



STICKY SITUATIONS GUIDE

6 FOOLPROOF RESPONSES – AND A BONUS -
TO GET WHAT YOU WANT, MAKE MONEY
& BUILD TRUST



Have you ever been in a sticky business situation and didn't know what to say? Whether you've been in business a month, a year or decades, sometimes your mind can go blank, especially when money is at stake, tensions are high, and your palms are sweating. That's when you need a proven script to fall back on.





Here are six key situations where you need a response to help you move through any awkwardness and get the results you want. What's so great about all of these lines is they preserve the relationship. They can create trust and soften defenses. They can also net you thousands of dollars or more, save you money and time and provide you a valuable piece of information.

SITUATION #1: DEALING WITH A HAGGLER

You are offering a service or product for sale, and someone wants to bargain with you on price. You don't want to go lower and gut your profits, but you still want to maintain a friendly relationship with the prospective buyer.



SITUATION #1: DEALING WITH A HAGGLER

EXAMPLE:

Before we met, my husband lived and worked in the Bahamas for a few years. He wanted to buy some secondhand surfing equipment and made a lower offer. The seller responded with:

RESPONSE:

“I appreciate your willingness to negotiate, but given the value of the equipment, I can’t go any lower right now.”

RESULT:

John didn’t get the equipment, but he got a great line we’ve used many times in business and personal situations. It’s gentle, yet firm and preserves the dignity of the relationship.



SITUATION #2: PARLAYING YOUR PREFERENCES

You have been offered the job, sales contract, etc. You want to negotiate an additional element before the deal is done but feel your position is too weak to haggle.



SITUATION #2: PARLAYING YOUR PREFERENCES

EXAMPLE:

My daughter Grace was heading to LA to start a semester on the West Coast. She was having one final phone interview with a company she thought would give her an internship she really wanted. Given her online college course load and the commute she would have to this job, I suggested she request working on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. That would leave her Friday through Monday of each week to see a little of LA and do homework. She argued, “They probably have tons of applicants. I’m in no position to negotiate anything! And this is the only internship job I will likely get offered. I don’t want to blow it now!”

I countered, “You’re just making a request and letting your preferences be known. You may not get it, but at least put it out there.” I knew she might get nervous on the call and forget the line or be too hesitant to use it. I took out a blank index card and wrote down this phrase:

SITUATION #2: PARLAYING YOUR PREFERENCES

RESPONSE:

“If I had a choice, I would prefer to work Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.”

