
Interest vs. Position: A Brilliant Distinction

Building understanding is not easy. The box below highlights some fundamental principles to help build understanding and move a group toward agreement.

➤ *What stands out to you as particularly wise?*

Fisher and Ury's classic text suggests that a "good agreement is one which is wise and efficient and which improves the parties' *relationship*" (italics added). They guide us to reach good agreements by replacing "positional bargaining" with principled negotiation. Four principles are listed below:

- 1. Separate the people from the problem**
To *separate people from issues*: address differences in perception, hear emotions and ensure communication.
- 2. Focus on interests rather than positions**
To *focus on interests*, invite people to share not what they have decided on but, rather, what caused them to so decide. Look for overlap in the interests shared, despite different positions taken.
- 3. Generate a variety of options before settling**
To *generate options*, allow time for invention before evaluation of ideas, encourage solutions that appease others' interests, and hone proposals that are supported by precedent.
- 4. Insist that the agreement be based on objective criteria.**
Finally, *a facilitator should*: ask for reasoning behind people's suggestions, demand that ideas are reasonable and are heard with an open mind, not give-in to pressure, and switch to a discussion of procedure as needed.

A shift from Position to Interest opens avenues for negotiation. You may want to jot down some examples of positions you or your colleagues take and replace them with interests.

Position	Interest
Example:	
Example:	
Example:	

