



## ▶ MENTAL FOCUS IS CRITICAL IN NEGOTIATIONS

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NEGOTIATION

By Marty Latz

Let's say you're driving to work, your cell rings, and it's your negotiation counterpart. You answer the phone. Before you say a word, who has the advantage? Your counterpart.

Why? No matter how bright you are or how good you are on your feet, you're probably not strategically thinking about that negotiation at that exact moment. And your counterpart has almost certainly spent a little bit of time thinking about that negotiation.

So what should you do? Call them back or let it go to voice mail.

Here's the problem. In today's multi-tasking world in which we all seem to have cells and other communication devices with us 24/7, our ability to focus on important communications often seems to take a back seat to just getting more done.

Many years ago while practicing law a time-management guru told me I should only work on one thing at a time. Multitasking, he said, is not only inefficient but reduces effectiveness too.

The ability to intensely focus, listen, reflect, analyze and carefully and strategically choose your words is especially critical in significant negotiations. So how can you increase your ability to focus?



### **Reduce multi-tasking**

The obvious first step is to reduce multitasking. When you're on an important call, don't monitor incoming emails on your computer. When you're driving in traffic, don't initiate an important call.

Look, I know almost all of you will continue to multitask. But make a conscious effort to reduce it during important negotiations.

### **Eliminate distractions**

I usually clear my desk of unrelated paper and minimize open computer programs in advance of important conversations so I can better focus. I also try not to take important calls except when I'm at my desk or where it's relatively quiet. Sometimes in my car I will also pull off and park so I can concentrate. These little things can make a big difference.

### **Initiate the call or set telephone appointments**

Initiating the call or setting a telephone appointment will guarantee you the time beforehand to focus on your goals for that conversation. This is critical.

Telephone appointments also minimize the possibility of inefficient phone tag.

Also set your appointments for times you can mentally focus. For me, this means not too late at night or too early in the morning.

**Spend time before the call reviewing your goals**

Of course, just because you have the time to prepare doesn't mean you will. At the least, spend a few minutes reviewing your goals for the call and playing out how the conversation could go.

I know next time you're in your car and your cell rings with your counterpart, you'll probably still answer it and engage. And many of these suggestions may seem like just common sense.

Yet it's easy to get caught up in everything around you and not take these steps. Don't. So, when that conversation is significant enough for you to take a little bit of extra time preparing, you initiate the call.

Marty Latz is the founder of Latz Negotiation Institute, a national negotiation training and consulting company, and ExpertNegotiator Software, web-based software that helps individuals and organizations achieve better results with best practices based on the experts' research. He can be reached at 480.951.3222 or Latz@ExpertNegotiator.com.

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*Internationally Recognized  
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ABC News Anchor George Stephanopoulos has called Marty Latz "one of the most accomplished and persuasive negotiators I know." As the founder of LATZ Negotiation, Marty has trained over 100,000 business professionals and attorneys from around the world, how to more effectively and successfully negotiate.

Latz is the author of Gain the Edge! How to Negotiate to Get What You Want, and has appeared as a negotiation expert on CBS, CNN, and Fox News. Latz also negotiated for The White House nationally and internationally on The White House Advance Teams. He also has written a monthly negotiation column for various newspapers since 1999.

Latz received his law and negotiation training from Harvard Law School, where he graduated cum laude.

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