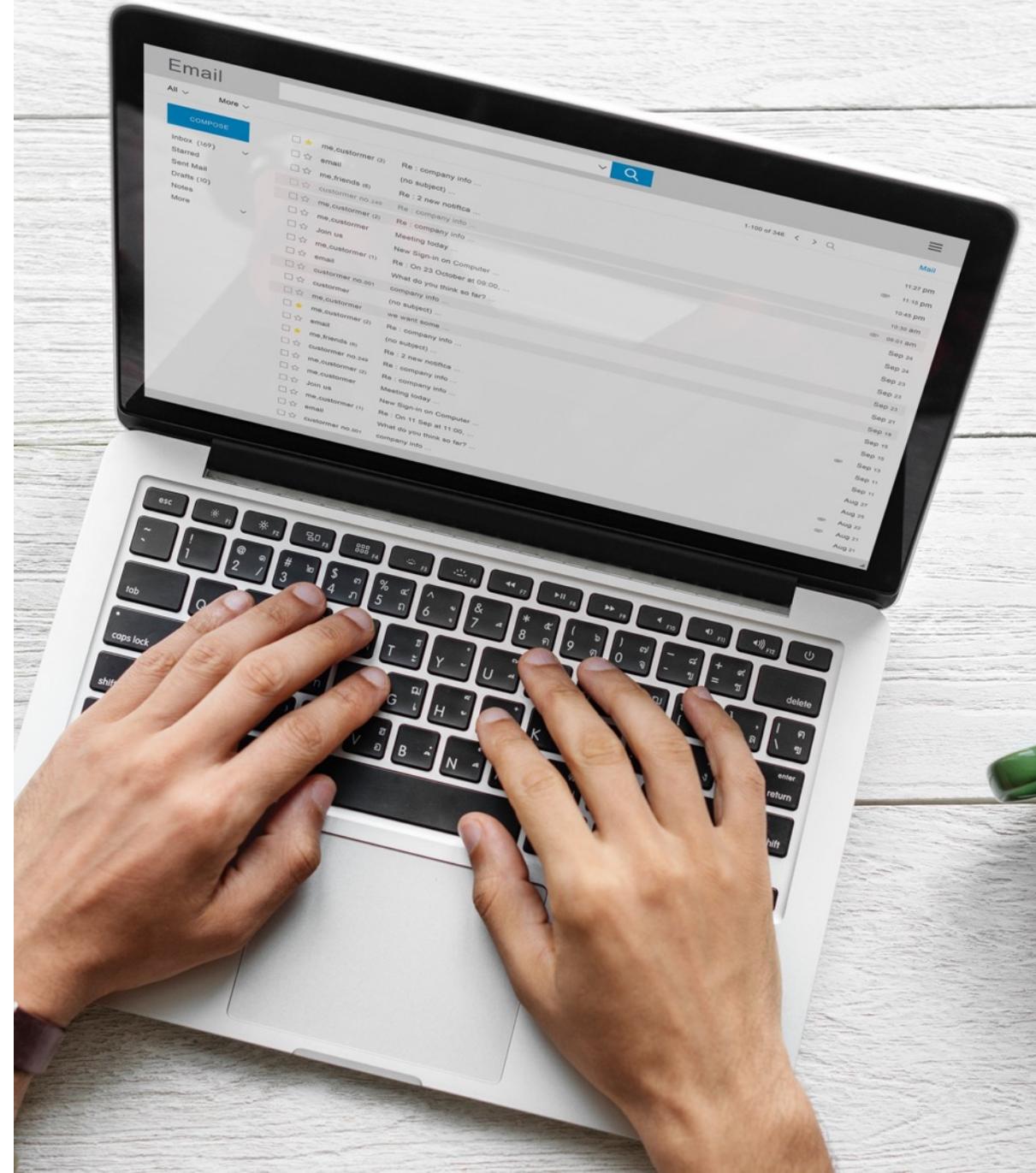
RESULT:

During the phone call, they did offer her the job, and she mustered her courage, took out the card and read the line. Her new supervisor said, “You know, we were going to hire two interns two days a week, so you could have Tuesday and Thursday, but we’re really impressed with you and want to make you the only intern, if you want to work all three days.” Grace was thrilled and later told me, “Mom, I was so scared to use that line, but it really worked!”

So, remember, “If I had a choice, I would prefer (blank).”

SITUATION #3: TURNAROUND A SOUR EMAIL EXCHANGE

How to take a written conversation that's gone south and turn it around.



SITUATION #3: TURNAROUND A SOUR EMAIL EXCHANGE

EXAMPLE:

You've been having a pleasant exchange with a colleague on Slack, email or Instant Messenger, etc. Suddenly, it takes a turn for the worse. The person has misunderstood some of what you said or misinterpreted your intentions and given you a snarky response. Your initial reaction may be to send a terse response back. Don't. Type this instead.

RESPONSE:

"I'll call you in a few minutes, and we can discuss."

OR if the person is physically in the same office, type:

"I'll walk over in a few minutes, and we can discuss."

SITUATION #3: TURNAROUND A SOUR EMAIL EXCHANGE

RESULT:

This is the scarier option I know. And it may intimidate the person you are having the exchange with. You may be thinking, “What, talk on the phone? I just want to continue emailing or texting my way out of this hole.”

Let me tell you why that’s difficult. You are operating in a vacuum. You don’t have enough information. You are missing verbal and visual clues.

Also, think of social media in general. It’s easy to be rude, abrupt or jump to negative conclusions when you’re not on the phone or three feet away from the person. So, by picking up the phone or walking over, you’re automatically going to de-escalate the exchange, especially if you’re warm and friendly.

