

A Model for Negotiation

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Negotiation is a fact of everyday life in the course of personal and professional relationships and is essential in order to cope with conflicting interests. Trainers and other human resource development professionals have a particular need for sharp negotiating skills. Whether providing guidance to management on how to negotiate employee acceptance of organizational or operational changes or attempting to influence organization leaders, negotiation is an integral part of the problem-solving process.

Knowledge about specific insights and skills which apply to the negotiation process is fragmented. This article describes a model of negotiating, based on the author's research and on experience with the training of negotiators, which can be used to gain insight into how negotiation actually works and as an instrument for feedback on one's own negotiating skills and tendencies. Scales are used to represent key negotiating situations and can be used to measure skill levels for handling each problem.

Spontaneous dynamics

The spontaneous ways people deal with each other can be

represented on a continuum that ranges from cooperation via negotiation to arguing or fighting.

Cooperation is likely if the interests and goals of the individuals involved are similar, and if the benefits are directly dependent on the degree to which resources are pooled.

Negotiation is likely when individuals' interests are different

The sensitive interplay between mutual dependence and individual interests in all negotiation situations represents a built-in dilemma. Each participant must further his or her stake in the negotiation by somehow associating it with the mutual dependence of the group.

Tangible, individual interests are often pursued by using a tough strategy that antagonizes

Negotiation is an integral part of the problem-solving process. . . but the ways people end up dealing with each other at the conference table can be spontaneous and unconstructive.

or opposed, but there is also a high degree of dependence on an agreement that has advantages for all parties. In negotiation, parties disagree, but they are willing to come to an agreement to avoid loss or negative consequences.

Fighting is the likely strategy for reaching decisions when either party believes it can win more by arguing than by negotiating. A fighting strategy is concerned with obtaining dominance and reducing the opponent to submission.

The boundaries among these three approaches to problem-solving are not clear-cut; rather, one leads to another with areas of overlap. Figure 1 clarifies the differences among the strategies.

mutual dependence. Others may opt for a cooperative strategy if the situation requires caution in the interests of the position held by that party. If the various strategies brought to the negotiation are not compatible, participants begin to react to subsequent feelings in a spontaneous way that all too often leads to unconstructive conflict—fighting. At some point, they will realize that they are caught up in a spiral of pressures, hostilities and prestige conflicts that reinforce each other and make constructive negotiation difficult, at best.

Four dilemmas

Between negotiating and fighting, there are dilemmas:

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"Am I revealing too much of my position... giving too few clues of my interests?" "To what extent should I trust the other party? Would any sign of distrust harm our relationship?" "Should I side with my rank and file and play it as tough as they would like?" Struggling with these questions makes negotiating stressful and frustrating, especially for inexperienced people. Insight into spontaneous dynamics and a broad arsenal of behavioral alternatives can prevent shifts toward destructive conflicts.

Descriptions of four major dilemmas for negotiators follow. Approaches to solving them are represented on a scale that ranges from cooperation to argument. Midpoints on the scales represent the optimal balance between cooperation and fighting—the approach which is most likely to lead to successful negotiations.

The first dilemma involves influencing the content of the solution by deciding when to make concessions and when to be stubborn with regard to information, debate, facts, agenda, compromises and positions. These activities have a direct relationship to tangible results and require a favorable division of costs and benefits. Subactivities in this category of dilemma include: exchanging information about aims, expectations and acceptable solutions; influencing one another's perceptions of what is attainable; and working step-by-step toward a compromise with mutual concessions. As represented by the scale in Figure 2, this area requires a balance between knowing when to make concessions and when to take more tenacious or firm positions.

