Wilmot, Part 6: Struggling in Relationships

COM 318: Prin. Of Persuasion

Relationships are not throwaway things. This line of thinking is the result of a results-oriented world. It is much like gardening; much must be done to keep it healthy.

Collaborative Negotiation

Conflict is inevitable

Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.

It can be managed, through collaborative negotiation.

Basic Behaviors to negotiation.

1. Assertion
2. Argumentativeness
3. Confirmation

Assertion expresses thoughts and feelings clearly.

Elements of an assertive message:

* Description of observable behavior that prompted your communication
* Your interpretation of the behavior
* The feelings that arise from your interpretation
* The consequences of the information you have shared so far.
* An intention statement

Argumentativeness, this aspect is your willingness to argue for a point of view to speak your mind. However, it is a balancing act, to prevent it from being aggressive.

* Be as objective as possible, just because someone doesn’t agree with you doesn’t mean it is an attack on your person.
* Avoid attacking the other person, even if the attack would give you a tactical advantage, center your arguments on issues rather than personalities
* Avoid interrupting, allow the other person to fully state their opinion before responding
* Stress equality and stress the similarities that you have with the other person; emphasize areas of agreement before attacking the disagreements
* Express interest in the other person’s point of view.
* Avoid presenting your arguments too emotionally, using a loud voice or vulgar expressions will be offensive and prove ineffective.
* Allow the other person to save face, never humiliate the other person.

Collaborative negotiation begins with confirmation. A confirming message communicates “you exist” or “you matter”. These messages aid in conflict resolution and convey respect despite the disagreement.

Three levels of confirmatory statements:

1. Recognition – The most fundamental, recognize the person. Respond to them and make eye contact
2. Acknowledgment – When we acknowledge others and their feelings, we send a powerful message. Listening to others and asking them questions is a method doing this. Paraphrasing may be the hardest yet most effective method of this level.
3. Endorsement – an agreement message and is the strongest type of confirming message. Often, we don’t agree, but we can usually find something that we can endorse.

Collaborators will have dual concerns, for themselves and for others. This is an integrative approach. In competitive or distributive negotiations, it is assumed that one person will win and one will lose. In integrative or collaborative situations, both groups can win, the both have diverse interests and common interests, additionally, they can perform negotiation.

Collaborators can more effectively solve problems by understanding the sides and producing win-win situations.

Collaborative and integrative models of negotiation makes some base assumptions

* The negotiating is controlled by enlightened self-interest
* Common interest valued.
* Limited resources with unlimited variation in personal preferences.
* The resources distribution system is integrative in nature
* The preferred ends result in an agreeable solution which is just and efficient

Collaborators are interested in the community at large and maintaining relationships. Thus the typical competitiveness of negotiation leads to losses for all in the collaborators mind.

Communication Patterns

Nonspecific compensation is a process in which one of the parties is paid off with some form of compensation.

Logrolling is similar to the above, however only one offers to “trade off” issues that are the top priority for the other.

Cost-cutting minimizes the costs to the other for going along with you.

Bridging invents a new option to meet the other side’s needs.

In collaborative negotiations, parties brainstorm to develop ways and creative options for everyone’s needs. Whatever methods we decide to employ, as long as we are collaborative we will view negotiations and items as complex, thus we will find creative methods of viewing the item.

The speakers move from a combative technique to a conferring technique.

Four principles to collaborative negotiation: people, interests, options, and criteria.

People: separate people from the problem. We want people to come to realize through working together on a problem. Attack the problem not the people.

Relational preservation becomes a superordinate goal in collaboration. When faced with a common enemy, two groups of opposed people will rally.

Interests: focus on interests not positions. Viewing goals as a position to be defend results in a harder and less pliable stance. The more you argue your position and defend yourself the more you feel you need to defend yourself. Interests underlie the positions and many positions can be derived from interests. Positions are specific solutions for an interest, thus it leads to oversight of possible solutions for meeting your interest. Interests are more diffuse and sometimes difficult to identify but keep you focused on collaboration.

Options: Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do. Trying to resolve some issue in the face of a foe narrows your vision. Pressure reduces creativity, searching for a single true solution is inoptimal. Set up time to focus on a new solution instead of defending your prospective goals endlessly. Goal setting continues throughout the conflict management and afterwards as well. A good decision is one that springs from the many options generated from concerned conflict parties.

Criteria: insist that the result be based on some objective standard.

One person’s will is not enough to justify a conflict solution. Some principle of fairness or judgement should be used, fair procedures can be used in many cases. In the situation of two people splitting a piece of pie, one gets to cut the piece and the other gets first choice; the procedure guarantees fairness. Or in the case of a marital couple in divorce, they can decide on the specifics of custody, visitation, and child support before they decide which party will have custody.

Collaborative tactics have their own disadvantages. This method requires a higher order of intelligence, keen perception, and discrimination, more than all a brilliant inventiveness.

Without training or having seen it modeled in real-time it is difficult to manage.

* Strongly biased toward cooperation, creating internal pressures to compromise and accommodate.
* Avoids strategies that are confrontational because they risk impasse, which is viewed as failure
* Focuses on being sensitive to other’s perceived interests; increases vulnerability to deception and manipulation by a competitive opponent and increases possibility that settlement may be more favorable to the other side than fairness would warrant.
* Increases difficutly of establishing definite aspiration levels and bottom lines because of reliance on qualitative goals.
* Requires substantial skill and knowledge of process to do well.
* Requires strong confidence in own assessment powers regarding interests/needs of other side and other’s pay-off schedule.

Collaborative negotiation is not universal, but is powerful.