

NEGOTIATION IN THE WORK GROUP

Florin Alexandru LUCA, Mihai P. IRIMIA

„Gh.Asachi” Technical University, Iasi (Romania)

Cei mai mulți oameni se simt intimidati de ideea negocierilor, dar toata viața realizăm permanent negocieri, chiar dacă nu ne dăm seama. Negocierea nu înseamnă numai încheierea unei afaceri dificile, ci participarea zilnică la un schimb tranzacțional. Mulți consideră că unicul scop al negocierilor este de a obține condițiile cele mai bune. Nimic mai eronat. Crearea unei atmosfere amicale, a unui climat de încredere care te va ajuta să-ți dezvolti pe viitor afacerile și ideile este mult mai importantă decât de a obține ceva ce partea adversă nu dorește să dea. Deși avem tendința să credem că recompensele financiare nu sunt nici pe departe principalul factor motivațional al oamenilor, aceștia sunt mult mai des motivați de ego, prestigiu, recunoaștere sau satisfacție personală.

Articolul de fata se focuseaza pe elemente de negocieri indispensabile unei negocieri în cadrul grupului de lucru.

Most people feel intimidated by the idea of negotiation, but during all our life we are negotiating, even if we do not realise it. We are negotiating from birth. We start with our mother: we cry until she solves our digestive problems. Obviously, we do not do it consciously but instinctively, but is this diminishing the value of the negotiator?

You are in a continuous negotiation with all the people you meet, whether they should be your colleagues, your friends, or why not, even your boss. In the family, the husband and wife are permanently negotiating, starting from high importance matters, such as the acquisition of a new house, to the most ordinary matters such as the film to be seen one evening. Negotiating does not mean only settling a difficult business, but the daily participation in a transactional exchange [1,2]. Many people think that the only purpose of a negotiation is to obtain the best terms. There could be nothing more incorrect. Creating an atmosphere of trust which will help you build your business and ideas in the future are much more important than obtaining what your counterpart is not willing to offer you.

Although we have the tendency to believe that the financial rewards are by far the main motivational factor, people are much more motivated by ego, fame, acknowledgement or personal satisfaction [3].

The reasons why people do not negotiate are the following [4]:

1. People are lazy. This does not mean that they are mean or rude. People care for their peace and if they are not good at negotiating, they are not willing to spend their energy on a lost cause.
2. People tend to give exaggerated attention to their chief. This means that they are willing to take over tasks which are not in their job description, out of respect, out of their will to be liked, for fear of repercussions and others.
3. People do not like conflicts. Conflicts are inconvenient and bring anxiety.
4. People do not think about negotiating. They are offered a work contract, with the standard salary and they think it is the final offer, even more in the case when there are also written some clauses for the wage increase for extra work or working during free days. The decision is based on accepting or not accepting the position. In the candidate's view there is not even one idea for negotiating the remuneration.

There are many situations when the boss adds periodically new tasks to our job description.

The employer's dilemma can be resumed to the following: „Is it possible to refuse the supplementary tasks we are given without endangering our job or career?” If the boss requires staying over the working hours the person in question obeys? Some of us consider that the only way to advance in career is to never say „no”.

Many people find it hard to refuse the supplementary tasks, because they are afraid of the possible consequences [5]. We say „yes” more often than we would like to say, out of various reasons: to keep a good relationship with the boss, to make proof of devotion, to make proof of our competence, to be liked and sympathized. In a situation of time limit, the immediate or anticipated benefits might be worth the sacrifices. But a repeated renunciation of self-imposed limits will lead to the appearance of resentments, as well as exhaustion.

There is necessary a unique combination of firmness and flexibility in order to face successfully the efforts required by the responsibilities which come from the job. Still, there are methods to make this problem in the job seem easier.

At the beginning of their career, most people respond affirmatively to any request. The problem is that after a certain period of time – time needed for learning and strengthening the position at the work place – we are no longer willing to make the same compromises. On the other hand, the employer or the boss got accustomed to the „Jack-of-all-trade”, available at any time and for a long time. There is thus required an intelligent approach in order to maintain the same good relationship with the boss and at the same time, to make him trust us more and show more flexibility on our part.

The Christian Science Monitor made public the results of an opinion poll, after interviewing 100 successful women in leading positions – from managers to stars, deans, police chiefs and official persons – in order to find out how they learned to say „no”. Many of them started their careers by saying „yes” to any request, before learning how to refuse them.

Mostly, these women created their own methods of saying „no” – favouring a collaboration style, more than a hierarchical way of solving the problems and making the decisions. As relationships are more important for them, they try to be respectful even when they establish the limits. Many of them dedicate time to explain the reason why they say „no” and they offer useful suggestions or alternatives when they choose to refuse a request. In conclusion, they wish to maintain the important relationships.