SITUATION #3: TURNAROUND A SOUR EMAIL EXCHANGE

What do you say when you approach the person?

“Hey, I figured it would be easier just to talk this through (in person or over the phone). So, I’ve got a few minutes. Is this a bad time for you right now?”

Then, depending on what they say, you can offer, “If it is a bad time, when would be better?”

If it’s a good time, say, “Great! You’re important to me (or what we were texting about was important) and I didn’t want us to get off track. So, I want to hear what you’re thinking about _____ (the topic from the email).” And then be quiet and listen. It will be so easy to turn the conversation around once you’ve shown that your colleague is important, and your goal is to better understand what’s going on, not defend your position.

SITUATION #4: ASKING FOR SOMETHING WHEN YOU'RE IN A WEAK POSITION

Here's another situation where you want to ask for something, but don't have a strong case.



SITUATION #4: ASKING FOR SOMETHING WHEN YOU'RE IN A WEAK POSITION

EXAMPLE:

When I was negotiating an employment contract, my husband suggested I ask for a car allowance. I stated the obvious, “But I’m working from home!” He countered, “Yes, but you’re often having to go to events locally. And just a few weeks ago you drove several hundred miles to a photo shoot.” So, he suggested I say:

RESPONSE:

Does this contract include a car allowance?

SITUATION #4: ASKING FOR SOMETHING WHEN YOU'RE IN A WEAK POSITION

RESULT:

I used that line. (Yes, I'm a fan of writing them on index cards if you're on a phone call.)

They said, "No, but let us see what we can do." Later, they added a small monthly car allowance for the duration of my contract.

If they had just said, "No, you're working from home. We're not including that."

Then I could've have said, "The reason why I asked is that I'm regularly going to events representing the company and I just had to go hundreds of miles to a photo shoot. I realize you probably weren't aware of that. So, in light of that new information, could you please reconsider it?"

So the line is "Does this proposal, contract, agreement, lease, etc. include (blank)?"

SITUATION #5: LOOKING UNDER THE HOOD

You're in a job interview, and you want to get a good idea of exactly what the company wants in a prospective employee. That will help you discover:

- Exactly what success would look like from their perspective
- If you would be a good fit for the job
- If you could deliver what they're wanting
- Information that you can use to show the interviewer how your skills and experience match with what they want.

OR

You want to get the sale from a prospective client, but you don't know what it would take to get it.

OR

Your boss requests you to take on a new project, and you're not sure of what he or she wants the outcome to be?

What simple question would suss out all that information for you?

SITUATION #5: LOOKING UNDER THE HOOD

EXAMPLE:

A committee of top board members was interviewing me for a job. About 10 minutes into their interview with me, I said:

RESPONSE:

If I hit a homerun in this job, what would that look like?

SITUATION #5: LOOKING UNDER THE HOOD

RESULT:

When I asked that question, one of the board members began to lay out what he thought was success. Another board member cut him off and contradicted him. A third board member jumped in, and she disagreed with them both. Their voices rose as each one gave their opinion about the role. Finally, the chairman turned to me and abruptly concluded the interview. Now, you may be thinking, *I definitely don't want to use that question.* After all, it got you pretty much thrown out of an interview.

But what we all realized was that they had a different yardsticks to measure my efforts. At that point, I saved myself from a situation where I would've failed, and not for lack of trying.

Later that afternoon, the president called and apologized. He thanked me for asking the question. "Our answers show we have some internal work to do, and we're really not ready to hire for this position yet." I told him I would be interested in the job once they got it sorted. I also was able to give him several suggestions on how I thought the job could be shaped. Several weeks went by, and they called. They had agreed on the role and told me I was their top candidate. I eventually took the job.

If it's a sales-related situation, the question would be:

If I hit a homerun in providing this service/product, what would that look like?

SITUATION #6: ASKING ABOUT MONEY POLITELY

Often, you need to find out how much money the other side has allocated for something.



