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## CHAPTER 12

# Building Trust: Keeping the Heart and Mind in Online Negotiation

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### 1. Introduction

In one of Albert Einstein's last interviews, he reportedly commented on the most important question he would like answered. Interestingly, his response had nothing to do with physics. It had everything to do with people:

I think the most important question facing humanity is, "Is the universe a friendly place?" This is the first and most basic question all people must answer for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his legacy as a scientist, Einstein was keenly interested in "the human condition." This should not be surprising: whenever two or more people are about to interact for the first time, they generally seek to gain a sense about "those other people" before they move forward comfortably in the interaction. In this effort to establish a sense of understanding there is an inherent, existential drive to find trust—that is, to believe that a friendly universe exists. Indeed, trust is the glue that binds the hearts and minds of people. It allows for the free exchange of ideas. It allows people to dare to agree or disagree. Trust is the factor that allows any negotiation to move forward and, more importantly, to last.

**Chapter 12 is drawn from *The ABA Guide to International Business Negotiations, A comparison of Cross-Cultural Issues and Successful Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (2009).**

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<sup>1</sup> While this quote is fairly well-known, it is considered somewhat of an "urban legend" attributed to Einstein. One reputable source, however, citing this quotation is Robert Dilts of the Neuro-Linguistic Programming University, in his *Reflections on September 11* (Sept. 12, 2001), [http://www.nlpu.com/Articles/Sept\\_11.html](http://www.nlpu.com/Articles/Sept_11.html).