

Negotiation

Overview

In this paper I will explore the intricacies of negotiation with a look into how differences in culture and gender affect the expectations and outcomes of a successful agreement. I will review the concept of principled negotiation, what the principles are, and how this differs from other styles of negotiating. I will also cover what a BATNA is and how it can help someone walk away from a negotiation that would have an unfavorable outcome for them. I will introduce the spectrum of how people express themselves during a dispute and show some examples of how this is shown across cultures. Finally, I will show some important ways that different types of negotiations can be coded as masculine or feminine and explore how women are punished for advocating on their own behalf in the workplace.

Theory/Concept

At its very core, negotiation is the act of trying to come to an agreement between two or more parties in dispute. While there are a multitude of different ways to negotiate an agreement, a highly effective way of reaching a good agreement is by using principled negotiation.

According to Fisher et al. (1991), the four principles are:

1. Separate the people from the problem
2. Focus on interests rather than positions
3. Generate a variety of options before settling on an agreement
4. Insist that the agreement be based on objective criteria

Principled negotiation is an excellent way to fairly and objectively reach an agreement, especially when there might be tension or a lack of trust between the parties.

Fisher et al. state that “the reason you negotiate is to produce something better than the results you can obtain without negotiating” (1991). This is referred to as BATNA, or the best alternative to negotiated agreement. In any negotiation you should determine your BATNA prior to negotiations to determine if you should accept or reject an agreement.

Negotiations are subject to both cultural and gender differences between each party. During a dispute, the way a person will express themselves falls on a spectrum between being emotionally expressive or emotionally unexpressive and being confrontational or avoidant. While Americans tend to be more emotionally expressive and confrontational, a person from Japan will generally be more emotionally unexpressive and avoidant (Meyer 2019). A skilled negotiator must learn about the effects that a person’s culture and gender will have on the way they communicate and try to resolve disputes. With practice, one can learn the underlying meaning of the other party’s words and actions in a negotiation setting.

In the workplace, women are faced with additional challenges when it comes to negotiating on their own behalf. We often are told that we must learn how to negotiate to earn a better salary or better benefits at our job, but an increasing number of studies are showing that women who try to negotiate in the same manner as men have less success in their negotiations and may even receive backlash or punishment for their behavior. This phenomenon is not a conscious behavior, but rather might be attributable to a subconscious response to a violation of expected gender norms (Amanatullah et al., 2013.)

Depending on the type of negotiation, a woman may avoid asking for her needs to be met with the agreement. This is because women who try to negotiate on their own behalf are seen as acting in a masculine manner that violates gender norms and they may face backlash for acting in this manner. Surprisingly enough, negotiating on behalf of a different party is seen as an acceptable form of gender expression, and women assertively bargaining on behalf of the

needs of others are not faced with backlash. “When a woman negotiates on behalf of herself, assertive bargaining is encoded as incongruent with communal prescriptions of the feminine role. When a woman negotiates on behalf of others, it is encoded as congruent with communal femininity” (Amanatullah et al., 2010).

Analysis

I worked as an HR assistant and payroll processor at a previous workplace. I noticed that a manager hired two new employees for the same position: one was a man who made \$55,000 salary and the other was a woman who made \$12.50 hourly. I reviewed the applications each employee filled out and both candidates had the same amount of education and experience. Thinking there might have been a problem with the paperwork, I asked the manager about the discrepancy. When I spelled out the difference in total compensation (the male employee would be compensated more than twice as much as the female employee) the manager was shocked but was firm in his decision. After all, the male employee had negotiated a higher starting salary and had a family to take care of while the female employee was single and had accepted the starting salary without making a counter-offer.

My personal distaste for the reasoning aside, I have now learned that there was a chance the female employee feared backlash or losing the offer if she tried to negotiate a higher starting wage. In my personal life, I also have not tried to negotiate better benefits at my job for fear that my managers would see me as overly financially focused or pushy. However, I had a vastly different experience with a different kind of negotiation.

During my work developing a new piece of software for another company, I interviewed different departments to discover what features and functionality they wanted to see in the new system. I found that I was able to successfully advocate on their behalf when meeting with

stakeholders to plan development even though one of the features, integration with a different pre-existing system, would be costly and delay development time.

Reflection

I have never been a very good negotiator when trying to obtain a beneficial outcome for myself in an agreement. I have always focused on the positions instead of the issues of each side and I didn't do my research to determine an objectively fair outcome. I cared more about keeping the peace between myself and the other party and didn't want to upset or offend them. After learning about negotiation techniques and learning about cultural differences that affect the level of trust between parties, I feel like I will be much better equipped to advocate for my needs in future negotiations.

Sources:

Amanatullah, E. T., & Tinsley, C. H. (2013). Punishing female negotiators for asserting too much... or not enough: Exploring why advocacy moderates backlash against assertive female negotiators. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 120(1), 110-122.

Amanatullah, E. T., & Morris, M. W. (2010). Negotiating gender roles: Gender differences in assertive negotiating are mediated by women's fear of backlash and attenuated when negotiating on behalf of others. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 98(2), 256.

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (1991). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. NY, NY: Penguin Books

Meyer, E. (2019, November 27). *Getting to Si, Ja, Oui, Hai, and Da*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2015/12/getting-to-si-ja-oui-hai-and-da>