SITUATION #6: ASKING ABOUT MONEY POLITELY

EXAMPLE:

You have been asked to deliver a proposal for a prospective client. They've told you some of the things they want in the proposal but haven't mentioned their budget for it at all.

Early in my career, I'd get so excited about having interest from a prospective client. Since it's awkward to bring up money, I either wouldn't broach the subject of how much they could spend on the project, or I'd accept their vague answers. Then, I'd have our team spend days working on the proposal with various options and creative concepts, many of them the client probably couldn't afford. In other words, I'd spin my wheels, waste our team's time because I hadn't asked the right questions and then get frustrated at the client and myself. To save time and resources, here's what I began to ask:

RESPONSE:

Is there a budget I should be aware of?

SITUATION #6: ASKING ABOUT MONEY POLITELY

RESULT:

Sometimes, they'll just come right out and tell you, which is great. Other times, they are cagey. They want you to give them all the options – even the ones they can't afford. This creates so many problems. (It's like shopping for a pair of black dress shoes that you want to spend no more than \$100 for. Yet you walk into a store and want the salesperson to show you every pair of shoes in every style in every price range first including the tennis shoes!)

If you're still not getting even a broad indication of the scope of the project, then you need to push. "To give you a proposal that meets your needs and turn it around quickly for you, I really need to know a ballpark figure of what you can spend. It will also save us both time and helps our team to focus on results you'll be happy with."

If they still refuse or deflect say, "What if I give you three options in the proposal: One for \$150,000. One for \$500,000 and one for \$1 million. Would that work for you?" Then they'll usually start tweaking those numbers.

Here's another reason why this line gives you vital information. You'll see very quickly how important the initiative is. Say your CEO wants to develop a new product line. She says it will be the next big thrust for the company. If you find out the initial budget is miniscule, look at that as an indication she may not be as fully committed to this new venture as she touted.

BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

Often, someone comes to you with a problem. You want to help but aren't sure what to do.



BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

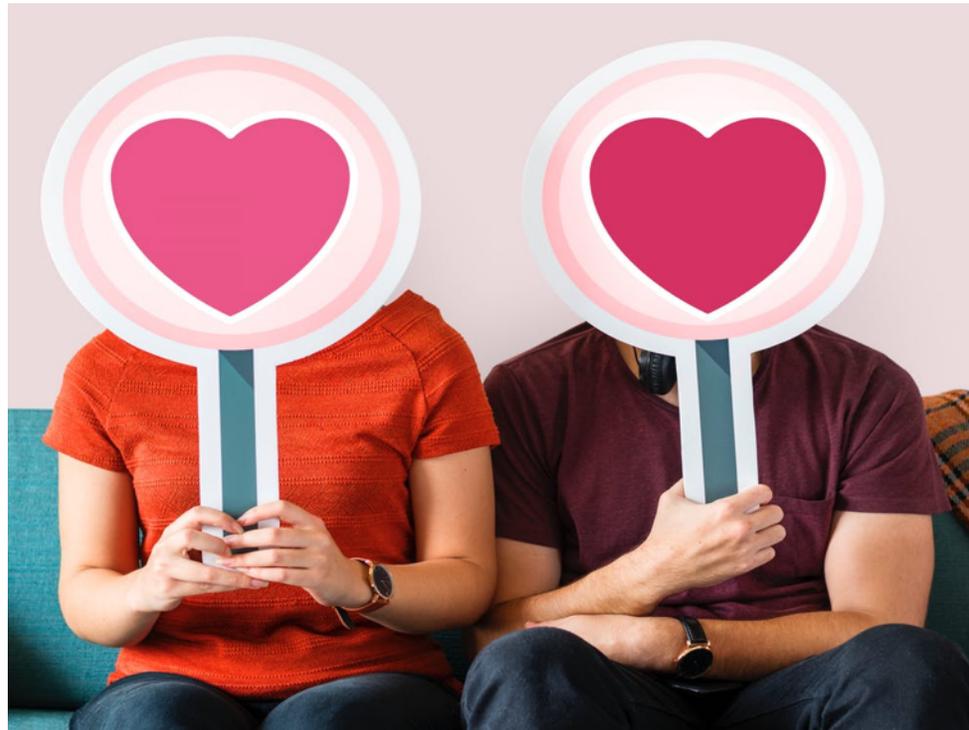
EXAMPLE:

