



Men vs. Women at the Bargaining Table

Many Times Females Settle for Less Than Their Male Counterparts

By TORY JOHNSON

Sept. 26, 2007 —

Today, women are better educated than their male counterparts, but they're still getting paid less.

On average, women earn just 77 cents for every dollar a man gets. One explanation for this discrepancy is that women don't negotiate as often as men do, thereby leaving behind money that could be theirs.

We partnered with Carnegie Mellon economist Linda Babcock to create a "Good Morning America" Bargaining Behavior Lab to observe firsthand the differences in negotiation styles between genders.

Volunteers were asked to play the game Boggle. They were also told that they'd be paid between \$5 and \$12, which was negotiable. After playing one round, our undercover operative offered each person \$5 and he said, "Is this OK?"

The unscientific results: More than half of the men asked for more money, but only a third of the women bargained for more.

One of the women who did negotiate told me it wasn't fun. She was uncomfortable during the back and forth. She hated talking about money and she just wanted to get it over with.

Banish negativity. Recognize that for some people, negotiating will never be fun. It won't ever feel good. Don't wait until it feels right or comes naturally because you'll be waiting forever.

Men have likened negotiating to sport; they thrive on it. Women say it's like a root canal! And even though a root canal is by no means pleasant, you wouldn't let your teeth rot just to avoid

the procedure. You'd get yourself to the dentist and you'd deal with it because it's the only wise, viable option. Same thing holds for negotiating: Speaking up so you don't leave money on the table is the only viable option. Commit to doing it.

For those who didn't speak up for more than \$5 in the Boggle experiment, I also sensed a diminished self-worth or a feeling from these women that they weren't entitled to get more money, let alone ask for more money.

Common thoughts about negotiating that I routinely hear: "This salary is good enough." "It's more money than I was making previously." "I didn't think I could ask for more." "If that's what they think I deserve, well they know best."

If you catch those thoughts wondering through your mind, consider them warning signs that you're in a danger zone. Get out fast. Don't get sucked into that "I'm not worthy" mentality. Break it when you spot it.

Beyond cash. It's not just money that's up for grabs. Women can and must negotiate for much more. Time off, a better office, an extension on a deadline, even division of responsibilities. When someone wants to dump extra work on us, we sheepishly say OK, but it's not always OK. Such incidents are ideal opportunities to negotiate: "You know, I have a lot on my plate too right now. I'd like to be able to help you on this, so perhaps we can find a middle ground."

Do your homework. When you face an opportunity to negotiate for money, prepare in advance. Do your research so you know what the position should pay based on industry data. (Use sites like payscale.com, salary.com and even industry-specific associations that collect salary information in your field.)

The goal isn't just to make more than you've previously earned, but to also be paid for what the position is worth. That amount might be considerably more than a minimal increase in your previous pay, so don't cheat yourself by failing to do the research.

Make a thorough list. You should also prepare by making a list of the reasons that support your argument for more money. In addition to the industry salary data, this should also be based on your skills and experience, specific accomplishments and the challenges you'll be expected to tackle in this role. This document will not only serve as a guidepost in your conversation, but it'll boost your confidence to see it in black and white.

Be creative when anticipating the opposition. Think of the reasons why the boss might say no, so you're prepared to respond if you're rejected. Additionally, think about alternatives if your top request isn't possible. Maybe you want \$10,000 more in base pay, but you're told the budget can't handle it. What else would matter to you? Perhaps it's an extra week of

vacation, a flexible work option, a guaranteed signing bonus or something else of value to you.

Listen to your kids. My 10-year-olds are the best negotiators. I'll tell my son to start his homework and he negotiates for more video game time. My daughter is the master at negotiating an extended bedtime, and I often marvel at it. They simply don't take no for an answer. They wouldn't think of not speaking up. They're never rude or disrespectful, just smart, logical and perfectly pleasant negotiators. Sometimes we can take a cue from our kids.

I highly recommend two great sources for preparing: One is the book "Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation and Positive Strategies for Change," by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever. The other is a series of easy-to-follow online courses at NegotiatingWomen.com.

Bottom line: It's your life and it's your money. Resolve today to take control of both. Don't leave money on the table because you're too shy to ask. And when you do speak up, be sure to celebrate yourself for using your voice.

The Take Control Tour in Phoenix took place at the [Heard Museum](http://HeardMuseum.org), a well-known Phoenix treasure that celebrates native American history and culture.

Tory Johnson is the CEO of Women for Hire and the workplace contributor on ABC's "GMA." Connect with her directly at www.womenforhire.com.

Copyright © 2007 ABC News Internet Ventures