

In determining what techniques are most likely to get us a “win”, we first need to step back and decide what it means to “win” in a negotiation. Most veteran negotiators feel they know the answer to this: if you’ve gotten the most you possibly can from your opponent, that’s a win. But is that correct? Imagine a situation where you are negotiating with a webpage designer to create and maintain an online organizational presence, and you rake that designer over the coals in your negotiation, using every dirty trick imaginable to squeeze out every concession possible. Did you win? The deal you sign with them isn’t the end of a negotiation, it’s the foundation for a long term relationship with the designer. What sort of foundation have you laid for that relationship? Do you think there may be negative ramifications in the months or years you continue to be in business with this person?

Imagine a different scenario – a dispute with your domestic partner. You use every trick in the book to win –you lie, you deceive - getting them to agree with every point you were originally disagreeing about. Did you win? Is this any sort of way to maintain a good relationship with your spouse/partner? Or a third scenario where you lie, cheat and steal to get what you want from a legislator. Once it comes out that you’ve lied, not only will that destroy your relationship with that lawmaker, it will ruin your reputation with everyone else in your state house.

Dr. Kathleen O'Connor, a psychologist who teaches negotiation at Cornell University, cautions her students away from perceiving themselves as “sharks”, noting that “That can work today, but not tomorrow. No one will want to work with you tomorrow.” (quote taken from “Why cooperating wins: Reputations, expectations and the fine art of negotiation” accessed at:

<http://www2.johnson.cornell.edu/alumni/enterprise/spring2007/feature4.html>)