

# Opening and Climate Setting

*“Your place or mine? Actually, I’ll come to you.  
That way I can get up and leave if things turn nasty!”*

There are many things that you can influence, or even control, that will determine the negotiation climate, the ‘atmosphere’, of your meetings.

Before you do anything, however, you need to ask yourself... *“What sort of climate do I want to create?”*

You may want an open, friendly, collaborative, supportive climate, particularly if you’re negotiating with long-term partners or you want to encourage the other party to open up and to work with you on problem solving.



Alternatively, you may have an issue to resolve, the other party might have made a mistake or let you down repeatedly, so a more formal, direct, ‘down-to-business’, or even austere climate may be more in line with your objectives. You can be firm without being nasty, to create the right climate to support your goals.

Consider:

- ★ **Venue**; your premises, their offices, alternating or on neutral territory
- ★ **Dress sense**; degree of formality
- ★ **Room layout**; in particular the availability of white-board, flipchart, data-projector etc
- ★ **Furniture**; seating and table arrangements, including distance between the various parties; room temperature and ventilation
- ★ **Refreshments**; availability and nature of drinks, snacks, lunch etc... *if any!*
- ★ **Agenda**; its nature, formality or rigidity/flexibility in terms of content and time allocation; also, who constructs the agenda; you, them or jointly?
- ★ **Greetings**, and in particular, the length of time it is appropriate to spend on small talk and chit chat before getting down to business
- ★ **Office tour**; to see facilities, offices and to meet other people informally
- ★ **Rapport**; degree to which you build on their comments to build a collaborative supportive climate, or counter them and argue to create a degree of tension/pressure
- ★ **Empathy**; degree to which you consciously build empathy or take actions that create and maintain a psychological distance between you and the other party
- ★ **Pace**; the speed with which the negotiation proceeds, or needs to progress