

Negotiation – Which Style suits you?

1. Adapted from Business Negotiation – A Practical Workbook, Paul T Steele and Tom Beaser
2. All styles adapted from Business Negotiation – A Practical Workbook, Paul T Steele and Tom Beaser

When P&SM professionals observe the other negotiating party across the negotiation table they should be doing their best to find out:

- How they are behaving
- The reasons behind their behaviour
- If there are any inconsistencies between appearance and fact

So, why do people behave as they do in a professional guise? The organisation's influence plays a key role here, for example, the organisation's ethics, ethos, personality all contribute to moulding the type of style adopted by its employees in negotiations.

Obviously this is only one aspect that affects behaviour, others will include targets to be achieved, observed rites and conventions, individual personality to name a few. Therefore, it is vital to understand each negotiating party's strengths and weaknesses.

Recognising the style

Recognising the type of style that is being displayed by the other party will enable you to:

- Feel more comfortable when a particular pattern of behaviour is being exhibited on the other side of the table
- Keep the momentum from stalling when it appears to be petering out
- Gain more information
- Avoid or break an impending deadlocked situation
- Better understand the effect of not only your tactics but also your approach on the other party .¹

The styles

During your career in P&SM you will come across hundreds of styles and approaches ranging from the acceptance style through to the threat style, here we will touch on just a few that you may or may not have dealt with.

- **Acceptance**, This is an approach where the negotiator just accepts the status quo and does not engage in constructive negotiation, often interpreted as a weak style, however, can be used to throw you off guard.
- **Bargaining**, This approach is a worthwhile activity and requires that both negotiating parties have something on offer worth the exchange. It is a method adopted that extracts value from the deal through the exchange of variables (various items) that each party values.
- **Compromise**, This is where the middle ground is sought between the stance you take and the stance of the other party. While in itself this may not be a negative stance, it can be indicative of a lack of desire to push the boundaries of the negotiation to the limit and achieve the maximum value from the deal. It is better than not negotiating, but realistically is not meticulous enough as a standard procedure. A real easy option!!
- **Emotion**, When applied in the right circumstances can be a powerful method of persuasion. The ability to influence the other party to alter their position through goodwill or any method that concerns how they may feel is a potent skill and ideally should be employed first by any trained negotiator.
- **Logic**, This is a very common approach when trying to persuade the other party to make a concession. Logical reasoning is the one style that is utilised the most in business negotiations. This style requires that parties prepare evidence so that they can prove to the other party that it is they who must make a concession. Its correct use

must be recommended but its use must not be at the expense of other techniques.²

In summary style and approach is an outward manner in which people act. It is a mixture of influences shaped by, individual personality, and the ethos of the workplace and ethnic characteristics. A skilled negotiator will select an appropriate approach to persuade the other party, and will match that with a particular style to suit, this may not be their personal style. Many people will find a style that works for them and generally stick to it, making the negotiator both predictable and vulnerable.

It is increasingly important to understand the other party's intentions and beliefs at your earliest opportunity. To do this listen carefully and empathize with their situation and feelings as they see it.