



Negotiation

Results and relationships

Different people have different objectives and they try to overcome these differences through negotiation. This occurs everywhere: in business as well as in government, in the family, in social clubs, among friends etc. Everyone enters into a negotiation of some sort at least once a day.

The question always seems to be whether the negotiation should be soft or hard. The hard negotiator always wants to win, turns the negotiation into a competition, invites hard responses to his hard actions and ends up in a deadlock. If this type of negotiator has the better arguments, he may lose a valuable relationship. The soft negotiator avoids personal conflict; he makes concessions to maintain the relationship, but in the end feels unsatisfied with the results achieved.

1. When is negotiating possible?

- When both parties wish to achieve a positive result;
- When both parties have something to exchange: to negotiate is to barter;
- When there is a relationship of dependency.

2. Four starting points

- Success is more important than winning.
Aim at win/win situations. It is not important whether a party is the winner or the loser. The objective is to explore all possibilities together in a creative way and to find a solution for a seemingly insurmountable difference; a solution which will be profitable for both parties. Both in terms of contents and on a relational level, this type of negotiation may prove successful.
- Be inventive.
Make a distinction between searching for possible solutions and judging these solutions; in other words between being inventive and being critical. For instance, by means of brainstorming, with or without the other party.
- Concentrate on interests, not on opinions.
Interests cause the problem. Human behaviour is motivated not by opinions, but by needs, desires, cares and fears. In order to find solutions, it is necessary to reconcile differences in interest rather than differences in opinion.
- Distinguish between the problem and the people involved.
The problem is often tangled up with the relationships of the parties involved. A common mistake is either to make unsatisfactory concessions to maintain a good relationship or to take a more uncompromising stance, because the relationship is already troubled. Be firm over matters concerning the problem, but always remain friendly when dealing with the other party.



3. Negotiation Steps

- Preparation
What exactly do I hope to achieve? What are my interests?
What might be the objectives of the other party?
Come up with as many different solutions as possible.
- Exchange information
Explain what you hope to achieve.
Try to establish the other party's objectives.
Ask many questions.
Try to determine what interests lie behind the other party's opinions.
- Make proposals
Make proposals using the 'if-then' format.
- Get down to business
Indicate what you are prepared to concede in exchange for meeting your conditions.
Make a counterproposal if a proposal is not acceptable.
- Conclusion
Make clear agreements and summarize the main points.
Confirm the agreements on paper or by e-mail.