If I have a problem at work, sometimes I want to come home and talk to my husband about it. Before we learned this approach I'm about to share with you, John might listen for a minute or two. Then he'd jump in and say, "Well maybe you shouldn't have done this or that." Or he might offer advice before I finished explaining what happened. Basically, he'd be trying to fix the situation before he even heard me out. Not only would I be upset about the work situation, I'd be ticked off at him! I don't feel heard or understood, and he's frustrated because he's trying so hard to help me solve my problem. So now, I've got a problem at work *and* at home. (Does any of this sound familiar at your house?)

BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

EXAMPLE:

Now we've come up with more of a system. Although I'm using an example from home, this framework works with business colleagues and your own kids too. Basically, it's: listen and repeat what they said, take a guess on what they're *feeling* and ask three simple questions. It's about slowing down and staying open.



BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

RESPONSE:

1. Don't say anything at first. Just listen to their problem.
2. Repeat what they just said without inserting your own ideas or commentary.
3. Ask: *Did I get that right?*
4. Then ask: *So what's the pain point for you?*
5. Repeat what they say back to them.
6. Empathize – say, *Wow, that must make you feel _____*. (lonely, hurt, frustrated, angry, vulnerable, scared, disappointed, left out, unimportant, dismissed, invisible, etc. If you don't know, take a best guess. See if you can pinpoint what's behind the anger.)
7. Then say: *How can I help?*
8. Do the request if possible.

BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

So this is how it might look:

Me: I had a tough day at work. The big project I'm leading seems to be going south, and the other department we're working with doesn't act like they care as much as we do. Their department head said, "If I would've been leading the project, this wouldn't have happened."

John: So, let me make sure I got this. That big project you were working on hit a roadblock and instead of pulling together, the other department head blamed you, and said if he would've been in charge, it would be in better shape. Did I get that right?

Me: Exactly!

John: Well, what's the pain point for you?

Me: He was being snide about it, but his comment made me doubt myself and my ability to lead.

John: So, it was deeper than the project hiccup. That verbal jab really struck a nerve and made you question your abilities. (*Paraphrase*)

Me: Right!

John: Wow! That must've felt really scary for you! (*Best guess at emotion.*)

Me: Yeah, it was.

John: How can I help?

Me: Remind me of some of my past successes, so I don't feel like such a loser! (*We both laugh.*)

John: You climbed Huayna Picchu and had natural childbirth - twice. You can handle this guy's comment and this project!

BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

RESULT:

I now feel like John's on my side. He heard and understood me, and after a bruising day, I'm grateful for a little empathy. I also gave John a specific task that he can do easily – encourage me in a specific way. By being reminded of some past successes, I'm able to “right size” the colleague's comment. Then that will put me in a better frame of mind to handle the project setback tomorrow. John also feels good because he helped me work through a problem.

Often times, we so want to help others, but aren't sure how to do it. Now, you have a way to support a child, work colleague, friend or significant other.

BONUS SITUATION #7: CLARIFYING WHAT THE OTHER PERSON NEEDS

If the steps above seem too complicated, then just:

1. Listen.
2. Repeat what you heard.
3. Empathize (*That must've been scary.*)
4. Ask: *How can I help?*
5. Do it, if possible.

SUMMING IT UP

Having some phrases that you can use in sticky situations will give you more confidence when situations turn awkward.

So remember:

1. Try writing the line down on an index card or in a notebook, so you have it handy. (If you type it into your phone, you can look distracted and uninterested by searching for it.)
2. Say it with a smile
3. Be curious and listen to the response.



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Let us know how some of these lines worked for you!

Besides these, what are some responses that you've found that are really effective?

Shoot us an email and let us know--
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