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BARTER
FOR YOUR
LIFE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Disclaimer..................................................................................................................3
Table of contents ..........................................................................................................4
Introduction ...................................................................................................................5
What to Barter With ......................................................................................................10
Kick-Ass Negotiations .................................................................................................15
Keep These in Mind as Well .......................................................................................20
Bartering is one of those skills often forgot by newbie preppers who are sure things will get back to normal soon enough. In a post-disaster society, however, money will be worthless… at least initially. Gold will worth more but few people will have it. Right now, it sits in the pockets of those who know how to juggle it while the vast majority of unprepared Americans don’t even have a savings account, let alone any precious metals.

So what will really worth post-collapse? Food. Water. Antibiotics. Toilet paper. Most of the things we right now take for granted. Stockpiling them is one thing but knowing how to trade them for your own benefit is completely different.

What’s Bartering?

If you look up the word “barter” on the online edition of the Merriam–Webster dictionary, you will find out that it means “to trade by exchanging one commodity to another“. In other words, someone has something you want while you have something they need.

When I said “you want” and “they need” I did it on purpose. Ideally, you want the other guy to be more motivated to barter than yourself because this gives you leverage during negotiation.

It’s one thing to say that bartering will be mandatory in a disaster situation and it’s another to figure out just to what extent. If the transportation system will be down, the stores will be completely empty. Unprepared folks will become more and more desperate to
feed themselves and their families. They know preppers exist and that they have stuff and some of them might even organize themselves to target us.

**Why Should You Know This Stuff?**

Bartering is more than just exchanging goods to stay alive. It’s about coming out on top when everyone else is struggling to survive. The better you get at it, the higher the quality of life for you and your family. You’ll soon be able to barter for comfort foods, toys and other luxury items that others won’t even dare to dream about in a post-SHTF scenario.

A lot of survival articles and courses give us the impression that we can barter with just about anyone. But a lot of these folks either don’t have a stockpile, they don’t have skills or neither.

**Bartering Is Relative**

This is a very important point. In order to be successful at bartering goods and services, you have to be very good at recognizing the value of things. That value is relative and influenced by a variety of factors:

- supply
- demand
- how desperate the other guy is
- how desperate YOU are
- what do OTHER people think about bartering (that have already done similar deals)?

That’s how pretty much how we determine the value of a thing right now. But, see, now it’s easy. We have money as a common
resource to barter with and we can go online and find out dozens of prices for something with a few simple clicks.

In a post–SHTF situation, the value of things is going to vary a lot more. You need to be at the top of your game and find out what the supply and demand is, how desperate people are and what were the details of all the other transactions that already happened?

Speaking about the value of things, more often than not, things will not be equal in value. That’s why it’s always good to give away or ask a small bonus in order to make it fair for both parties.

A pair of nail clippers, a bag of coffee or even a toy are just a few examples. Make sure the bonus you offer to give is something you really don’t need and that the bonus you ask is something really useful to you. Bonuses can be negotiated as well, why not?

**Two Crucial Bartering Lessons**

Lesson #1 in bartering is: keep your mouth shut. You don’t want people to know exactly what you have or how much you have. You’ll only make you and your family a possible target for looters. Only show what you’re willing to trade right there and then.

Lesson #2 is to stockpile things even if you don’t need them. Tobacco is an example. Even though you’re a non–smoker, a lot of people will kill for a cigarette when they have to deal with lack of supply and the stress of a post–apocalyptic scenario.

By the way, things like tobacco can also be used as decoy as part of your home defense methods. If a looter breaks into your home and finds lots of tobacco, it’s better to take THAT than your valuables or your guns, right? Once they find the cigarettes they might just call it a day and run away.
Stockpile even the things you don’t need, because they’ll be extremely valuable TO OTHERS.

