

If you like provocative thinking, you may enjoy this book: *Start with NO* by renowned negotiation coach Jim Camp misses few opportunities to fly in the face of widely adopted mainstream theories about negotiation strategy.

The author argues that the prevailing 'win-win' negotiation model, originally postulated in mega-seller *Getting to YES*, is fundamentally flawed and works—if at all—only with like-minded counterparts. In the author's view, many negotiators, especially buyers for large multinationals, have figured out that 'a gung-ho, win-win negotiator on the other side of the table is a sitting duck.'

To Camp, negotiators are adversaries, not collaborators. There are 'tigers' who are 'lying in wait' and sometimes masquerade as win-win advocates only so they can pounce on naïve win-win oriented counterparts, 'winners' or 'losers,' compromising is 'deadly stuff' – according to this Vietnam veteran and former Air Force pilot, it's a dangerous world out there.

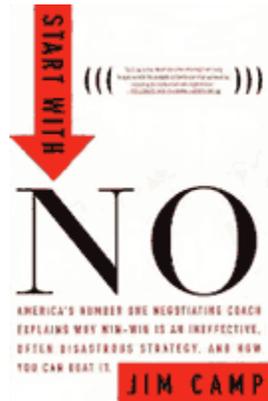
Beyond the rhetoric posturing, though, *Start with NO* makes important points that negotiators all too often overlook, both in formal and informal settings: Begin with the position that 'you do not need this deal.' (If you desperately need it, get ready to be exploited.) Next, find out as much as you can about your counter-

part's views, especially their 'pain' points – whatever they see as a current or future problem. Then, follow a decision- (as opposed to emotion-) based approach: every 'Yes' you give should be a decision, reached by offering 'No' as an acceptable alternative for both parties throughout the process.

From an international negotiation perspective, *Start with NO* is a mixed bag. On one hand, members of many cultures, among them China, India, Russia, to name but a few, rarely use win-win strategies and may pursue their negotiation objectives in fierce and sometimes aggressive ways. At the same time, Camp off-handedly dismisses the importance of relationship building, though it can be crucial in many of these countries and may require a delicate balancing act when negotiating there.

Camp believes negotiators are overly concerned about getting the approval or friendship of their counterparts, arguing that business relationships should be based on mutual respect. True enough – but which traits establish respect varies greatly across cultures. Simply walking away from a seemingly 'bad deal,' as Camp suggests, means that doors may be closing for good in some regions of the world. Looking for ways to make the deal better often holds greater promise.

So, take *Start with NO* with a grain of salt. You may not be all that effective if you take the advice it holds too literally. But its key message is valid, and the book presents a number of strategies and insights that every negotiator should know and be able to use.



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