Negotiation Skills for Business Professionals Reflection Paper

Michael J. Davis

Pennsylvania State University
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Abstract

The reflection paper analyzes the Role Play Exercises and Questionnaires completed throughout the course. Through them I’ve learned things about myself and the how and why of the behaviors I have adopted. They have also given me an insight into how to conduct negotiations in different settings and under different conditions.
Negotiation Skills for Business Professionals Reflection Paper

This course has enlightened me as to many of the mechanisms involved in negotiations and professional relationships. It has also helped me understand aspects of negotiation that I knew of but never fully grasped. Equally important in negotiations are knowing your opponent and knowing yourself. The Questionnaires seem to be focused on helping analyze the behavior of yourself and others, while the negotiations are practical applications of the lessons learned through the analyses and the course readings.

**SINS II Questionnaire**

Of the seven clusters, four were more or less in sync with the stated averages. However, the other three, False Promises and Strategic Misrepresentation of Positive Emotion were somewhat close and Inappropriate Information Gathering was extremely high.

The biggest shock to me was my high score in Inappropriate Information Gathering. The average was 2.35 and my score was 5.66; that’s not an extremely high number, but it is more than twice the average. The questions for this cluster were regarding paying friends or associates for information, soliciting it from the opposing negotiator through friendship or favors, and recruiting a member of the opposing team to bring confidential information with him when he switches sides. I felt like the first two were possibly morally sketchy in some cases, but still acceptable as long as nothing illegal was occurring, so I gave them high scores. The third, recruiting an opposing team member, I gave a much lower score to. Not only does the legality come into play, but ethically I would consider this unacceptable under most circumstances, not to mention the fact that I would be very cautious of someone who would accept an offer like that anyway.

I was surprised that more people felt all three were unacceptable. When seeing a large variance from the average like that, one has to ask him or herself if their thinking on the issue is flawed. I’m unsure if I fall into this category, but I do believe in protecting my or my principle’s stake in the negotiation. I believe that in most negotiations this might never even be considered, but I also believe that there are negotiations that take place that I might not be willing to risk leaving some things to chance. I suppose this can be seen as an end result ethical dilemma, except instead of basing actions on what could potentially happen if it is done, it would be based on the potential consequences if it is not done.

The false promises cluster had an average of 2.06 and my score was 1. I felt all of these having to do with making false promises and guarantees were inappropriate. Although the average score was already low, I still took note of the fact that it was still twice as high as what I had given it. I doubt it has everything to do with being an honest person; I think it reflects my desire to be sincere in negotiations, as I would want others to be with me. One thing that has tested my patience in the past is being forced to go backwards when negotiated agreements were made in good faith. What’s worse, and more expensive, is after a negotiation is concluded and later the promise falls through. This is damaging to all parties, financially for the one to whom the promise was made; the promisor risks damaging his credibility and trustworthiness as well as financial liability.
To the other cluster, Strategic Misrepresentation of Positive Emotion, I gave a perfect score of 7. Maybe it’s because of my history in sales negotiations that I feel so strongly about these. The sales environment I worked in was adamant about developing and maintaining rapport, expressing empathy, and other false emotions in order to establish trust with new prospects and benefit from existing clients. It’s possible that my initial general distrust of anyone I negotiate with stems, at least in part, to the culture that I was exposed to. In the context of negotiations and not meeting quotas, this could be potentially damaging, especially if it blemishes your credibility. I don’t like misrepresenting my emotions, and rarely do unless absolutely necessary, but I do agree that they are acceptable behaviors, just not admirable ones.

**Personal Bargaining Inventory Questionnaire**

This questionnaire was the first of the course, and going through the questions, I found myself wondering how I would compare to others. The statements that I felt most or least strongly about were not really what begged my attention, things like being competitive or liking to win, but the ones that required consideration in order to come up with a number were the ones that wondered the most about. I asked myself if others would share my opinions on the ones I considered moral gray areas, like those dealing with honesty and exploitation. Now while I didn’t give those high scores, I couldn’t give ones either.

In both parts of the questionnaire, I noticed a pattern that suggested my style is more compromising than anything else. Ideally, Problem Solving is advantageous to both parties, but I tend to be generally untrusting of others, even if there’s rapport and we’ve worked together before. This exercise enlightened me to the fact that one of my biggest fears in negotiating is the fear of putting myself or those I represent at risk by trusting that the other party’s intentions are honorable. Although integrative negotiations have the potential to create value, the opposing party will negotiate based on their own self-interests, and because of this mindset I feel like I need to play my cards as close to my chest as possible.

**The Use Car Negotiation.** This exercise allowed me to practice negotiation which I feel I am not as fond of, nor as good at, as integrative. Distributive negotiation is less appealing to me personally, and entering into a negotiation with a complete stranger with unknown credibility or intentions is unsettling.

During this negotiation, our initial offers were farther apart than I anticipated, and without raising my initial resistance point considerably, there would have been no deal to make. As the buyer, at first I wanted to spend no more than the $8,000 I had collected from the insurance company. My initial offer was $7,000, and my target price was $7,500. After the seller’s opening offer of $10,000, I realized that my chances of getting the car at my target price was not going to happen.

After a series of counter offers, there was a negative bargaining range of $1,000, an $8,000 buy offer and a $9,000 sell offer. I had an alternative, the Liberty, and I carefully considered it before continuing. But I felt the factors like mileage and depreciation, among others, made the Jetta a much better investment. So I chose to raise my initial resistance point and split the difference with $8,500, while expressing a lot of angst at offing that much. In this situation, spending my savings is not something I would be prepared to do, and again I...
considered my alternative. It would not have been hard for me to walk away at this point. If I went any higher, the long overdue vacation would have to be postponed. That alone would not be that much of a problem, if the alternative didn’t exist. Since I had the Liberty as a backup, I fully explained my situation to her in an effort to get her to reveal her BANTA, which she did and we settled on $9,000.

