

## Introduction to the *Negotiation Skills Workshop*

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There are many different perceptions of what constitutes negotiation. Some courses and books on negotiation focus on understanding and correcting the common mistakes people make in the give-and-take of the negotiation process. Correcting those mistakes can and does directly impact the bottom line. While correcting mistakes is an important part of developing your negotiation skills, it is only a part.

Some courses emphasize planning and preparation. Good planning is crucial, but often the “how-to” of actualizing that planning is not developed enough.

Other courses emphasize the art of compromise. In a world of differing needs, values, and viewpoints, the willingness and ability to compromise is vital. However, “compromising” has tended to degenerate into an unsatisfying “settling,” or a simplistic, non-discerning, “splitting the difference.”

Still other courses emphasize acting with honesty and integrity. However, too often that emphasis is not balanced with developing the skills to effectively deal with people who operate with lower standards.

Many also view “good” negotiation as the skillful application of manipulative behavior to gain the “upper hand.” It is a small wonder then that expertise at negotiation often has a negative connotation and that many courses and books on the subject are limited to the application of manipulative techniques. Such books may make for “fun” reading, but in fact, manipulation is not negotiation at all.

Manipulative behavior certainly needs to be understood and put in perspective so that it can be handled appropriately and expeditiously. But, it must be viewed as something to be dealt with when negotiating, not as integral to good negotiation.

Any one of the above approaches when overemphasized or viewed as the totality of negotiation limits a negotiator’s effectiveness. The predictable result is rote application of technique and procedure and/ or a reversion to old patterns, which won’t push a negotiator to the next level.

Good negotiation is much broader than any one of these individual emphases. It does include avoiding the common mistakes, good planning, understanding and working out legitimate differences, acting with integrity, and dealing effectively with intimidating and manipulative behavior. It includes those actions and more.

What, then, is good negotiation? **Negotiation is the process of determining and moving toward meeting, with integrity, all involved parties’ perceived needs. Good negotiation is doing that well.** Doing so requires more than a casual awareness of human behavior. In fact, it demands an in-depth understanding of what motivates human emotion and behavior.

Each person is unique, with a particular personality and particular emotional responses, all of which differently impact the person’s unique perceptions of needs, wants, and values. Too often we forget that others place different values on things than we do. If we remind ourselves of this, we create a potential. If we are further able to determine, understand, and act on those

differences, that potential becomes a foundation for a synergistic relationship—one that can be truly win-win for all parties.

Although not always attained, win-win is the underlying goal of all legitimate negotiations. If it is not, then what takes place is not negotiation at all, but rather attempted exploitation. This does not mean that we do not strive to optimize our own return. We do, not by taking and justifying unfair advantage, but rather determine and position, with integrity, what is considered by the other party, to be of need and value for which he or she is willing to pay.

Therefore, a significant part of this program is developing models that will help you understand and more reliably predict emotions and behavior. This, in turn, allows you to develop greater skills in effectively dealing with any behavior, “good” or “bad.” This awareness and ability is a **core competency** that has applicability far beyond negotiation per se.

All of the elements basic to good negotiation are also fundamental to any situation in which understanding human dynamics is vital to success. Consciously reinforced, these elements will enhance your ability to establish rapport, determine needs, sell, motivate, coach, manage, and lead.

The principles are relevant whether you are negotiating a bank loan or a labor contract; buying or selling a used car, factory, or company; or dealing with your clients, peers, superiors, subordinates, significant other or in-laws. They are universal and cross-cultural and have been applied with great success in many countries and cultures.

Some people have an intuitive sense of negotiation, but too few are fully cognizant of all the principles involved. Thus, they violate or ignore at least some of the principles, often with costly results. Surprisingly, the experienced senior tends to inadvertently violate just as many principles as the inexperienced junior does. The only difference is that the bottom-line costs of the senior’s mistakes tend to be much greater.

This workshop will differentiate the various elements of the overall negotiation process (*see diagram*), develop increased awareness and skills for each part, and reintegrate the parts into a synergistic and effective whole. It is designed to both expand awareness of the principles involved in negotiation and develop practical, immediately useful implementation skills. Time and time again, the skills applied from this course have produced dramatic bottom-line benefits for both the neophyte and the experienced negotiator.

The focus of this workshop is to help you, the individual participant, become a better negotiator in its broadest sense and application. Being a good negotiator is not about competition or being “better than” anyone else. It is not about one-upmanship. Rather, it is about you becoming more aware of your strengths and weaknesses, and then, you, more consciously and more proactively developing and reinforcing strengths and confronting and correcting weaknesses.

It is about you learning and observing your own patterns as well as those of others. It is about you understanding psychological principles and dynamics and applying that understanding with appropriate flexibility to each unique situation. It is about discernment, integrity, courage, choice, and personal empowerment. It is about how much you are willing to face about yourself.

Role-playing a number of cases taken from real-life negotiation situations will help you recognize your own unique patterns. The cases are valuable in that they: (1) point out previously unknown strengths that can then be consciously reinforced; (2) highlight those automatic, often unconscious, patterns that are limiting your results—only when observed can they be corrected, changed, or eliminated; and (3) clarify behavioral patterns which often are representative of how you are more broadly “negotiating in life.”

Throughout the course, continue to observe your own unique patterns as well as the differing patterns of others. This will help you develop your discernment skills as well as your ability to self-assess and self-correct. Good negotiators are consciously striving to be more aware of both their own patterns and those of their counterparts. Those who do the best at this, with integrity, are the more successful negotiators.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, but there may be ways that are more effective. Often, the person who makes the biggest “mistakes” learns the most. Relish your “mistakes.” Look for your patterns – both ‘good’ and ‘bad’. They are where the real opportunities to learn and grow reside.

As each group differs somewhat in its needs, perceptions, and pace, the time spent on any one topic and the order in which the topics are presented will vary. This workshop will cover a significant amount of material in a short time. Each module builds on the previous one. Therefore, it is important that you are not unclear about any point. Confusion builds if not dealt with immediately. If anything is unclear, please make that known, and we will take the time to provide appropriate clarification. We welcome and encourage any suggestions that you believe will facilitate your learning process.

The course manual is composed of summaries of the various modules. It is intended as a reference and refresher rather than the more typical sequential fill-in-the-blanks workbook. I invite you to use it as such.

Above all, this course is about learning more about us. Let’s stretch ourselves and have some fun in the process.

I look forward to working with you.

*Ed Morler*

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