

Negotiating is the game of life!

Every day, in countless ways, I communicate with others, broker or client, spouse or child, in attempts to influence their behavior. In my ambition as a Realtor to develop the most effective negotiating skills, I try to learn from top negotiators who already made name for themselves. One of my favorite teachers is Herb Cohen, who always tends to tickle my funny bone in his books. In his latest book "*Negotiate This!*" he tries to illustrate what he means by "What you see depends upon who or where you be" with a real life real estate example:

His wise observation came alive for him when his wife, Ellen, had the responsibility for finding them a new home. Although he had told this tale before, there were specific portions that he deliberately omitted—primarily to save himself from personal embarrassment.

The essence of his story is about how his wife found a home she wanted, and before he ever saw it had obtained the commitment of everyone in his "organization" (aka family). Presented with a fait accompli, he in effect ratified a decision that was already made by the people who were important to him.

Never previously revealed was that after they both signed the contract for the purchase price of \$395,000, Herb matter-of-factly inquired, "By the way, what was it listed at?"

"Same", his wife said.

"No, Ellen, I mean what was the asking price?"

"Oh, it was \$395,000."

"No," Herb said, "that can't be, cause that's what we're paying."

"Well, Herb you got that right."

Grabbing his chest, he gasped, "I don't believe it. You paid the asking price? Nobody does that!"



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"Well we just did," the wife said.

Attempting to stay calm, Herb tried to reassure himself. "Well you must have had a good reason. There's gotta be something I don't know—some justification?"

"Well, there was," she said. "It was a vacant home."

"What? Ellen, you don't understand. Vacant homes always go for less."

"Not in this case," she replied.

Incomprehensible and trying to maintain calm, he implored his wife for an explanation.

"Okay, I'll tell you. If the home were occupied, we would have to wait for the owners to move out. Because that takes time, we wouldn't be residents of the school district until two months into the school term. So our

kids would come into a new school after classes have been going on. Socially, they would be in an alien world and academically they would be struggling to survive. As a result, their self-esteem would diminish, their grades would drop, and they would be miserable. Who knows if they would even be able to go on to college after such a horrendous experience—struggling constantly to make friends and catch up? But now, they can begin with their peers, make friends, get a good educational foundation, and feel good about themselves. They now have a chance to go on to college, professional school, careers, and good lives."

"Well, Mr. Negotiator, isn't it worth a lousy \$20,000 to ensure that your children have good lives?"

You know, Herb Cohen, the world's foremost negotiating practitioner, had never really thought about it that way. He realized that his wife was not wrong—she was right. Thus, what is a liability for one person (a vacant house) is, in reality, an asset for another. After all, "What you see depends upon who or where you be." My husband, Michael, and partner in real estate loves this story because he recognizes that women tend to be more goal oriented than men. But that's a different story that should better be covered by one of the other *Neapolitan Family* contributors...

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