

The Membership Management Report

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FOR THOSE WHO RECRUIT,
MANAGE AND SERVE MEMBERS

Inside

2 Membership Dues Options
[Invite members to 'pay it forward'](#)

3 Member Renewal Procedures
[Time to turn your renewal process upside down?](#)

4 Member Orientation Strategies
[Create member resource tutorial videos](#)

5 Strengthen Member Loyalty
[Provide members with a virtual plaque](#)

6 Non-Dues Revenue
[Monetize your webinars with an all-access package](#)

7 Member Retention Efforts
[How an exit survey can recharge your membership](#)

8 Alumni Association Programs
[Forty under 40 program engages alums](#)

BEST-PRACTICE SALES TACTICS

Strengthen Your Negotiation Skills

By Kim Pawlak

The two skills most people ignore when it comes to negotiating are listening and asking good questions, says Shakira M. Brown, communication strategist and professional speaker at SMB Strategic Media LLC (Hamilton, NJ).

"When you listen more, you'll find that people will reveal far more information than they expect, and you can use that information to negotiate your position," she says.

"Asking good questions is another way to get information from the other side that they may not have intended to provide. This is not trickery. It is just creating the space for information to flow to help you negotiate your side."

Brown says the best type of questions to ask are open-ended questions that can't be answered with simple yes or no responses. While the questions you ask will be situational, she shares this example of a straightforward question: "Is there anything down the pike I need to know about that I might be interested in right now?" They may not answer, she says, but if they do, it could be something like, "You know what, actually, coming up, blank, blank blank will be available, and while I can't give that to you now,

when it's available, I can make sure that you're first in line."

That's why listening is so important, says

Brown: "There might be something that you'd like to add into your package that is of value to you that they didn't know would be of value to you. It could be something that you accept in lieu of something else to move the negotiation forward. It could be something that you could benefit from.

It also could be something that the other side could benefit from." Maybe it's that something you could do for them that will get the deal done, she says. That one thing then becomes part of the negotiation.

"If you don't listen, you'll never find out anything," she says. "If you're constantly focused in on just your position, you'll never get the information that provides an opportunity for you to create a win-win deal for both sides. And a win-win typically will move the negotiation forward." But again, if you don't ask questions to get that type of information out, it most likely won't be volunteered. ♦

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— Shakira Brown

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