



## Everything Is Negotiable

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Life is Negotiable

Something very few people truly realize is literally everything is negotiable, and it's important to think of your career as a chance to negotiate the best possible deal and circumstances you can for yourself.

Your career, your pay, your hours, your health insurance, your parking, and everything else related to your job--all of these things are negotiable.

I remember when I first started practicing law, I joined a law firm, and there was a girl in the firm who had gone to a very good law school and done very well there. However, the girl was quite flippant and didn't work that hard. She did good enough work; nevertheless, she would come in maybe around 9:00 and be gone by 4:00 or 5:00 each day. She did things in the evening like take tennis lessons. On the weekends, she liked to go horseback riding, and she had a far different life than I and the other associates in the law firm.

I couldn't understand this. While I was working at least 6 days a week and walking around the law firm like a zombie like the rest of the associates, this girl seemed to think she was a member of a country club. She was relaxed and practicing law for her was not something that was nearly as intense as it was for the other associates in the law firm. We all worked like hell and were terrified because we wanted to impress the right people, wanted to make partner in the law firm, and were afraid of getting fired.

One day, I was out with a friend of mine who was a partner in the law firm. I couldn't believe it when he explained to me what had happened with this particular woman:

"Before she started here, she negotiated a contract where the firm agreed to make her partner within 5 years. She also negotiated that she would not have to bill more than 1,500 hours a year."

I was almost speechless when I heard this. What a superstar this girl was for negotiating this. I've been intimately involved in the legal industry for years and have never heard of someone negotiating a contract like this with a potential employer while they are in law school. Most people joining law firms work their asses off for years and have no security that they will ever make partner. They are nervous for years and scared and frightened. This girl, unlike any of the other young attorneys in the law firm, never had to worry about this. She had sealed her fate even before she joined the law firm and in return she was calmer, enjoyed life more and had employment and advancement security.

This is the power of negotiation. This girl asked for something I have never heard of anyone ever asking for, and she ended up getting it. This was incredibly smart of her and something that ended up changing her life.

You too can change your life through negotiation. The ability to negotiate is one of the greatest skills you can possibly have. You need to negotiate, and when you negotiate effectively, you will have more security, wealth, and happiness than those who do not negotiate.

Everything is negotiable. I negotiate every single day and in every single way.

Let me walk you through my day today. This is a typical day for me and each day is punctuated by a series of negotiations like this.

I woke up this morning on the Gold Coast of Australia where I am on business. I went downstairs to fetch a cab to the International Airport in Brisbane. When I got downstairs, I asked how much the fare to the airport was. I was quoted between \$200 and \$250. I told the first cab driver in line that I would pay \$140 and he agreed. I didn't accept a metered fare, and I simply made an offer and it worked. As it turned out, the cab driver was going the 70-minute drive to the airport because he wanted to go see an open house for an apartment near the airport. I gave him a nice tip when we got to the airport, and he was extremely grateful. I saved a lot of money, and everyone was happy.

When I got to the airport, I asked for a seat in an exit row with no one beside me. I was nice to the ticket agent, and they made this happen. Incredibly, the coach area I was sitting in was full except for the seat next to me. My simple request made this happen. It is really incredible what you can get if you just ask. I probably had more room than if I was traveling in First Class.

Then, I went through customs and stepped directly in the Duty Free Shop. I have been wanting to get an iPod for some time and, if you can believe it, I carry a CD player around with me everywhere because I am able to download songs onto my computer and then burn them onto CDs. This has worked for me for some time; however, it's getting very old. I've literally been walking around with a portable CD player for the past 25 years and, this week, I decided I needed to start using an iPod permanently.

At the Duty Free Store, instead of an iPod, I picked out a Sony MP3 player with wireless headphones. As I was at the cashier, I started being nice and requesting a discount. Incredibly, the woman at the counter disappeared and went to talk to a manager and came back a few moments later and agreed to give me a 5% discount. This wasn't a lot of money, of course, but it ended up saving me around \$15 on the item. I do this everywhere I go. If a Diet Coke is \$3.00 in certain stores I exclaim, "This is too much!" and say I'll pay \$2.00, most times the cashier smiles and laughs and tells me no. Nevertheless, this strategy works all the time wherever I go.

Several years ago, during the "real estate boom," I saw a house for \$2,500,000 that I liked on a nice stretch of beach in Malibu. The house had been on the market a few days and I am sure would be selling in a jiffy. There hadn't even been an open house yet.

"I can't afford this right now!" I told the owner. "I have another house I'm paying for! Can I rent it for \$3,000 a month for a year and decide after a year if I want to buy it?"

"Sure thing!" he said. Little did I know the man's wife was from Asia and had known people who had been killed in a terrible tsunami which swept through many areas of Asia. She wanted to get the hell out of there, and they took the first offer which came along. The savings from this was incredible, and I got to enjoy an exciting house for only \$3,000/month.

The idea I'm trying to make you understand is most things are open to negotiation. In fact, the way I look at it, almost everything is open to negotiation.

Most people assume when you go into certain sorts of stores that there's no negotiation. In almost every store and every case I have ever seen there is room for negotiation. You need to adopt a negotiation mindset and do everything within your power to consistently negotiate everything you can.

In your career, your ability to negotiate will pay gigantic rewards. You can negotiate almost anything--from the assignments you get, to the work you do, to your promotion, to your health and life insurance, you name it. You can also negotiate your way into a job and your way into various promotions once you have gotten the job you are after.

My only word of advice about negotiation is never do too much of it. You never want to piss people off. Negotiate too much and you will find your employer extremely turned off. It's often best to negotiate only about the small things at work and never do so too much. Do not forget, however, there is far more that you can negotiate than you might first realize.

### **THE LESSON**

You can change almost every aspect of your life through good negotiation. You must view your career in terms of opportunities to negotiate the best possible outcome; when you do this and hone your negotiation skills, you will achieve far more wealth, security, and happiness than would be possible for those who don't negotiate. While negotiation is critical, it must not be overdone; simply realize there are always more potential opportunities than what might initially be on offer.

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