab bag of skills necessary for the successful property manager, it would be the skill of strategic negotiation. Negotiations are a property manager's chief form of persuasion! In fact, the very best property managers are the best negotiators. And to state explicitly the converse are the worst property managers are the worst negotiators.

■ **Everything in life is a negotiation.** Everything! Anytime you deal with someone else, seeking to reach agreement on some matter, you are involved in a negotiation. Dealing with astute owners and tenants, to successful contractors, accountants, and diligent building engineers, a property manager's ability to communicate and negotiate effectively is paramount to his success. Every property manager should continually study, practice, and understand the power and benefit of effective strategic negotiations. Always remember that improvement comes from well-structured experience and perfect practice.

■ **Know your negotiation patterns.** In other words, how do you act and respond when under pressure? Can someone know from the look on your face, by the tone of your voice, by the movements of your body if you are angry, surprised, disgusted,



Steven Sessions
President/CEO,
Fuller Management
Services, Denver

embarrassed, or any other number of emotions? Yes, all day long! As in the game of golf, shortcomings or emotions tend to be magnified under stress. For example, when I play the eighth hole at Valley Country Club, the course I played as a kid, with that dreaded magnetic pond to the left, with those magnified out-of-bounds stakes lining the entire left side of this treacherous par 4, I know – I absolutely know – where my ball is going to land off the tee. There is absolutely no doubt! That is why I always bring two balls to the eighth tee box and a 3-foot piece of garden hose (a.k.a. the Sessions "rescue club" that I carefully insert in my mouth as I slowly walk and stumble to the eighth tee box with sweat pouring off my slender body), so that I can breathe as I choke! Some golfers tremble, others find they can't speak, some have hands that sweat profusely. I can't breathe! Is there a pattern? I leave it to you to decide!

I have studied great strategic negotiators and their patterns since the very first day of law school, when Dean Hoffman indicated that great lawyers first

study themselves, ever striving to recognize their own peculiar but very consistent patterns when under pressure. Thereafter, they focus on opposing counsel to recognize and clearly identify their peculiar patterns, those *ever consistent* subtle facial expressions, voice changes and body movements that reveal so much more than their mere words. What was chilling to me was when the dean indicated that his law firm literally kept detailed records of opposing attorneys and how and when they compromised, handled pressure, etc. Wow!

So, whether dealing with owners, tenants or contractors, take the time to meet with them, learn their story, their language, understand what they think, and see what their culture is like and the way they live. Get a real taste of their habits and way of life! Tour their Web sites. Understand how they approach problems and respond in difficult situations. See how they present themselves. *Pay attention!* Respect their strengths and carefully observe their weaknesses. And, most important, make sure you are really *hearing* and *feeling* what they are experiencing. That is called preparation! Always remember, we know a lot less about others and ourselves than we think we do! So start listening, observing, feeling and learning!

Stay tuned for part two: Know bargaining range and resistance points!▲