Business magazine

Negotiating

For some, negotiating is about winning. For others, it's about compromise. But if we think about it as a collaboration, often both sides can get what they want.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. ..... to clash
2. ..... to get your (own) way
3. ..... to compromise
4. ..... collaboration
5. ..... a misconception
6. ..... a foundation
7. ..... profitability
8. ..... a quarrel

Definitions

a. a situation where people work together to achieve the same thing
b. the capacity to make a profit
c. a wrong idea that is based on a failure to understand a situation
d. to get what you want, even though other people disagree
e. to reduce your demands in order to reach an agreement
f. an argument
g. to be in conflict
h. a base or starting point

Negotiating

Whether you're negotiating a multimillion dollar deal, agreeing on your role in a project or simply persuading your colleagues to go for Chinese food for lunch, effective negotiation skills can help you to motivate other people, get the best results and improve profitability.

There is often a misconception that negotiating is about insisting on our point of view to get our own way. Conversely, others assume that negotiation is all about compromise and that we have to be ready to forget 50 per cent of what we want.

But thinking of negotiating as either insisting or compromising can damage relationships and leave both sides feeling as if they've lost. According to Fisher and Ury in their best-selling book *Getting to Yes*, there is another way. They argue that collaboration is the key to negotiating successfully, and they illustrate this by telling the story of the Orange Quarrel. It goes like this:

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Joey and Jenny are arguing over an orange. In a win–lose situation, Joey might simply take the orange from Jenny. Joey would then be satisfied but Jenny would be upset and frustrated. Alternatively, Joey might find dishonest ways of convincing Jenny that she didn't want that orange after all. Using this method, Joey might get his way, but he might damage their relationship in the long run.

If they focus on compromise, Joey and Jenny might decide to cut the orange in half. Their effort to share means that each of them now has half of what they wanted but neither of them is fully satisfied.

However, if Joey and Jenny spent some time talking to each other, they might find out that Jenny in fact wants the orange peel to make a cake. Joey, on the other hand, loves eating oranges and doesn't want the peel. In this collaborative scenario, Joey and Jenny are both able to achieve 100 per cent satisfaction when they realise that Jenny can have all the peel and Joey all the fruit. Yet, according to Fisher and Ury, too many negotiations end up with half an orange for each side instead of the whole fruit for one and the whole peel for the other.

The first step to understanding the role of collaboration in negotiations is to realise that it is not always a competitive situation. One person's 'win' doesn't have to equal another person's loss. Exploring the interests and needs of both parties can help us see solutions we didn't consider before.

Here are five things we can do to collaborate when negotiating.

1. Know your objectives.

What are your interests in this? Make a list of the results you'd like to achieve. What are your priorities? Remember that maintaining a good relationship might be one of your objectives.

2. Separate the people from the issue.

Understand the difference between the content of the negotiation and the people who are negotiating. Try to be objective and manage your negative emotions.

3. Ask questions and listen.

Some people enter a negotiation prepared with a speech about what they want. But as seen in the Orange Quarrel, it is important to also understand your negotiation partner's interests and objectives. So, ask questions, listen and get an overview of everyone's situation.

4. Find shared interests.

How different are your interests from your negotiating partner's? Get to know which interests clash and which ones are shared. An understanding of shared interests will help you see this as an opportunity to work together rather than a competitive situation.

5. Look at creative options.

The first solution you think of, for example splitting the orange in half, might not always be the best one. Think creatively and discuss different alternatives that might work for everyone.

Most people have positive intentions and they do want to get along, even in potentially tense situations. By showing that we are professionals capable of collaborating, we can not only please everyone involved but also set a strong foundation for future negotiations.

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Tasks

Task 1

Match the situation (1–3) with the type of negotiation (a–c).

Situation

1. ..... Joey takes the whole orange and Jenny gets nothing.
2. ..... Joey and Jenny split the orange and each of them gets half.
3. ..... Joey and Jenny find out that they each need different parts of the orange. Jenny takes the peel and Joey takes the fruit.

Negotiation

a. Negotiating by compromise
b. Win–lose negotiation
c. Collaborative negotiation

Task 2

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Negotiating is about how we can insist on our point of view and get what we want.	True	False
2. If we don't want to compromise, then we can't negotiate.	True	False
3. The moral of the Orange Quarrel is that both sides can achieve 100 per cent satisfaction if they understand each other's needs and think creatively.	True	False
4. One objective in negotiation could be to keep a good relationship with the negotiation partner.	True	False
5. We should spend most of our negotiation time telling others about what we want.	True	False
6. It is important to understand which of your objectives are shared with the other party as well as which objectives could be in conflict.	True	False
7. We might have the same goals and objectives as our negotiation partner.	True	False
8. We should follow our instincts and take the first solution that comes to mind.	True	False

Discussion

When would collaboration be the best negotiating strategy? When might other strategies work better?

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