The second major dilemma concerns a balance between the extremes of genial and hostile behavior. A constructive climate and respectful personal relationships are important to effective negotiation. An irritated or overly formal atmosphere inhibits cooperation. Trust, acceptance and credibility, on the other hand, foster mutual dependence

Figure 1.
Tactics Used in Cooperation, Negotiation and Fighting

Cooperation	Negotiation	Fighting
Conflict is seen as a common problem	Conflict is seen as a clash between different but mutually dependent interests	Conflict is seen as a question of "winning or losing," "over or under" or "we or they"
People present their own goals as accurately as possible	People exaggerate their own interests but pay attention to possible areas of agreement	People emphasize the superiority of their own objectives
Weak points and personal problems can be openly discussed	Personal problems are disguised or very circumspectly presented	Personal problems are treated as though they do not exist
The information provided is honest	The information given is not false, but one-sided. The facts favorable to one's own party are deliberately emphasized	If it can help to make the opponent submit, false information is deliberately spread
Discussion subjects are presented in terms of underlying problems	Agenda items are formulated in terms of alternative solutions	Points of disagreement are formulated in terms of one's own solution
Possible solutions are tested against their practical consequences	Occasionally the linking of solutions to principles is used to put some pressure on the other side	One's own solutions are rigidly tied to higher principles
Speaking out for one particular solution is deliberately delayed as long as possible	Strong preference for a particular solution is shown, but a scope for concessions is self-evident	An absolute and unconditional preference for one's own solution is expressed at every opportunity
Threats, confusion and taking advantage of the mistakes of others are seen as detrimental	Occasionally a modest and carefully calculated use is made of threats, confusion and surprise	Threats, confusion, shock effects, etc. are welcome at any time to reduce the opponent to submission
Active participation of all concerned is encouraged	Contacts between parties are limited to only a few spokespersons	Contacts between the parties take place indirectly via 'declarations'
An attempt is made to spread power as much as possible and to let it play no further role	Power is occasionally tested, or attempts are made to influence the balance of power in one's own favor	Both parties engage in a permanent power struggle by strengthening their own organizations, increasing independence and dividing and isolating the opponent
People try to understand each other and share each other's personal concerns	Understanding the views of the other side is seen as a tactical instrument	No one bothers to understand the opponent
Personal irritations are expressed to clear the air of tensions that could hamper future cooperation	Personal irritations are suppressed or ventilated indirectly (e.g., with humor)	Irritations confirm negative and hostile images. Hostility is expressed to break down the other side
Both parties find it easy to call in outside expertise to help in decision making	Third parties are brought in only if there is a complete deadlock	Outsiders are welcome only if they are "blind" supporters

Figure 2.
Conceding versus Stubborn

1	2	3	4	5
lenient, indulgent		tenacious, testing		hard, stubborn
One presents information and arguments as open for discussion		Firm presentations of facts and arguments, but margins are self-understood		One presents information and arguments as self-evident and unassailable
One accepts the interests of the other side as they are described		One tests the interests of the other party to get to his or her priorities		One challenges the interests of the opponent to discard them
One promotes a smooth and gradual working out of a compromise; one is prepared to make generous concessions		One allows impasses to occur and uses them as a test; relatively small concessions are part of the game		One provokes crisis situations; a tendency toward "final offer, first bid"

Figure 3.
Jovial versus Hostile

1	2	3	4	5
genial, confidential		credible, solid		hostile, irritated
Relying on personal charm, tendency to tell lots of jokes, likes to become very close		Promoting informal discussions, showing interest in personal matters, moderate use of humor, consistent behavior		Keeps the opponent at length, formal behavior, sometimes sarcastic; shows irritation, seems unpredictable
Dependent: "Your interest is my interest"		Shows interdependence: "What solution will we find?"		Shows independence: "What can I get out of this?"

Figure 4.
Examples of Manipulations

Manipulation	Intended Effect on Opponent	Counteraction
"Pathetic" requests for understanding one's own position	Inclination to grant "generous" and disinterested favor	Rejection of responsibility
Semblance of incompetence to understand "complicated" position of opponent	An awareness of a need to explain things, thereby disclosing too much information	Specific questions on what is not understood
Businesslike orientation: treating problems as incidental questions	A feeling of "old boys" who should not make it difficult for each other	Indicate firmly that there are still some obstacles
Rational-serious attitude: statement of authority based on "evidence" and "constructive" ideas	Fear of seeming stupid, not serious or nonconstructive	Assert that some important aspects are not yet taken into account

and cooperation. Specific ways of promoting a constructive atmosphere include: paying attention to participants' opinions; establishing informal and open contacts; behaving predictably and seriously, and not pulling any "fast ones"; avoiding situations that would cause another to lose face; and distinguishing role behavior from personal good will and mutual respect. The dilemma here is that of trusting someone else without reservation vs. running a risk of weakening one's own position and overcompromising. The optimal balance in this case is found in a kind of calculated trust which is fully aware of the exploitative possibilities of a personal confidential relationship (see Figure 3).

