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Tactic of the Week #34

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Tactic #34 - Whatever

Summary: Appearing indifferent to the outcome of a negotiation.

With this tactic, one counterpart appears to be uninterested in the outcome of the negotiation. She simply encourages the other counterpart to follow through with the terms. Her attitude is clearly, "Whatever..."

Example

Company A warns Company B that if a delinquent bill is not paid, the matter will be turned over to a collection agency. B replies, "We are already being sued by six other companies. We are planning to file for bankruptcy next week. We will provide you with the name of our bankruptcy attorney, and you can send the collection paperwork directly to him. Perhaps that will save you some time."

A second example is a parent giving a teenager some tough feedback about a bad report card. The parent says, "If you don't improve your grades, you will be grounded indefinitely." The teenager replies, "Whatever, I don't care. I don't have any friends or anyplace I want to go anyway."

Counter

In the first example, although Company A's goal, getting the money, remains the same, it may be in the company's best interest to switch tactics. First, A could utilize the tactic of [Calling Your Bluff](#) and ask for the name and address of the bankruptcy attorney. If there really is no bankruptcy attorney, A may want to stay on the collection course. If it seems the debt is eventually going to fall into the bankruptcy courts, A may want to try the tactic of [Moving the Goalpost](#), agreeing to accept a lesser amount if the account is settled immediately.

Every parent wants to know the counter to the second example! Although it is impossible to predict every child's reaction, we have two suggestions. First, the parent could ask, "If you are grounded indefinitely and you get asked to the prom, how will you feel when you can't go?" A second possible tactic is [Calling Your Bluff](#). The parent could respond, "Great! At least I will know where to find you until your grades improve."

Do you have any negotiation questions? If so, then send them to us by hitting the "reply" button in your email window. 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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