This negotiation could just as easily ended without closing the deal. Personally, I see the Jeep Liberty alternative and $1,600 cash as more appealing than the Jetta and $600 cash. Had the negotiation taken place between me and a used car dealer, I would likely have walked away without ever raising my resistance point, assuming that their resistance point is near what the individual in this exercise chose. Because I was dealing with an individual, I assumed that what she said about her BANTA sounded reasonable and was probably accurate information. If I were negotiating with a dealer whom I had never met, I would never have believed what they disclosed as their alternative.

**Trust Scale Questionnaire.** The results of the exercise show that the individuals whom I have more trust in are the same ones I communicate more openly and honestly with. I’m unsure if the trust exists because of the communication or the communication is facilitated by the trust, but either way, the relationship exists between them in both Calculus Based and Identification-Based trust.

I have very superficial relationships with several people, and though at one time there was a high level of trust, now the amount of distrust dominates our relationships. This is consistent with the idea that trust is much easier to keep or build than to repair.

In integrative negotiations you’re basically working together, just with different agendas. As long as no preexisting distrust complicates the relationship, negotiators can collaborate to find outcomes that are most beneficial. Each concession helps build trust between the parties.

**Salary Negotiations.** This negotiation was much more personally rewarding than the Used Car negotiation. In this one, I already had a working relationship with the other party, and because of that my perception of the other party was based on quite a bit of information and experience. Within a reasonable realm of certainty I knew what to expect. This was not a “me versus him” negotiation, as was the case in the other negotiation. In this case we were able to find common ground in the company’s prosperity, and clearly demonstrate the inherent value in intangible qualities like competence, work ethic, and loyalty.

Here we definitely ended up with a win-win agreement. Although our openings and targets were different, we discussed ways to create value and we discussed what should be fair compensation for the work that had been done. In the end, the VP of Finance traded an $8,500 raise in exchange for higher motivation and morale from one of his star managers, and the credit manager accepted the responsibility of playing a larger role in the future of the company. In my opinion, everyone is pleased with the outcome, and the relationships involved will be stronger because of it.

**Communication Competence Scale Questionnaire.** Reflection and Presence Cognitions were my highest scores. I feel these reflect the fact that many times I have difficulty
interacting socially, such as a networking event or luncheon. This doesn’t really apply to me when I’m in the company of familiar people, but when meeting new people I definitely catch myself aggressively analyzing what to say or what I have already said in order to make a good impression or do better next time, respectively.

I found it somewhat odd that Communication Knowledge is linked to Reflection and Presence Cognitions, among others, because of the fact that it is related to confidence and assertiveness, both of which I feel I personally need improvement in. I noticed the questionnaire formatted the questions to reference “conversations” and not “negotiations.” Therefore, I would assumed that the results would be much different, since attitudes and communication behaviors are very different between the two.

Realizing this, I completed the questionnaire again, substituting “negotiation” in place of “conversation” and the results were higher scores for all five cognitions. The only questions that I scored at three or below were about practicing or thinking about what you’re going to say prior to the negotiation. Preferably, I would wish to engage in a negotiation with a lot of background information but not too much rehearsal. As I said before, in social settings I may tend to be nervous, but in a debate-like setting where I’m trying to convey a point or idea, nervousness is replaced with assertiveness.

**Sick Leave Negotiation.** Cultural differences and stereotypes can be some of the hardest obstacles to overcome in negotiations. I was unable to complete the role play because my partner and I were unable to get in touch with each other, but I did do a thorough analysis of the negotiation points with the aide of his discussion post.

Having lived in three foreign countries, one of them in East Asia, and visiting several others, I can appreciate the cultural differences that exist between people, and I’m very aware of how the world perceives Americans in general. Mr. Hagashi had a valid argument, and my role, Kelly, had an equally valid one. The success of a negotiation like this would require both parties to accept those differences and acknowledge how the other approaches the negotiation.

For Americans there are exceptions, but the socially accepted norm is to fall back to what is legal, and in Kelly’s argument, the school was legally obligated to honor the contract. Ours is a culture of individualism, and in addition to the core issue of the sick leave, the manner in which Kelly has handled the situation leading up to the negotiation is not received very well from his superior and his peers.

Ultimately, from Kelly’s point of view, I would explain how even if I felt inclined to disregard the contract in favor of accepting the local practices, in my culture it is customary to ask permission prior to initiating action regarding financial compensation. Highlighting how we had both made inaccurate assumptions could then serve as a reminder to both that we should reevaluate the situation and bring a much calmer, more productive approach.
Conclusion

After analyzing each of the questionnaires and negotiating exercises, I’ve identified areas in which I am weak and strong. I’ve also learned how moral and ethical dilemmas influence our behavior during negotiations.

I feel that in integrative bargaining trust is a significant contributor to a successful negotiation, and my relatively low level of trust for others prompted me to focus on forming and maintaining positive relationships with those I negotiate with. Information sharing demonstrates commitment to effective negotiations, and reciprocating trust can facilitate them, ultimately leading to a more favorable outcome for everyone.

A certain degree of empathy is also necessary to developing relationships. Looking at things from your opponent’s point of view can not only help build trust between you, it can also give insight into their why they frame the situation the way they do.

Finally, the course has given me a great understanding of Opening, Target, and Resistance points, and the influence that BANTAs and other factors like time constraints can have over negotiations. Depending on the conditions present during the negotiation, a bad deal might become a good one and vice versa. A negative bargaining range can seem like a small hurdle after options are exhausted and your back is against the wall. One should remain aware of these conditions and choose the time to conduct the negotiation carefully.