It’s very hard, for instance, to give away part of your stockpile in order to get a gun because you know you’ll have less food. However, you’ll gladly give away packs of cigarettes even if you’re a non-smoker because you know you don’t need them and they aren’t essential for your family’s survival.

You have to realize you’ll be dealing with people who might not get what you have form somewhere else. They could be desperate and things will escalate quickly. You need to know how to keep calm, to speak in an assertive manner and, more importantly, not to brag about what you have and how much.

Some people, when they’re in a desperate situation and you’re not, they see it as their right to get a good deal and get angry quickly if you don’t offer it to them. The solution is to prevent getting there by not raising your voice, not being condescending, not making fun of them and your situation and, most of all, not threatening them.

It’s probably best to have a gun or even someone else with you before you go to expose yourself.

Always choose your bartering partners carefully. For all we know, they could pretend to be good at something just to get something to eat in exchange for their poorly executed skill. Don’t tell anyone what you have or what you can do. If someone looks like he’s a trouble maker, he could be tough to negotiate with and might even set his eyes on you and even follow you home!

That’s right, keep your skills hidden or you might get in trouble. If you’re a really good doctor, you might end up dragged ever week
to take care of some poor bastard who’s dying because he didn’t take the time to prepare
WHAT TO BARTER WITH

If you think about it, pretty much all the items you stockpile are going to be necessary after SHTF. That’s why we hoard them, right? From food to baby diapers to tools and duct tape, all of these are going to become very valuable.

So which ones should you start stockpiling for bartering purposes? Let’s narrow them down by choosing the ones that have a really long shelf life and are also cheap. This will not only prevent you from breaking the bank but will save you the effort of rotating your bartering stockpile.

Here’s a list to get you started:

- cigarettes
- alcoholic beverages such as whisky and wine
- toilet paper
- clothes
- sewing kits
- tools
- glue
- soap
- shampoo
- tampons
- duct tape
- knives
- honey (indefinite shelf life)
- shoe laces
- motor oil
• livestock (for breeding purposes)
• baby diapers
• matches
• zip lock bags
• batteries
• anything that works on solar power (calculators, phone chargers etc.)
• bleach
• clocks and watches repair
• sanitation
• blacksmithing
• toothbrush
• toothpaste
• nail clippers
• combs
• guns
• ammo
• paper, pencils and pencil sharpeners
• canteens
• pots
• water purification kits
• fire starter kits
• razor blades
• medicine
• condoms
• pepper spray
• blankets

And how about food and beverages (besides wine and whisky which are already at the top of the list)? Try these:

• cooking oil (olive and coconut)
Like I said, a lot of these things you’re going to stockpile anyway. The trick is to start with the ones that are cheapest because you don’t really know which ones are going to be the most sought-after.

In fact, I bet you have plenty of old tools lying around the house or yard right now that, instead of throwing away to get new ones, you can stockpile them.

If you know the above lists inside out, you’ll always be on the lookout for bargains. Plus, if you need some of these things for you, you can get them in larger quantities and save precious dollars per unit of measure.

Last but not least, here’s a quick list of the skills you can barter with. Giving away your time and knowledge is great because… you have it, you give it away and then you still have it.

Here’s the full list:

- survival knowledge
- medical knowledge
- carpentry
- navigation skills
- firearm skills
- combat skills
- working the land (for others)
• reinforcing homes
• building earth domes
• purifying water
• clergy
• navigation skills
• vet skills
• grinding grains
• sewing
• reconditioning clothes
• reconditioning shoes
• leatherwork
• finding drinkable water
• manual labor (digging ditches etc.)
• knowledge about edible plants
• herbal remedies
• cooking without electricity
• making bio-fuel
• midwife
• butchering
• home repair
• milking
• mechanical knowledge
• appliance repair
• engine repair
• baking
• plumbing
• pest control
• masonry
• hunting
• fishing
• soap and candle making
- canning and preserving
- beekeeping
- log splitting
- gunsmithing

The awesome thing about having skills is that you become needed to the society. That means your life’s going to be worth more and you’ll even have people having risking their lives to protect you!
KICK-ASS NEGOTIATIONS

Bartering is more than just the exchange goods and services without the use of money. People go to the flea market because they like to bargain. They like the tension, they like to get the other guy to lower his guard and get more for less.

