

▶ IN-PERSON TALKS OFTEN BEST OPTION

LATZ
NEGOTIATION

By Marty Latz

I recently woke up at 3:45 a.m. to catch an early flight for a breakfast meeting to explore a potential business relationship. Since only four individuals were involved, you might ask yourself why? Given Skype, video conferencing and online meetings, why not just save time and communicate through your computer?

Because even the most sophisticated technology cannot - and will probably never - completely displace the in-person meeting, especially if it involves a negotiation. That's why we should consider the following in determining whether and when to actually meet.

Impact on the relationship.

The more your goal includes a long-term relationship, the more likely you should strive to meet face to face, at least to start. You don't want to negotiate significant issues with a potential business partner solely by e-mail.

For most, it's also harder to establish a strong relationship over the phone or e-mail than it is in person (although this might be changing with texting becoming so ubiquitous). It's also easier to say no to someone with whom you do not have much of a relationship.



In contrast, I bought a car two years ago largely by getting bids online combined with a few e-mails and phone calls. The only time I saw the sales guy was when I picked up the car. There, I didn't really care about the relationship.

Consider tradition and culture.

It's traditional in some negotiations and cultures to follow a fairly defined script in terms of when and where and how to meet and communicate, especially early on. Pay particular attention to these, as they are likely based on years of practice and have engendered deep-set expectations.

To divert from them, which may be helpful, carries significant risk.

Also, find out the reasons underlying those traditions. This will help you understand your counterpart and avoid problems later.

Evaluate when to meet.

It's often helpful to meet face to face early and late in the negotiation - and in between, e-mail and other forms of communication work fine. Why? It depends on your goal for each part of the negotiation.

Parties often meet early to develop rapport, get information (the first golden rule of negotiation is information is power, so get it!), and basically size up each other.

Face-to-face communications also lessen the likelihood of misunderstanding and provide parties with the opportunity to observe body language, facial expressions and behavioral cues.

Accurately reading nonverbal signals can prevent crucial long-term problems. This is especially important early so parties can start off on the right track.

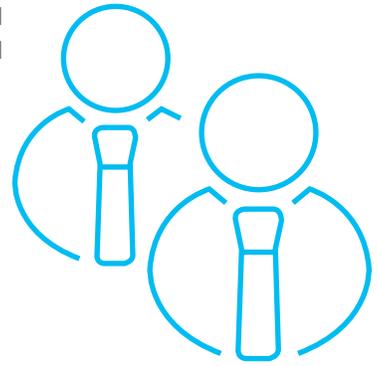
Parties also often meet in person to close the deal and make the last moves, largely because late meetings often carry expectations that everyone is coming ready to move and get the deal done. Why else spend the time to actually meet, right?

Effect on efficiency.

Efficiency often plays the largest role in whether we meet in person. That's one of e-mail's greatest advantages (and even more so with texting). They're incredibly efficient.

But keep in mind that sometimes it's actually more efficient to meet in person, especially if there are multiple parties involved. Efficiency also sometimes comes with a cost to the relationship, is contrary to tradition, and just doesn't make strategic sense.

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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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