

## 7. Strategies and tactics of the negotiation process

7.1 The relationship of power in the conflict solution: **How to Balance Power in Conflict.** Power struggles frequently make their way into our personal interactions and cause conflict. Trying to one-up someone or put them down is never constructive, just as allowing someone to devalue you or overpower you is never constructive. These destructive behaviors can lead to downward spirals both in our relationships and our general conflicts. Instead of engaging in a power struggle, try to balance power relationships, so that each person comes out with their values and self-respect intact.

### STEPS

**Engage in dialogue.** Conversation is key in any sort of power balancing situation. Be clear about what you want and what the other person wants. Stick to facts and avoid insinuating or stating that the other person is wrong or that they're causing a problem. Always focus on the matter, desired behavior or outcome, and not on the personal traits of another.

- Try to talk face to face and not through text messages, emails, or phone conversations. Facial and body language are an important source of clarification and humanizes the interaction, while technology tends to distance us. It is far easier to forget how we can harm others with a barb or insult through the interface of the computer, whereas seeing someone's reaction in front of us clarifies this instantly.
- Avoid getting defensive or speaking in negative tones. As soon as you sound whining, victimized or angry, the emotions start to get the better of the conversation.
- Be sure to listen carefully and to get clarification when necessary. Don't be scared to ask questions, they're a great way to get more insight into the other person and their thoughts. It's also fine to ask for clarification of things that you don't understand, even if it's about the other person's emotions.

**Bear in mind that both of you might have a valid perspective of a conflict regardless of the power balance.** This can be confronting for both of you but it is also empowering, as potentially you have a range of solutions available provided you can accept that both sides are valid perspectives. It would be unusual if there were only one right way to achieve most things.

**Define the conflict as a mutual matter.** From the outset, the person holding the position of more power may be inclined to state the problem as being one caused by the person with less power. This needs to be challenged immediately by defining the problem as a mutual issue, so that there is no attempt to seek one person giving in totally. Here are some ways to get mutual buy-in to the conflict:

- "We have a problem we both need to resolve."
- "We seem to have a difference of opinion as to how to go about resolving this matter. We need to find a shared solution."
- "We need to negotiate over this."

**Practice restraint.** If you are the person holding the high power position, you can limit your own power rather than using it to gain an upper hand. Refrain from continued destructive patterns, either of speech or action. Be aware of your own behavior and regulate yourself. Look for opportunities to express concern for reaching a state of equality.

- Be aware of the need to pace. This is especially important when an extrovert and an introvert are in a conflict situation. The extrovert will often want a problem solved *now* and will focus on discussing the problem now until it's solved. An introvert will be more inclined to avoid confrontation and feel cornered, shutting down if the extrovert won't allow time for reflection and postponement of the discussion. In this case, an extrovert may sense a position of power and it is important to recognize the need of the introvert to take time out and think through things first. Of course, the introvert can then assume the position of power if they never come back to the problem, in which case, the extrovert needs to set a time limit to come back to resolution without nagging in the interim.
- Understand that there is a difference also between people who "think" (analyzing, clarifying and strategizing solutions) and people who "feel" (emotional perspective and focus on feelings). Thinkers will tend to focus on confrontation, while feelers will seek harmony and avoidance of conflict. In this case, balance needs to be found from both sides, so that the feeler stops fearing confrontation all the time, while the thinker stops seeing every situation as needing confrontation.

**Focus on interdependence.** If you find yourself in the low power position, emphasize the interdependence that you and the other person have between each

other. High power individuals will likely avoid this and minimize any recognition of interdependence. Point out emotional, behavioral, economic, or other dependence on each other. This is especially important in close or intimate relationships. Focus should not be put on the amount of power or influence that each person has over the other, but on achieving the balance between them and drawing each other into mutual understanding.

**Rely on calm persistence.** Significant change in power relations rarely comes from radical or aggressive confrontation. Careful and thoughtful understanding and planning will likely lead to small but important changes. Avoid rising to bait or getting wound up; instead, focus on coming back to the point that you specifically stated in step one, the want that you're absolutely clear about. Also refer to the want that you understand the other person as having; reminding them that you haven't lost sight of their want is empowering for both of you.

**Stay actively engaged.** Never accept or give in to defeatist attitudes; this is tantamount to effacing yourself and letting the other person use power to belittle you. Remember that no power position is a permanent condition. Be sure to speak your mind but also stick to providing "big picture" and balanced ideas. Stay connected to your values and the outcome that you perceive as worthy throughout times of intensity or difficulty in your dialog with the other person.

- A conflict should only be avoided or ignored where it is trivial or not important. Otherwise, it needs to be dealt with, whatever your power relationship. An ignored little conflict can soon grow into an enormous one. Don't confuse temporary withdrawal from conflict with being defeatist though—time for reflection and cooling down is always valuable. Just be sure to come back to the matter for final resolution.

**Seek third party intervention.** Sometimes there is a need for outside help, where it is clear that both of you are simply going around in circles, being stubborn or cannot reach a conclusion that is fairly balanced. It may also be necessary if the conflict has become intolerable or is damaging you. It is a sign of strength from both of you call in an arbitrator in such a situation. This could be achieved through mediators or counselors. Never be scared to ask for outside help; it may be just what you need and it is never a poor reflection on your own worth.

