



## The Negotiation Academy - Europe

The Power to Win More

### **The 'Good Cop – Bad Cop' Principle**

***By Michal Zieba***

Good cop/ Bad cop is one of the best-known negotiation tactics. This gambit is a social-psychological strategy used to persuade the other side to move towards one's desired outcome by subjecting the other side to stressful emotional contrast. The idea behind this tactic is to increase the other side's stress level on one hand and induce cooperation on the other. The bad cop acts in a threatening and abusive way (to increase the stress) and the good cop adopts a friendly and warm posture to create a positive climate and relationship between him and the counterpart. Having an option to deal with either an aggressive or friendly counterpart, the choice seems to be obvious. It is important to be aware of our limits in negotiation, especially when we decide to cooperate with the Good cop, as he/she will be the one that asks for concessions 'in return' for managing the Bad cop.

Imagine a sales person and owner negotiating with the prospective buyer of a property.

- Owner: *"I'm sorry, but I do not wish to spend more time on this negotiation. I really have to go now, as I don't see the possibility of a meaningful offer. Go well"*(Gets up and departs, slamming the door.)
- Sales person: *"I must apologise for my client. He's a difficult person. I want you to know that I want you to get this house. Let me see what I can do."*
- Buyer: *"Do you think you can convince your client?"*(This is dangerous, as the buyer is now asking the sales person to take over the negotiation and could end up feeling compelled to accept the deal the sales person offers.)

The best counter response for the buyer is to inform the other parties that he/she is aware of the ploy being used, thereby nullifying it.

### **Dealing with the Good Cop/ Bad Cop routine**

No matter how often we see these antics in old and new movies alike, many negotiators often don't see when these scenarios are being played out in front of their very eyes. You will be faced with two or more negotiators; one is demanding concessions whilst the other is (by comparison!) more reasonable. Often the bad cop doesn't have to be present at all. The other party will make references to their boss or other team members' demands for your concessions.

Most important is for you to notice what is happening, and remember that despite appearances, the 'good cop' is not on *your* side. Often the dynamics can be changed by your calling them on their behavior by smiling and saying "You know what this reminds me of? A police interrogation scene from an old movie with that old good cop / bad cop routine. Now I *know* you guys wouldn't intentionally be doing that routine on me, so let's get back to the reason why came together today."

Alternatively you could focus all your efforts on the bad cop, and ignore the good cop. Since it is the bad cop you have to satisfy, it should be her/his interests that need to be fully discovered. Look out for the Good cop/ Bad cop tactic whenever you deal with two people and be prepared to counter it effectively.

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