

Mark Cushway Reveals the Key to Brinkmanship in Negotiations

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How far should we push a negotiation to the brink to try and get the result we seek?

In politics, brinkmanship can occur as a negotiating strategy, and historically, even where things have seemed to teeter on the brink of disaster, things have then been resolved.

In the world of business, does it pay to be unreasonable?

Does brinkmanship have its place, and what happens if you are on the receiving end of it?

Mark Cushway, executive leadership coach, motivational speaker and entrepreneur, discusses the issue.

CAN YOU ACHIEVE SUCCESS THROUGH BRINKMANSHIP?

“It’s about understanding the characteristics and behaviour of your opponent. Can you convince them that they stand to lose more than you do if the deal collapses?”

The strategy is a high-risk one, with a danger that misreading your opponent will result in you sustaining strategic losses.

“The chances are, you still stand to lose considerably if the deal goes south. If they don’t blink first and call your bluff, what are the risks you then face?”

In the political world, such high stakes negotiations are remembered less for any audacity on the part of the key players and more on the fact that they really seemed to be on the brink of catastrophe.

“In business, the usual emphasis is on forging strong, positive relationships. Brinkmanship in negotiations tends to work in the opposite way, being more based on a mutual antagonism.”

THE OPPOSITE VIEW

The perspective on brinkmanship shifts if you are on the receiving end.

“Brinkmanship is about exploiting perceived vulnerabilities, and can therefore leave you feeling very exposed. Where your business has built up certain dependencies, say with key suppliers or customers, this can leave you open to someone employing this negotiating tactic.”

IS THERE A DEFENCE AGAINST BRINKMANSHIP?

“You have to assess your pain-points and decide if they leave you too exposed. Diversify your suppliers

and widen your customer base where possible.”

Another long-term strategic defence is to build and bolster your unique selling proposition (USP).

“Your USP should already be the key to your marketing, but it can also work to strengthen your negotiating position.”

“If you have something on the table that your competitors are missing, you are less vulnerable to brinkmanship, because the person looking to do the deal will find alternatives are not easy to come by.”

In the end, brinkmanship may be unavoidable in certain situations, but it should not be used lightly.

“Ensure you’ve explored the alternatives first, because this form of negotiation is unlikely to help you build long-term, strategic relationships.”

Mark Cushway is an expert in leadership coaching, an entrepreneur and motivational speaker. Discover more about him by visiting [markcushway.com](https://www.markcushway.com) (<https://www.markcushway.com/>)

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