**Integrative approaches**

Integrative approaches, in sharp contrast to distributive approaches, frame negotiation as interactions with *win-win* potential. Integrative theories and strategies look for ways of creating value, or “expanding the pie,” so that there is more to share between parties as a result of negotiation. Integrative approaches use objective criteria, look to create conditions of mutual gain, and emphasize the importance of exchanging information between parties and group problem-solving.

Because integrative approaches emphasize problem solving, cooperation, joint decision-making and mutual gains, integrative strategies call for participants to work jointly to create win-win solutions. They involve uncovering *interests*, generating *options* and searching for commonalities between parties. Negotiators may look for ways to create value, and develop shared principles as a basis for decision-making about how outputs should be claimed (and who claims them).

The efficiency of integrative approach to negotiations depends on how negotiators treat four essential elements: *interests, people, options, and criteria*.

**Identifying interests**

***Positions*** represent the stated stances and objectives of the negotiating parties, and are the focus of distributive bargaining whereas ***interests*** are the underlying reasons that explain people’s positions. Integrative approaches maintain that to negotiate efficiently negotiators should go beyond positions and seek to satisfy true underlying interests. In so doing, negotiators can approach issues of mutual concern with greater creativity, understanding and flexibility. Interests may be harder to identify than positions and may be unspoken or even hidden behind a party’s stated demand or position*.* To better understand the differences between interests and positions, consider the example here.

***Example: Separating interests from positions***

Jenny and Jack are sister and brother. They went back home one day both in desperate need of an orange. However, there is only one orange left in the kitchen. They quarreled over who can have the single orange. At that time, their mother came back.

Here I will ask you a question: if you were the mother, what should you do to deal with this dispute?

For me, if I were the mother, maybe I would cut the orange to two halves, and give each child one half and ask them to shut up! Do you think I am a smart mother? The children may stop the quarrel by yielding to parental authority but they would unlikely be happy about it.

Well, let’s go on and see the outcome of the story. The mother came back and asked why they quarreled. Each child maintained the position that he or she should get the orange (that is their position). When mother asked why they wanted the orange (this is the underlying interests). The boy said he desired the flesh of the orange because he wanted to have juice. The girl said she need the rind of the orange to flavor a cake. When framed this way, in terms of interests instead of stated positions, the problem appears to become a win-win solution. Jack had the juice and Jenny had the peels. The children discovered that each may in fact have what he or she need without depriving the other’s interests.

However, coming to understand another party’s interests may not always be so straightforward. A party may have a reason to want to intentionally conceal their underlying interest in a particular subject matter, or their interests may be difficult to decipher simply because they may be multiple.

**People**

Another element of integrative strategies involves ***People.*** Parties in a dispute often forget that the other side consists of people who, just like themselves, are subject to the human frailties such as emotions, potentials for misunderstandings and mistaken assumptions. Then therefore, negotiator needs to ***separate the people from the problem*.** This means finding a way for solving a problem without getting distracted by personal elements, and coming to an agreement in a manner that will preserve the relationship.

The better the relationship, the more cooperation each side will get from the other, the more information can be shared comfortably, and the higher the prospects for arriving at a win- win solution. To help build relationships, the use of tactics that can help negotiators to get to know the other party. This may include

* finding ways to meet informally,
* arriving early to chat or
* staying on after formal negotiations end*.*

Negotiators should also remain aware of important tactics and considerations that help negotiators to feel as though they can emerge from the negotiation with self-respect, and the good opinion of others. This may mean taking steps to make sure that neither party is forced to lose face or appear personally compromised as a consequence of having accommodated the other party’s demands.

**Alternatives**

In order to set realistic goals, negotiators must start by considering certain fundamental questions: where will each side be if no agreement is reached? What alternative solutions are available for meeting your goals if you cannot count on the cooperation of the other side? As seen earlier, attention to alternatives is an important feature of distributive as well as of integrative-based approaches. However, in contrast to the emphasis that is placed on concepts such as reservation points and bottom lines in positional approaches to bargaining, integrative approaches tend to take a slightly more nuanced view of the role of alternatives in negotiation. It is crucial for both parties to know their ***Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)*** both before and throughout all stages of a negotiation. According to integrative approach, having a resolute bottom line can come at high costs. By its nature, a bottom line can be inflexible and onerous. It can prevent creative thinking and lock parties into positions that may prevent them from coming to a favorable solution.

A BATNA provides negotiators with a measure of flexibility that is lacking from a bottom line. Unlike bottom lines, BATNAs change when negotiators perceive a change in their alternatives. When negotiations are viewed in terms of BATNAs, as opposed to positions or bottom lines, the negotiation can continue even when figures are rejected because negotiators are freer to continue to explore additional possible solutions.

Moreover, because negotiation is viewed as a joint decision making process in the integrative approach, there is always a possibility of either side reconsidering their position in mid-stream and deciding to pursue a different course than originally planned. Negotiators who fail to evaluate (and reevaluate) their alternatives to an agreement both before and during the process may therefore also be in danger of rushing to an agreement without having fully considered their or the other party’s alternatives, leading one side to end up with a deal that should have been rejected.

BATNAs can be an important source of power or strength in a negotiation. A more ‘powerful’ party with a weaker BATNA will need to come to a negotiated agreement more than its rival. For this reason, developing a BATNA can be the best tool when facing powerful negotiators. In agricultural trade negotiations, having alternative trading partners, for example, multiple potential buyers for a stock of wheat who may be willing to incorporate side agreements into the primary purchase agreement, strengthens the seller’s BATNA facing other potential buyers.