Adrenaline? Maybe. But that’s not why we’re doing it. We’re doing it to ensure that we

A. Don’t get killed
B. Get a good deal.

In that order. 😊 And when I say “don’t get killed’, I’m also referring to the situation where we have to give off important items for urgent items.

The art of negotiation isn’t new and you can master it. Few people know that the richest men today (money-wise) know how to negotiate. Some of them say that everything’s negotiable and they’re right.

I want you to use the following golden rules of negotiation starting right now because you want to get good at it. Sure, you can’t go to a supermarket and negotiate a pack of gum but there are other things you can.

Your time, for instance. Instead of helping people whenever they need you, negotiate the time, the duration and then don’t be ashamed to ask them for favors.

Go to a flea market and start negotiating on some of the things there. Maybe some of them will fit nicely with your stockpile. go
practice and pay attention to how people react to different tactics. Remember: practice makes perfect.

**Know what you want.** It doesn’t make sense to barter your stockpile without knowing what you want in return. You’re not doing it to help people, you’re doing it to help yourself. If someone comes to you, begging to trade a bottle of wine for some food, ask yourself if you really need that wine. You probably don’t.

Don’t fall into the trap of trading simply because you think “Oh, well I have enough food to last me a year, I my wife will love the bottle wine…” Either you find a way to stockpile more food before you do this or you find something else to trade.

Which brings me to rule #2:

**Trade what you don't need.** At least that’s what you should try. When you’re giving away something you don’t need, you can focus on making it more appealing to the other guy, by telling him, for instance, that there’re other people who’d gladly take on the deal.

**Expect that the deal will not go through.** When you go to the flea market you’ll see this with your own eyes: most bartering deals don’t happen… which is why you have to be prepared to kiss a lot of frogs to get what you want. Always remember that there are plenty of other guys out there who have what you want. Plus, by refusing to deal with someone WITHOUT OVERREACTING, you’ll earn his respect and get better deals next time.

Tough negotiators aren’t tough on the outside, they’re tough on the inside.

**Do your homework.** Say you have something to barter, such as cigarettes. Ask yourself: why do these people need it? Because
they’re hardcore smokers, because they’re addicted to nicotine. They need the smell of tobacco down their throat. Make sure you let them you that you know that one way or another. Play with their emotions. Push a few buttons.

**Never lie.** I know it’s tempting to exaggerate and lie but this will not help you long term. You have to believe in your offer and the only way to do it is to be absolutely 100% sure that it’s the right thing for the other guy. If you try and screw them, they won’t do business with you the next time PLUS they’ll tell others. You want your reputation intact.

OK, now that we talked about the basic principles of negotiation, let’s discuss some of the actual tactics you should make use of when bartering. Some of these might seem misleading but, trust me, all good negotiators use them.

**Scarcity.** You want the other person to know you don’t have that much of your stuff to go around. If they pass on or delay making a decision about completing a transaction, they might come back to see you’ve given your item away.

Don’t be ashamed to mention this. When you do it, they urgency mechanism inside them will kick in and they’ll be more likely to take the deal. You don’t want them to like you, you want them to trust you and to barter with you.

**Increase perceived value.** The more you make your stuff seem to be worth, the more the other guy is willing to “pay” you for it. Comparing apples to oranges will work just fine. For example, instead of giving someone one pack of cigarettes, tell him that you can give him 5 packs, which he can, in turn, barter for food. Tell him that this stuff is worth more than food because desperate
people need to smoke. Tell him that you don’t really have time to run around trying to give away your cigarettes but he could, if he only established a clientele.

