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## **Don't Skip A Move**

Negotiation is like a game of chess, as each side plots their next move or concession to get to the endgame. The pace of the sequential moves by the parties provides the music to the negotiation “dance.” Each reciprocal move, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, can get you closer to a final agreement. However, impatience, or an effort to be perceived by the other side as cooperative, may cause a party to skip a move to simply “cut to the chase.” In reality, skipping a move can set you back. Skipping a move actually redefines the value of the negotiation and reveals a position that is closer to your endgame, which could be exploited by the other side.

Remember that each move is symbolic. While it is true that a dollar amount is attached to each move, it's the symbolism of the amount, and not necessarily the substantive amount, that drives the next move. The distance between you and your counterpart's positions at any one point doesn't tell you everything about where you are in the negotiation. Instead, you can get a better read of the situation by observing the nature of your counterpart's concessions.

Each side moves at its own pace. Sometimes one party comes to the table expecting a traditional negotiation with multiple moves, and the other party hates to negotiate, but both have come to the dance. In this case, engage the non-dancer by asking them to “pick the music” they will dance to by developing the negotiation agenda. This simple request may give them a sense of having some power, and motivate them to participate. Sometimes a sense of powerlessness is the root of a party's reluctance to negotiate.