

Becoming a better negotiator



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Over the past 8 weeks there has been a lot that I have learned about myself as a person with inner reflection in my negotiation style. Negotiation is a skill that I thought people have to be born with. Although people can be born better suited with negotiation skills; the skill is also a craft that can be taught and learned. People must be able to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and build off their strengths to become a better negotiator.

Lewicki, Saunders and Barry (2011) state that while some people may look like born negotiators, negotiation is fundamentally a skill involving analysis and communication that everyone can learn. I think that the questionnaires that I took really amplified what I need to work on as a negotiator.

Negotiation is a part of everyday life for everyone, in home life and in personal life and becoming a better negotiator can impact our lives positively in both. This paper will reflect and summarize what I learned about myself doing both questionnaires and how I plan on improving my negotiation skills using this class going forward.

Questionnaires

The first questionnaire is called The Personal Bargaining Inventory. This questionnaire helps clarify the perceptions of one's self on different dimensions of negotiation; from how a person should or "ought" to negotiate, power and deception, cooperation and competition, and winning and losing. The second questionnaire is called Communication Competence Scale. This scale is a diagnostic tool to help one determine their level of communication competence.

Communication competence is defined as the ability to enact both appropriate and effective messages in any communication setting. The Personal Bargaining Inventory asked twenty three questions rating my own behavior and twenty seven questions rating people's behavior in general, on a scale of 1-7, 1 being strongly uncharacteristic and 7 being strongly characteristic (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2009). Both of these questionnaires make you look at yourself and gauge how we feel about our own behavior in negotiation and communication.

It also makes us reflect on how we believe others should act and behave in negotiation. These are both great exercises for someone to use if they want to figure out exactly what they need to work on to become a better negotiator. Some of the questions asked about ethics; such as lying to get what we want, taking advantage of someone, and being accountable about the things we say in conversation and in negotiation. One must be completely honest when taking these questionnaires. Both of these questionnaires helped me reflect on myself and what I think of myself.

About Me

Margaret J. Wheatley said " without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful". I think these questionnaires help with my own personal reflection. I have always been told that I am antagonistic and this is something that I need to work on. These questionnaires only backed up that assessment. A couple of the questions in particular stuck out to me. I had to be honest with myself, which helped opened up my eyes and helped me realize this truth. In the Personal Bargaining Inventory question number 21 was eye opening; " in

any competitive situation, I like to win. Not just win, but win by the biggest margin possible”.

I ranked myself truthfully at a 7, strongly characteristic. I hate to lose. I don't know of anyone that does, but I really hate it. I get a sinking feeling in my stomach when I lose, or team I root for loses. It affects my attitude and really upsets me. I love to win. They say a win is a win, but in negotiation concessions must be made. Keeping this behavior could end up hurting my negotiation strategies in life. I must be willing to compromise more.

The second question came in the Communication Competence Scale, “generally, I think about how others might interpret what I say”. I need to choose my words more carefully when dealing with people. I don't usually think about what I say before saying it, and sometimes people may interpret those things negatively. These questionnaires really helped me reflect on myself as a negotiator and as a person. Everyone could benefit from using them.

Get Better

As seen above there is room for me to improve and become a better negotiator. We all should try and become more well rounded people in our lives, to become morally and ethically responsible as well as better negotiators. I believe that I can become a better leader in life and at work if I am able to become a better negotiator. I can do better for my family and I can do better for myself. There are ten best practices to use for negotiators. I will use these ten practices to improve my skills and craft my negotiation style. Those ten practices are the following:

1. Be prepared.
2. Diagnose the fundamental structure of the negotiation.
3. Work the BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)
4. Be willing to walk away.
5. Master the paradoxes.
6. Remember the intangibles.
7. Actively manage coalitions.
8. Savor and protect your reputation.
9. Remember that rationality and fairness are relative.
10. Continue to learn from the experience.

I have a real life experience that just happened to me that these ten practices would have helped me with. I had set up a meeting with a customer and I expected just to introduce myself to these guys and let them know that I was new to the area. I wanted to show face to them and let them know that I was here to help. Well that was part of what happened. These guys took me and put me in a conference room and asked me a million questions about my company and what I would do for them. I feel I did okay in this situation, but had I been able to prepare for this negotiation I might have done a better job.

Practice 1 and 10 are what I will take away the most from this to learn from. Had I known that this introduction would have been more than just that, I would have prepared better for some of the questions they asked. I am new to this position and I will be able to walk away from this experience with something to work on. I tried my best to keep all questions in a positive light and try and make the meeting as personal as possible. This negotiation was

not for a contract, but more or less for an opportunity that could lead to one. I laid a lot of my cards out on the table to let them know that I wanted to build trust. There were three guys in the meeting.

Two of them specifically said that all they cared about was price, while the third said, " I don't give two (curse)'s about price, all I care about is what you are going to do for me, I care about service". This helps me in the future going forward with these guys, being able to address what is the most important thing to them when it comes to doing business with me and my company. This customer has all the power and they know it. All I want to go out and earn their business. I am a vendor to them and there are other vendors that can offer the same services as I can, what can I do to earn their business? I need to make my experience personal with them and try and build a personal relationship. Building trust in negotiation is one of the biggest and most important things in business.

Once I get the opportunity to build this trust and earn this work I can then go into the negotiation phase of an MRO contract. MRO stands for Maintenance, Repair and Operations. We write out these contracts for loyal customers that basically take the negotiation out of our work. We set the prices and the services provided for the customer that we don't need to earn or negotiate, we need to basically " keep them happy" until the contract runs out. They are set for 5 years and are fair and rational for both us and the customer.

If I am able to get to the point of a negotiation for a MRO contract, it would look really good to my supervisors and I could become one of the youngest managers in our company. I must take a plan of action to see things from my opponent's perspective and keep in mind the intangibles that go into

negotiation. Leaders must be credible and trustworthy (Bednarz 2011). Learning to become a better negotiator and person would definitely make me a better leader for my family and my company.

In conclusion, this class has taught me a lot about negotiation and myself in the process. There are steps and processes that anyone can take that can train and help turn this into a skill. Negotiation is not the easiest thing in the world to do. No one is born with the same personality, and negotiation is a skill (like sports or music) that can be born with in certain people. But like sports and music, negotiation is a craft that can be worked, learned, exercised and honed. We must always get ready and be prepared prior to a negotiation. We must also learn from all our negotiations in life so that we can get better.