

Team Training Session 2

Negotiation – some tips for your groups!

As you progress with the video assignment you will begin to experience situations of conflict. This is normal in any situation where you work with other people. Some of these conflict situations are relatively easy to overcome just by a quick discussion while others may require good research and many discussions (and yes sometimes they may feel like you are hitting your head against a brick wall!!...it happens to all of us occasionally). Learning some basic skills in negotiation can really help you manage team discussions and will give you a competitive edge when working in professional teams.

No-one is ever automatically good at negotiating. It takes practice. But there are a few things you can try to remember which might help you.

The first is that when you try to discuss a difference of opinion, try to stay on topic and not get too emotionally involved. This is very difficult, but if you walk into a discussion with a smile and casual mannerisms rather than scowling and with your arms crossed, it can make a big difference to the outcome of the discussions.

Secondly, try to look at what each person is interested in...be specific (there is an example below). What exactly do they want to achieve (such as filming footage at the coast) and what specifically do they need to achieve that (someone with a car, someone to go with them, borrow the camera at appropriate time etc).

Third, brainstorm all possible options that will allow you and everyone else to achieve their interests. The more options the better. Include everything, no matter how unlikely or unusual. Once this process begins it is often possible to find creative solutions that make everyone happy.

Lastly decide on a solution and write a “contract”. For the video assignment (and in future team projects) you can write in your meeting minutes that “regarding conflict X, solution Y was decided on which involves Joe Blob doing A and John Smith doing B”. Make this specific (and non-personal) and if you think it helpful, get everyone in the group to sign the meeting minutes.

Below are some more detailed notes on negotiation which you may find helpful as semester progresses.

Negotiation - summary

The information given here is a guide to negotiating using a method developed at the Harvard Negotiation Project called principled negotiations and has been taken from the book "Getting to yes". This method can be used in virtually any negotiation. Issues are decided upon by their merits and the goal is a win-win for both sides. The four steps of a principled negotiation are:

1. "Separate the people from the problem"
2. "Focus on interests, not positions"
3. "Invent options for mutual gain"
4. "Insist on using objective criteria"

In principled negotiations, take the view that you and all the other participants are problem solvers rather than adversaries.

Step 1: Separate the people from the problem

- Avoid letting emotions take over
- Build a working relationship by facing the problem not the people

Think of the people you negotiate with on a regular basis. Generally, the better we know someone, the easier it is to face a negotiation together. We tend to view people we don't know with more suspicion: just what is "Bob" up to?

Take time to get to know the other party before the negotiation begins.

Think of the negotiation as a means to solving a problem and the people on the other side as partners helping to find a solution. Ideally both parties will come out of a negotiation feeling they have a fair agreement from which both sides can benefit.

If the negotiation feels like a situation of "you versus them" try:

1. "Raise the issue with [the other side] explicitly...'Let's look together at the problem of how to satisfy our collective interests'."
2. "Sit on the same side of the table...Try to structure the negotiation as a side-by-side activity in which the two of you - with your different interests and perceptions, and your emotional involvement - jointly face a common task."

Step 2: Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Here is an example: Roland needs coconuts to diffuse the toxic gas in the bombs but Jones needs the coconuts to cure a terrible disease. You as a third party can ask "what part of the coconut or how much of each coconut does each person need"? Jones needs the milk and Roland needs shell. The interests of Jones and Roland is to cure disease and diffuse the bombs using the milk or the shell of all the available coconuts. The positions of each person is to obtain all the available coconuts.

More often than not, by focusing on **interests**, a creative solution can be found.

It is most important to discuss all the details and reasons for each interest so that options can be discussed that cover these details (the fact that one person needed the milk and the other needed the shell rather than that both just needed the coconuts).

Step 3: Invent Options for Mutual Gain

There are four steps to generating options:

1. Separate inventing from deciding. Like in any brainstorming session, don't judge the ideas people bring forward, just get them on the board.
2. Broaden the options on the table rather than look for a single answer. Remember the men at the library? The only option they saw was opening or closing the window in the room they were both sitting in. In fact, there are many options: borrow a sweater, open a window in another room, move to a different spot, etc.
3. Search for mutual gain. In a negotiation, both sides can be worse off and both sides can gain. Principled negotiations are not about "I win" and "you lose".
4. Invent ways of making the other party's decisions easy. Since a successful negotiation requires both parties to agree, make it easy for the other side to choose. This is where putting yourself in the other person's shoes can be very valuable. What might prevent "Bob" from agreeing? Can you do anything to change those things?

Step 4: Insist on Using Objective Criteria

Negotiations are not battles of will. There is no winner and you don't need to push your position until the other backs down. The goal is to "produce wise agreements amicably and efficiently".

Once objective criteria have been developed, they need to be discussed with the other side.

1. "Frame each issue as a joint search for objective criteria."
2. "Use reason and be open to reason" as to which standards are most appropriate and how they should be applied.
3. "Never yield to pressure", only to principle.

Sometimes the other party just won't play:

In a principled negotiation, you don't want to play games with the other party and you don't want them playing games with you. In this situation try:

1. Concentrate on the merits: talk about interests, options and criteria
2. Focus on what the other party may do: try and identify the other party's interests and the principles underlying their position
3. Focus on what a third party can do: bring in a third party to assist if steps 1 and 2 aren't successful

Three final points

1. "You knew it all the time." Much of what goes into a principled negotiation is common sense.
2. "Learn from doing." You won't become a better negotiator unless you get out there and practise.
3. Winning: "The first thing you are trying to win is a better way to negotiate - a way that avoids your having to choose between the satisfactions of getting what you deserve and of being decent. You can have both."

References:

Fisher, R. and Ury, W. (1991) *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving in*. Penguin Group. ISBN: 9780140157352