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## TIPS

- Power is expanded, not eroded, when you make room for alternative perspectives.
- Parties in conflict very rarely benefit from "blowing up".
- Never be afraid to agree to disagree. You shouldn't shy away from different points of view; they're just different, not dangerous.
- Make sure the critical needs of each person are met before attempting such a balance. (this includes personal survival, protection of others, and a maintained sense of self).
- Maintain a sense of humor to make the conflict seem less threatening. Never use humor to be condescending or nasty though.

## WARNING

- Be conscious that some people will do anything to escalate confrontation while others will do anything to avoid it. Both are unbalanced extremes that need careful bringing back into the center. Acknowledge fear of conflict by being reassuring and supportive without letting go of the need for resolution.
  - Some extreme instances of power imbalance may include dangerous or violent situations. If you find yourself in such a case, you must *seek help immediately*. Every person must have enough respect for themselves and their own personal well-being, no matter how difficult that can seem.

**7.2 Study of different strategies and tactics in negotiation:** The best negotiation strategies and tactics come from understanding the negotiation process and knowing how other people use it. This allows the person negotiating to watch out for tricks another person might use to convince him that he's wrong. Negotiation is about working a problem out so that both parties are happy, but it's still best to know tricks that others use to get their own way. Certain people are less willing to negotiate than others.

Before the conversation starts, the person should prepare himself. He should make a list of the items he wants to discuss and what he wants done about them. He should know all the facts about not only what he's discussing but about counterarguments other people might make. In business, knowing facts and statistics to back up a certain point goes a long way. He should understand the different viewpoints and why others are arguing against him.

One of the best negotiation strategies is to truly understand the problem and what the competition wants. First, the person decides what he can compromise on and what he can't. Certain points he'll be willing to change or alter, but others he does not want to change. Next he identifies the problem and finds facts or arguments to back up his approach to solving it. Then he learns more about the people who do not agree with him and finds a way to make them happy without giving up on what he wants to see happen.

This strategy works in many areas of life, not just the business world. For example, a young couple may be fighting about who is going to pay the bills. Perhaps the wife is upset because her husband isn't paying as much even though he earns more. She could decide exactly how much she is willing to pay in bills, a certain percentage of her salary for example, and ask her husband to match that with the same percentage from his salary. Here, she uses numbers to support her claim, and also provides a solution that can make both people happy.

When a person is planning to discuss or negotiate with someone, be it a friend or a boss, it's important for him to understand the negotiation strategies the other person may use against him. The other person may try to avoid the discussion or argue so much it becomes difficult to finish the discussion. In this case, he should remain calm and come back to discuss the issue at a better time when the person is more willing to talk.

An opponent in the negotiation may try to bargain in a way that is not fair. For example, a new client may say he can only afford to pay a certain price even though it is lower than what the worker usually receives. To avoid this complication, the worker should simply say that he can only provide a certain quality of work or type of product for that price range. He should then ask the client if he wants to look at products or services with fewer features to match his budget. The client will either take a product that is worth the money he's offering, or offer more money for the product he really wants.

Though negotiation strategies and tactics may seem a bit overwhelming at first, but they are usual regardless of the situation. A person who wants to negotiate better should keep the following tips in mind. The negotiation is not an argument, but rather a debate to find a common solution that both parties can agree on. It's important to know what both sides want so the person can create a solution that fits everyone's needs. When he comes to the discussion prepared with solutions, facts,

and examples of exactly why his solution is the best, he's more likely to get what he's asking for.

**7.3 Preparation of the negotiation:** *The role of preparation in a negotiation is underestimated. You would not skydive for the first time without being prepared. Negotiation is much the same and inadequate preparation could cost you thousands of dollars. Being prepared means taking the time to research your opponent's position, as well as understanding your limit and estimating theirs. Keep in mind that you are not expected to know everything; ask open-ended questions before the negotiation begins to help you in your preparation.*

## 1. BATNA

- When preparing for negotiations, you should be able to identify your "best alternative to a negotiated agreement," also known as BATNA. Your BATNA is your bottom line of how far you will concede and how much you are willing to allow your counterpart to walk away with. Your goal is to have the other side come back with an offer better than your BATNA. By preparing and knowing what your comfort level is, you will likely not walk away from the table unsatisfied with the outcome of the negotiation.

### Background Preparation

- Going into a negotiation without understanding the background of the conflict could leave you blindsided. Once you are in a negotiation, you will need to think quickly on your feet. If you have studied the background information in advance, such as the personalities of the people involved, culture, laws and any other facts which may have an impact on a decision, you can reason with knowledge because you have factual information to support your statements.

### Identify the Issues

- For a negotiation to be effective, it is important to try to identify any issues that may surface from the opposite side so that you can prepare yourself to address them and are not caught off-guard. By identifying any issues pertinent to your opponent's perspective prior to the negotiation, you will be better prepared to address them in the negotiation and may even have on hand possible resolutions.

Find Common Ground

- Before going into a negotiation, establish what the common ground is between both parties. Write down in detail what you want and what you don't want from the outcome as precisely as you can. Then try to understand the perspective and wants of your counterpart and what he is hoping to avoid. Finding common ground and focusing on your shared interests is critical to shaping and framing the negotiation to a mutual resolution.