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Tactic of the Week #13

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Tactic #13 - That's Not Good Enough

Summary: Saying that the last offer is unsatisfactory in order to get a counterpart to make a better offer.

The idea behind this tactic is very simple. When someone makes you an offer you think could be improved, you simply respond, "That's Not Good Enough." Then pause and let your counterpart make the next response.

Example

Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State under Richard Nixon, was a master at this tactic. According to one story, his chief of staff once handed in a report he had written on an aspect of foreign policy. When Kissinger received the report, he asked simply, "Is this your best work?" The chief thought for a moment and, worried that his boss would think the report was not good enough, responded, "Mr. Kissinger, I think I can do better." So Kissinger gave the report back. Two weeks later the chief turned in the revised report. Kissinger kept it for a week and then sent it back with a note that said, "Are you sure this is your best work?" Realizing that something must have been missing, the chief once again rewrote the report. This time when he handed the report to his boss, he said "Mr. Kissinger, this is my best work." Hearing that, Kissinger replied, "Then this time I will read your report."

Counter

The best counter for the chief of staff in this situation would have been to gain more information by using the tactic of [Asking an Open-Ended Question](#) like, "Is there anything you were specifically looking for in my report that is not there?" Or, "Is there anything specific about my report that you do not like?" Or, "Just out of curiosity, why are you asking about the quality of my work?" Or, "How do you define 'best work'?" The key to countering the That's Not Good Enough tactic is not divulging information until it is clear precisely what your counterpart is looking for.

Do you have any negotiation questions? If so, then send them to us by hitting the "reply" button. We'll do our best to address them in upcoming issues.

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This tactic is one of 101 strategies and tactics featured in [The Only Negotiating Guide You'll Ever Need](#), by Peter Stark and Jane Flaherty.



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