Tell him that you’re getting increased demand for cigarettes as time passes by and that you’ll soon “raise the price” simple because the rise in demand. The more packs he gets now, the more he’ll save in the long run.

**Point out the negative.** Let your guy know what happens if he doesn’t take the deal. Those medicine could save his brother’s life if he gives them to him on time. If he doesn’t… he could pay a much higher “price” than the one you’re asking.

**Give him an extra bonus.** To sweeten the offer, you can give them a little something to push them into taking the deal.

Here, take this home—give it to your kid. My wife made it. Kids need toys in times like these to take their minds off what’s happening.

**Be greedy.** If you feel like the other party has an abundance of the stuff he’s bartering with, you can ask for more. Give me two can openers instead of one and we have a deal. If he has lots of can openers, he won’t mind it.

**Talk about him.** Get to know him a little bit. Ask about his situation. Even though, on one level, he’ll know you’re trying to get under his skin, his emotions will tell him to trust you more simply because you’ve’ taken an interest in him while the rest of the world doesn’t give a damn. The perspective of having what appears to be a friend could be very alluring to him.

**Bring someone to tag along with you.** If he’s outnumbered, he’s going to give you a better deal. I don’t know why this works,
probably because deep in our mind we think we could get beaten up even if we logically know we won’t. Nevertheless, it works. When he meets your wife or one of your kids, he’s going to become a little more attached to you and that means a little more likely to take the deal.

Play dumb. When the other guy tries to convince you that his stuff is the best, act aloof like you don’t really care about the extra-benefits:

“Oh, really? Well, that’s nice but I just need something to fix the window, I don’t need it to build be a space-ship. “
Here’s a few more tips to make the most out of bartering.

#1. Have a gun

You never know when things go wrong. Let the other guy know that, while you’re calm and trustworthy, you are not to be messed with.

#2. Don’t look like you’re doing well

If someone sniffs that you may have a big supply of food, weapons and other things, word will travel fast and reach the ears of those who aren’t afraid to take a shot at your supplies. Don’t look like you’re gaining weight when everyone else barely has something to eat, don’t brag and don’t give any clues as to what you may have at home. Careful about the stories you tell when you bond with people.

#3. From bartering to a business

With things not going back to normal for years and years to come, why not leverage your bartering skills into a business that will bring value to your family long-term?

Most of the businesses that are on top right now will fail miserably when SHTF but it’s going to be a matter of time until others will pop-up. It’s just a natural evolution of things.

Here are a few ideas of bartering businesses you can start:
A few more things to keep in mind. First, you need to be good at marketing. The more people will know about them, the more popular you become and the more deals you’ll make.

Second, don’t keep your store at home. If someone decides to loot it, at least they won’t run across your personal stockpile. You’ll need to consider the security of your business as well. You can’t sleep inside the store every night with a gun on your chest.

Third, always stash away the objects acquired through your bartering business. Only keep in your store what’s really necessary. Don’t have too many supplies or some folks will be tempted to take a chance. Bring to the store every day just a little more than you think you’ll sell.

A few bartering business ideas include:

- selling filtered water
- having your wife make toys for children
- making clothes
- bartering livestock for breeding purposes
- bartering fruits and veggies from your garden
- building things, such as aquaponics systems, earth domes, chicken coops and so on

In general, think about all the things you can do for others long term. If your business is about bartering cigarettes but you don’t have a supplier, you may as well find something else.

#4. You can get scammed… or worse!

The bullets you get can be duds. The food you barter for can be poisoned. So could the water. Any gold or silver coins can be counterfeit. Heck, even alcohol can have methanol in it.
The point I’m trying to make is that you can get screwed very easily. Before you engage with someone in bartering, do your due diligence. Find out if he’s bartered with other people. Find out if you have common friends and ask them about him.

And even so, you should test the food and water on your pet first (hopefully you have one) to really be sure it’s ok.

Stay safe,

Dan F. Sullivan