

**FOCUSING ON INTERESTS IN
THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS**
Abridged from on Getting to Yes

INTERESTS V. POSITIONS

1. The basic problem in negotiation lies not in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each side's needs, desires, concerns, and fears. Such desires and concerns are interests.
2. Interests motivate people. They are the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions.
3. A position is what you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to make that decision.
4. *For any interests there are usually several possible positions which could satisfy it. People generally adopt the most obvious position.*
5. When you look behind opposed positions to determine the motivating interest, you often can find an alternative position which meets the needs of both sides.
6. People assume that because their positions are opposed, then their interests must also be opposed. Often, however, there are many shared interests.
7. Agreement often is possible because interests differ. Shared interests and differing but complementary interest can both serve as the building blocks for a wise agreement.

IDENTIFYING INTERESTS

1. A position is likely to be concrete and explicit. The interests underlying it often are unexpressed, intangible, and perhaps inconsistent.
2. It is important to figure out your interests. It is just as important to figure out the interests of the other side.
3. Ask why a person is taking a particular position. Make clear you are not asking for justification of the position, but rather for an understanding of the needs, hopes, or desires that it serves.
4. Identify the basic decision that those of the other side probably think you are asking them to make, and then ask yourself why they have not made that decision.
5. Each side generally has many interests, not just one. They may not even realize they have some of the interest they do.
6. The most powerful interests are basic human needs, which include:

- security
- economic well-being
- a sense of belonging
- recognition
- control over one's life

7. These basic human needs often are overlooked. We tend to think that the only interest involved is money.

TALKING ABOUT INTERESTS

1. If you want the other side to take your interest into account, explain to them what those interests are. Help them understand exactly how important and legitimate your interests are.
2. Be specific. Concrete details not only make your description credible, they add impact. As long as you do not imply the other side's interests are unimportant or illegitimate, you can afford to take a strong stand in setting forth the seriousness of your concerns.
3. Part of the task of impressing the other side with your interests lies in establishing the legitimacy of those concerns. You want them to feel not that you are attacking them personally, but rather that the problem you face legitimately demands attention.
4. Each of us tends to be so concerned with his or her own interests that we pay too little attention to the interests of the other side. If you want the other side to appreciate your interests, begin by demonstrating that you appreciate theirs. Acknowledge that their interests are part of the overall problem you are trying to solve.
5. If you want someone to listen and understand your reasoning, give your interests and reasoning first and your conclusions or proposals later.
6. Look forward, not backward. In a dispute, however, people are more likely to respond to what the other side has said or done rather than to act in pursuit of their own long-term interests.
7. We can choose to look back or to look forward. **You will satisfy your interests better if you talk about where you would like to go rather than about where you have come from. Instead of arguing with the other side about the past, talk about what you want to have happen in the future.**
8. Instead of asking them to justify what they did yesterday, ask who should do what tomorrow.

CONVERTING INTERESTS INTO CONCRETE OPTIONS

1. Be concrete but flexible. Ask yourself, "If tomorrow the other side agrees to go along with me, what do I now think I would like them to go along with?"

2. Treat each option you formulate as simply illustrative. Think in terms of more than one option that meets your interests.
3. Much of what a positional bargainer hopes to achieve with an opening position can be accomplished equally well with an illustrative suggestion that generously takes care of your interests.
4. Be hard on the problem, soft on the people. You can be just as hard in talking about your interests as any negotiator can be in talking about a position. In fact, it is usually advisable to be hard. It may not be wise to commit yourself to your position, but is wise to commit yourself to your interests.
5. Often, the easiest solutions, those that produce the maximum gain at the minimum cost to the other side, are produced only by strongly advocating your interests. Two negotiators, each pushing hard for their interests, often will stimulate each other's creativity in thinking of mutually advantageous solutions.
6. Give positive support to the human beings on the other side in equal strength to the vigor with which you emphasize the problem. This combination of support and attack may seem inconsistent. Psychologically, it is; the inconsistency helps make it work.
7. Fighting hard on the substantive issues increases the pressure for an effective solution. Giving support to the human beings on the other side tends to improve your relationship and to increase the likelihood of reaching agreement. It is the combination of support and attack which works. Either alone is likely to be insufficient.
8. Negotiating hard for your interests does not mean being closed to the other side's point of view. You must take their interests into account and show yourself to be open to their suggestions.