We could mention some of the strategies which can be used in this matter: this „no” can be uttered at the work place only when the priorities are clearly established. There must be carefully weighed the risks and benefits of any refusal – both on professional and personal level. Last but not least, the reply must be given according to the request, on the same terms.

An efficient way of establishing the limits at the work place, without putting in danger the professional relations could be found in asking yourself a few questions. When you are asked something, if it is not an emergency, give yourself enough time to think if you would like to answer „Let me think about it / check my schedule / see my other obligations”. Then, make your decision known as soon as possible and keep your word.

Time can be a „weapon” in negotiations. Putting pressure on the counterpart might prove extraordinarily efficient. To understand the views of the counterpart might help in understanding their negotiating style. Understanding the expectations of the manager might help in evaluating the attitude the counterpart has about that particular task.

A new task might seem an opportunity to be promoted, but sometimes, in the long run, it might seem an annoyance which eats up time and causes lack of concentration on the main activity. In negotiations, it is advisable to take time to reconsider the offer. Short negotiations encourage bad behaviour: deadlines, ultimatums, reduced creativity, unfavourable payment conditions and others. Short negotiations usually lead to obtaining a good result only for one of the parties. On the other hand, if the negotiator is better prepared than his counterpart, he might evaluate the business quickly and can impose the conditions that the third party accepts, and then this strategy would impose by itself. The only problem arising here is how to maintain a long term relationship. If you are interested in having a long-time relationship, then a solution reciprocally advantageous would be in the advantage of both parties [6,7].

We must analyse if it is necessary to comply with the request and what would the losses or consequences be in case of a refusal. Is the new request in the parameters of the job? Do the job, life style or promotion depend on accepting it? The request presented to you ranks within your priorities? Does it suit your personal ambitions? Will it bring you closer to reaching them? Would you feel happier or fulfilled if you accept the task? Do you tend to accept out of the will to be helpful? Are you asked to do something important, significant? Are you capable of successfully undertaking that responsibility? Is there someone more suited than yourself to fulfil that task?

If the answer to these questions is negative, then it would be preferable to refuse in a clear and firm way. A clear „no”, communicated in a polite manner is easier to accept than an ambiguous answer which will leave the interlocutor confused. The reasons which are at the basis of the answer must be explained clearly and concisely. The interlocutor must be convinced about the reason why that particular task does not rank within the priorities, strategies or personal engagements. If the decision is made based on a personal belief, explain to the interlocutor so that he might not feel offended.

Nevertheless, it is well to present the management with an alternative for the solution of the problem (including a personal involvement for a clearly defined term). The management of the company will appreciate the fact that they will not have problems in the short term. Time will be saved and thus the company will have the necessary time to solve their problem, eventually by hiring another person. It is preferable to be helpful when you can, and generosity never remains unrewarded.

The negotiation on the phone usually ends in hasty decisions. First of all, you have to give quick answers and that could be harmful later. Then, it is much easier to communicate with a person who is in the same room. Thirdly, people tend to sign quicker a certain type of contracts, such as the ones of extending the period. That is why, it is recommended that whenever it is possible, give up settling this kind of transactions on the phone [8].

Flexibility. Going into a negotiation and being rigid about what you think might make the negotiation very difficult and rather fail, which is not the case when you are flexible. If you are open, there will be found new solutions to the existing problems and you will not let a business fail, unless it simply cannot be settled.

Changing the negotiators is a technique which is applied quite often in the negotiations between management and unions. You negotiate with somebody and obtain quite good terms. Then, another person replaces the first negotiator, saying that actually, the person you negotiated in the first place surpassed the mandate. Changing the negotiators is used in negotiations led in ill faith, as an example in the disproportionate negotiations between two parties [9]. In order to annihilate this tactics, before starting the proper negotiation, it is advisable to check whether the counterpart is the negotiator assigned by the company for the contract in question and if he has the authority to validate the contractual terms as well as to sign for the company.

References:

1. Bill S. The Skills of Negotiating. - London: Wildwood House Ltd., 2005.
2. Cornelius H., Faire S. Everyone can win. - Melbourne: Simon & Scuster, 2004.
3. Josien M. Interpersonal communication. - Paris: Editions d'Organisation, 2004.
4. Dawson R. Secrets of Power Persuasion for Salespeople. - Iasi: Polirom, 2006.
5. Collet P. How to Read People's Minds from Their Actions. - London: Random House Group, 2005.
6. Hiltrop J., Udall S. The Essence of Negotiation. - Bucharest: Teora, 2002.
7. Pandelica A. Companii multinaționale. Strategii de marketing. - București: Economica, 2007.
8. Stanton N. Communication. - Iasi: Multiprint, 2004.
9. Michaelson G., Michaelson S. Sun Tzu for success. How to use The Art of War to Master Challenges and Accomplish the important Goals in Your Life. - F+W Publications Company, 57, Avon (USA), 2003.

Prezentat la 14.03.2008