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## **Preach What You Practice**

A guy gets into a cab in New York City and asks the cab driver, “How do I get to Carnegie Hall?” The cab driver replies, “Practice, practice, practice.”

As that classic joke implies, being prepared will take you places. Just as musicians rehearse big concerts and lawyers rehearse tough cases, negotiators should rehearse a tough negotiation. Start by scheduling a preparation session with a colleague or friend. Preparation is easier to do when you’re talking it over with someone else. Brainstorming with others brings new perspectives, compels you to face difficult issues that you might otherwise avoid, and can provide moral support.

In your practice session, rehearse what you will say to the other side and how to respond to what they may say. Have your colleague play the role of the other side and test your powers of persuasion, focusing on the parties’ interests, options and positions. Get feedback from your colleague about what did and didn’t work, how it felt to be on the receiving end of your presentation, and what you might do differently. Anticipate what tactics the other side may try and think in advance of how to respond. Preparing in advance makes you less likely to be caught by surprise at the real negotiation.

So how do you get to a done deal? Practice, practice, practice.