



Formal English for Professionals

Ways of being diplomatic

- Corinne V.

Listen to Susan describe an important business meeting that she had yesterday and answer the questions below.



Write your answers here:

1. What relationship does Susan have with Bartlet Automotives?
2. How long has Susan worked with them?
3. Was it an easy meeting?

Listen to Susan once more. As you listen, match the issues with her reactions.



1. Absorb shipping costs

2. Redesigning products

3. Delayed payments

a. 'You obviously don't understand!'

b. 'You are clearly forgetting your obligations!'

c. 'You must be joking!'



Conflict should be avoided at all costs



Diplomatic techniques should be favoured

Conflict should be avoided at all costs

A horizontal strip showing a blurred view of a poker table with various colored chips (red, blue, green, white) scattered across it.

A poker-face tends to help too!

Diplomatic techniques should be favoured

What we think....

1. You are clearly forgetting your obligations.
2. You obviously don't understand.
3. You said that we would share the costs.
4. We can't agree to this.
5. We are shocked by this offer.
6. We will never accept this.
7. We won't discuss this unless we have guarantees.



And what we really say...



- a. We understood that we would be sharing the costs.
- b. I'm afraid that we would find this rather difficult to agree to.
- c. We will be happy to discuss it once we have some guarantees.
- d. We're not completely satisfied with this offer.
- e. With respect, it seems to us that there is some sort of misunderstanding.
- f. Would it help if we go over each of our obligations to find a balance?
- g. Unfortunately, we would find this rather difficult to accept.

Strategies and techniques...

- a. We understood that we would be sharing the costs.
- b. I'm afraid that we would find this rather difficult to agree to.
- c. We will be happy to discuss it once we have some guarantees.
- d. We're not completely satisfied with this offer.
- e. With respect, it seems to us that there is some sort of misunderstanding.
- f. Would it help if we go over each of our obligations to find a balance?
- g. Unfortunately, we would find this rather difficult to accept.

Such openings soften the listener and s/he is prepared for bad news.

Using 'we' over 'I' seems less defensive and takes collective responsibility.

Using positive adjectives over negatives shows more willingness to negotiate.

2nd conditional strategies make statements sound more hypothetical and less definitive.

Such adverbs act as softeners & are less definitive, thus leaving the field open for negotiations.

Such phrases sound less like defensive & leave the field open for negotiations.



Rewrite more diplomatic replies for Susan's reactions



a. 'You obviously don't understand!'

b. 'You are clearly forgetting your obligations!'

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Image references



Business Meeting Image: <https://unsplash.com/photos/W7aXY5F2pBo>

Ear Vector: <https://pixabay.com/vectors/ear-sound-signal-hear-conch-cup-304432/>

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