Negotiators maintain a keen awareness of the balance of power between them. How one influences the balance by being flexible or domineering represents the third major dilemma. Negotiating assumes an equality between parties. When there are obvious differences in power, however, the dilemma of coercion/exploitation vs. submission/accommodation may come into play. One party may wish to add power to his or her position, if only to test the power and resistance of the opponent or to find out what balance of mutual dependencies exists. Open attempts to influence the power balance by dominating or being aggressive usually give rise to conflict.

Among the more subtle methods of influencing the balance of power is the manipulative approach. In the manipulative approach, one party exerts subtle pressure on another's feelings or self-esteem. If done covertly enough, the victim of this tactic will not clearly understand his or her insecurity or irritation, and will not be poised to counteract the attack effectively. Figure 4 presents examples of manipulation.

Although power games increase the risk of a fight, negotiators need to test the balance of power and to recognize that they too

may be tested or provoked. The challenge is to create an equilibrium between low levels of resistance—which can be perceived as submission—and domination. This encourages dependence in a firm, but nonaggressive way. Examples of this balance are depicted in Figure 5.

Finally, a commitment level needs to be clearly established in order to consolidate one's position as a representative. The relationship of a negotiator with a constituent group is in itself a matter of negotiation. Constituents are often more radical than their representatives, may have exaggerated expectations and may view their opponents in negative, stereotyped ways.

A representative who takes a tough stand inspires confidence among constituents. It may be difficult for negotiators to resist these pressures, especially when yielding to them would strengthen their own position. Being a "good" representative may mean being encouraged to fight. Tactics for dealing with these pressures are:

- Avoid strict mandates or precise instructions by allowing only a short period of time for preparation or by keeping the subject matter unclear;
- Moderate the demands of rank and file by giving tactical information on what is attainable;
- Do not appoint people whose expectations are too high to the actual negotiating team;
- Report results in vague or complicated terms, so that immediate criticism has little firm basis;
- Exaggerate concessions of the opponent; and
- Use personal power and prestige.

Excessive and blatant use of these tactics would, of course, erode the credibility and support of a representative, but active balancing and appropriate application of the tactics afford the representative the freedom of action needed for advancing the group's position (see Figure 6).

Figure 5.
Bending versus Domineering

1	2	3	4	5
minimal resistance		preserving a balance		aggressive, trying to dominate
Inhibited use of favorable facts		One tries to adjust the balance by means of facts and restrained pressure		Adjustment by arrogance, threats, emotional outbursts and manipulations
When challenged, not much resistance		When challenged, one reacts proportionally		When challenged, one attacks
No active interest in alternatives to current relations		One is alert to alternatives to improve one's position <i>within</i> the present relation		One behaves as having other attractive alternatives which one is ready to use at the least sign of trouble

Figure 6.
Uncommitted versus Overcommitted

1	2	3	4	5
no commitment to rank and file		tries to enlarge the maneuvering space		is just carrying out instructions
Takes freedom of action but risks losing rank and file support		Avoids a strict mandate but stays in contact and influences "opinion leaders"		Asks for and "obeys" mandate
Independent thinking but too detached from constituents		Prevents stereotyping, is moderating expectations		Goes along with stereotyping, is raising expectations of the outcome

Conclusion

Training managers, organizational consultants and other human resource development professionals have always performed a negotiative role and can only benefit from developing sharp negotiating skills. In any negotiation, at least one of the four major dilemmas will exist and some method on the cooperation-negotiation-fighting continuum will be used to resolve the issue. Insight into the inherent dilemmas of negotiation can prevent disorientation and reduce anxiety by attaching meaning to the actions and intentions of one's opponents.

The scales on which the four dilemmas are represented can

serve as an instrument for feedback on one's own negotiation tendencies as well as a guide to understanding the behavior of others. The negotiator with a thorough understanding of common dilemmas and the insight to read responses—both one's own reactions and those of others—stands the best chance of championing his or her position.

