


Chapter 14

Negotiating Across Cultures: Insights for the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century accentuated the globalization, regardless of some cases apparently returning to the previous regionalization paradigm. In both cases, human communication has been and will be key to overcome the major challenges ahead. Within the global context, communication is increasingly cross-cultural, which brings additional challenges related to misunderstandings and the potential to escalate conflicts, sometimes ending up at crises. Therefore, communication and negotiation across cultures has never been as relevant as now, and the purpose of this chapter is to provide a fundamental knowledge base to cross-cultural negotiation, taking into account the main culture models from the last 50 years. It will be based on several relevant culture models, taken from multiple lines of research from reference authors in the field of culture models, negotiation, leadership, and decision making.

INTRODUCTION

Living is deciding, and negotiation may be regarded as a joint decision-making process involving two or more parties. Diplomacy can be understood as “pursuing war by other means”. In the same sense, negotiation, also a central concept to diplomacy, can be understood as the pursuit of goals and desirable

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outcomes by means other than the open conflict. The word is closely related with business, in the sense of being busy, doing diligence in order to overcome a problem. The concept however, is quite eclectic in the sense that it entails contributions from a considerable number of fields and a considerable body of knowledge that have been accumulating over centuries, which may be regarded as a blend of art and science.

A taxonomy of different concepts related to negotiation is provided, as negotiation types can be classified as simple or complex, integrative or distributive, single variable or multivariable, two parties or multiple parties, among other parameters. The negotiators themselves can also be classified into one of different profiles accordingly. Hence this text provides a comprehensive description of the main relevant concepts a negotiator shall have into account. Moreover, businesses should invest in developing negotiation as an organization capability for the twenty-first century (Ertel, 1999).

If negotiation in the strict sense is already a demanding endeavour, if in addition one considers situations of negotiations involving people from different cultures, then the whole set-up becomes even more complicated. Such complication originates from distinct ways of communication (e.g., low context *versus* high context cultures), the way people understand the concept of time in different geographies, or the level of hierarchy and power relations within societies to mention a few dimensions.

Besides this introduction, this chapter is composed of five main sections. In the second section a fundamental introduction to the main concepts concerning negotiation is provided. In the third section the relevant concepts in what culture and culture models concern are described. The fourth section provides some examples of the impacts culture may have on negotiation as a joint decision-making process, for sake of discussion. Finally, a concluding section summarizes the main points.

NEGOTIATION: A FUNDAMENTAL BACKGROUND

To address such an eclectic subject, some fundamental concepts are in order. The starting point concerns the answer to the question: “what is negotiation?”. If one takes the etymology of the word from the Latin *negotium*, it is related with carrying on business, occupation, an endeavour that is entailed by difficulty, trouble, pain or labour. It is the negation of the Latin word *otium*, which means ease or leisure, and therefore negotiation can be understood as the negation of the leisure (*otium*), which also means putting effort to attain intended goals. Negotiation is also a concept close to bargaining, however, negotiation is a much broader concept, as besides tactics it involves strategic thinking, and a care for human interrelation, psychology and personal communication.

Negotiation, as many aspects of life and systems have may be approached as a process composed of different stages (Fisher & Ertel, 1995). Hence some main identifiable stages are: (1) the planning stage, (2) the ‘at the table’ stage, and (3) the closing stage. Such classification is however incomplete, as one could also add a preplanning stage where a negotiator decides if it is worth negotiating or not, together perhaps with some set-up measures, that may, for instance, include lobbying to arrange pre-negotiation alliances (Lax & Sebenius, 2003). And suffice to say that after the negotiation has closed or the deal has been done, there is a need for follow-up in order to ensure the objectives are materializing, something that may involve “post-negotiation’ negotiation” (Mendenhalt, 1996; Craver, 2012).

Negotiations may involve two parties or multiple parties. The later makes them substantially more complex. Considering one of the simplest negotiation types - a two parties’ negotiation, involving a seller and a buyer - a simpler graphical representation of the frame applicable to such negotiation could

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