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**Meghan Casserly**, Forbes Staff

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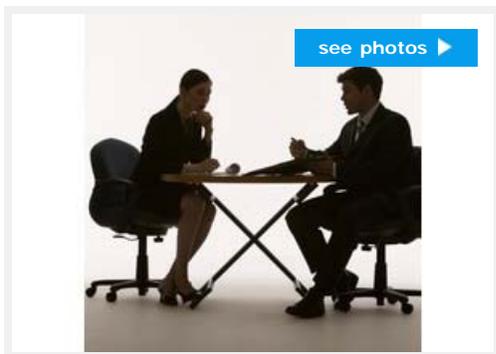
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# Why American Women Lose At Negotiation -- And What We Can Do About It

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A new survey from [LinkedIn](#) reveals that not only are professionals uncomfortable with negotiating for higher salaries, roughly one in four of us are so anxious with the process that [we've decided to skip it altogether](#). But what's worse news is that the group that is [the most averse](#) to the often-awkward but oh-so-important dance of negotiating in the



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According to the survey, which queried 2,500 professionals in eight countries, Americans are the most likely to report feeling anxious about negotiating (39%). Germans, it should be noted, have the most positive outlook on the process, with the highest rate of respondents saying that they are, in fact, "excited" about negotiating (21%). Indian employees, it should be noted, claim to be the most confident in the world about their negotiating skills (47%), while South Koreans feel the most indifferent about the process (21%).

What makes Americans so anti-negotiation? After all, we're a nation of

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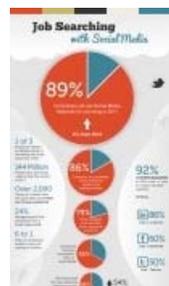
**Meghan Casserly**

Forbes Staff

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Girl Friday is about being everything at once: at Forbes that means sticking to the ForbesWoman beat while finding moments and mental space for

unions and certainly know the power of collective bargaining. But when it comes to one-on-one bartering, we're definitely behind the curve. Lee E Miller, author of *Get More Money On Your Next Job...In Any Economy*, says it just comes down to cultural comfort levels. "Many countries throughout the world place a higher premium of bargaining because it's just a part of their social norm," he says. "They barter for goods and services and so it follows suit that negotiating would be much more common in the workplace as well." In the U.S., we regularly pay whatever price we're quoted, whether it's for a pound of apples or a housecleaning service. When it comes to salary negotiations, many Americans have a "take what you can get" mentality that explains our discomfort with negotiations.



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Meghan Casserly  
Forbes Staff



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J. Maureen Henderson  
Contributor



### Why Women Don't Negotiate

Daily Muse  
Contributor

But while Americans have it bad, globally the aversion to negotiating is an overwhelmingly female problem. According to the numbers, fewer than 26% of women feel comfortable negotiating compared to nearly 40% of men. "Women are certainly less confident than men when it comes to negotiations," says Selena Rezvani, *FW* contributor and the author of the new book *PUSHBACK: How Smart Women Ask—And Stand Up—For What They Want*. "A big part of that problem for women is the belief that relationships should trump agenda." In other words, she says women are concerned that negotiating—or any sign of resistance—with a manager could tarnish a long-term relationship. When confronted with that scenario, many women choose to forgo their own agenda (whether a salary increase or desired promotion) in order to protect workplace relationships.

Ouch. Whether we like it or not, women tend to over-value relationships and under-value ourselves in the workplace, Rezvani says, a troubling pairing of behaviors that keep us from successful negotiations. But add the troubled economy to the equation and women are even worse off. "There's nothing like a recession to keep people from thinking they have to take what they can get," she says, something Miller quickly echoes. "I happen to think that the 25% of professionals who say they aren't negotiating truly believe that they can't," he says. "Especially when you view any job offer through the lens of a bad economy, an offer seems like an offer. There's a real fear that if you even begin to negotiate a job offer, you won't just not get the salary you want, but that the job will be pulled from under you. That's a lot to lose."

The good news is that American women are wrong. If done appropriately, negotiating has a much better

startups, celebrity gossip and the occasional political sex scandal. What (I hope) you'll find here: a witty take on current events, a youthful eye on women's career issues and a somewhat jaded

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 Deborah L. Jacobs  
Forbes Staff

chance of increasing your happiness than of costing your job. Both Miller and Rezvani encourage women to use their feminine natures to their advantage in negotiation settings, citing a particularly salient point from the LinkedIn survey. When asked whether negotiation is like a poker game, dance, bullfight or tennis match, men were most likely to say poker, which paints the exercise in a purely competitive light. Women, on the other hand, most often cited a dance. “That women see negotiation as a dance implies that they see it as a collaborative activity rather than one in which there is a winner and a loser,” says Rezvani. “If women can go into negotiating with the mindset that both parties will benefit from the outcome, they may have a much

easier time of it.”

That certainly is a helpful attitude, but I wonder if it’s enough to get women to make the first move. After all, I pushed Rezvani, we all *know* we should be negotiating—for higher salaries, better benefits and flex time—but the numbers continue to show that we’re not knocking on the doors and setting the meetings. What can be done—really done—to make a change?

For that Rezvani has a prescriptive—and surprising—solution. “I think it’s really helpful to remind women that other women are watching them,” she says. “At all levels, but especially if you’ve reached the management level, there are younger women watching you to see if you’re just accepting the status quo as a woman or if you’re really pushing back and fighting for your position.” Keep that in mind, she says. If you can’t do it for yourself, negotiate for the sake of the women around you and lead by example. By demonstrating to women that you’re not just going to take whatever’s offered can set off what Rezvani calls a “cascading effect” of influence that could be just the thing to change these dismal numbers for women in years to come.

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**Susannah Breslin**, Contributor 4 months ago

Great post. A bit over a year after being downsized and starting work for other companies as an independent contractor, I need to raise my rates. True to my female form, I cringe at the prospect. I especially like the last observation here. That other women are watching you. That means the issue is bigger than you.

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Victoria Pynchon , Contributor 4 months ago

And when we negotiate, we re-anchor women's compensation. We're all comparing our compensation to one another – not to our male peers'. So we're all at the effect of the 20-60% pay gap (yes – women equity partners in AmLaw100 firms make 60% less than their male counterparts – as we get more successful – the delta increases radically). There's nothing we can do for women that's more important than increasing our economic value. And every time you charge \$10K instead of \$5K as your speaking fee, you raise the bar for all women. Here's the best advice we give – look at men's fees and adjust accordingly. Your sisters in the workplace will thank you.

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Victoria Pynchon , Contributor 4 months ago

One more helpful piece of knowledge for women – your employer KNOWS you're being under compensated because men have asked for raises and bonuses since they started working and women haven't. Your employer wants to close the delta – employers worry they'll be sued for discrimination in pay. So when you ask your employer for a raise or bonus to narrow the gap, you're actually doing your employer a favor because he, she, it can't raise all women to parity at the same time. So go do it! Buy Selena's book, read her blog here and ours ("She Negotiates") here as well. It's our time.

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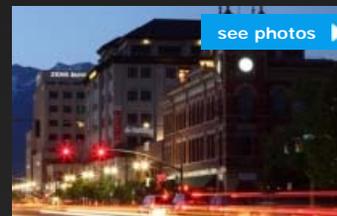


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