

Notes on Negotiation with the Romans II

Article deals with effectively choosing and implementing a culturally responsive strategy.

Negotiator cannot take common knowledge and practices for granted and thereby simply concentrate on the individual. Must consider counterpart in two respects: as a member of a group and as an individual.

- Individuals of the same group often differ from the group average. Members of the same group may even differ very widely on certain dimensions. At the same time, the degree of variation tolerated between group members is itself an aspect of culture.

Five steps to selecting a culturally responsive negotiation strategy

Step 1: Reflect on your culture's negotiation script

Examine:

1. General model of the process
2. Individual's role, weaknesses strengths (why do/does I/he/she/ do this?)
3. Aspects of interaction
4. The form of a satisfactory agreement

Value of doing this is that:

- Helps explain your expectations and behavior to a counterpart
- Prepares you to make decisions under pressure
- Allows you to compare your culture to another on a holistic rather than fragmented basis
- Helps you to determine counterpart's level of familiarity with your culture
- The profiles (product) produced can be used in future negotiations with other groups
- Motivates interest in other cultures
- Enables you to act consistently and conscientiously

From Table 1

- Beware of psychological and group biases, such as denial and groupthink
- Probe for assumptions and values: they are seldom identified explicitly in day-to-day life
- Don't become rigidly wedded to your own ways
- Take time during negotiation to step out of the action and reflect on your behavior

Step 2: Learn the negotiation script of the counterpart's culture

Should be done regardless of negotiations familiarity with counterpart's culture.

- If expert, update the profile/discover more
- If novice, begin a comprehensive profile

Develop the ability to use the counterpart's cultural and personal negotiation scripts as well as knowing the scripts and related values.

Allows negotiator to better anticipate and interpret the counterpart's behavior

Try especially to glean and appreciate the basic concept of what "negotiation" means to that culture, because it anchors and connects the other dimensions. When you lose your way or become confused, it helps to have this sense of the "spirit of the interaction."

From Table 2:

- Don't be too quick to identify the counterpart's home culture. Common cues (name, physical appearance, language, accent, and locations) may be unreliable. The counterpart probably belongs to more than one culture
- Beware of the Western bias toward "doing." IN Arab, Asian, and Latin groups, way of being (e.g. comportment, smell) feeling, thinking, and talking can more powerfully shape relationships than doing.
- Counteract the tendency to formulate simple, consistent, stable images. Not many cultures are simple, consistent or stable.
- Don't assume that all aspects of the culture are equally significant. In Japan, consulting all relevant parties to a decision is more important than presenting a gift
- Recognize that norms for interactions involving outsiders may differ from those for interactions between compatriots.
- Don't overestimate your familiarity with your counterpart's culture. An American studying Japanese wrote New Year's wishes to Japanese contacts in basic Japanese characters but omitted one character. As a result, the message became "Dead man, congratulations."

Core beliefs and values of cultures should be understood

Step 3: Consider the relationship and circumstances

Same strategy will not work equally well on every counterpart in a given cultural group or even with the same counterpart all the time

Consider the life of the relationship: the negotiator should acknowledge any already established form of interaction, assess its attributes and the parties, expectations of the future, and decide whether to continue, modify, or break from the established form.

Consider the fit of respective scripts: consider your profile (individual and group) with your counterparts (individual and group). Adjust strategy accordingly (Romans 1)

Consider balance of power: American are notorious for using their power insensitively. Can backfire in future.

Consider audiences: if counterpart will be accompanied by other parties, such as interpreters, advisers, constituents, and mass media, different strategies may need to be adopted.

Consider wild cards: Parties may have extra cultural capabilities such as financial resources, professional knowledge or technical skills that expand their set of feasible options, bases for choice, or means of implementation.

Step 4: Predict or Influence the Counterpart's Approach

The effectiveness of a culturally responsive strategy in bringing about coherent interaction depends not only on the negotiator's ability to implement it but also on its complementarity with the counterpart's strategy

- Embracing counterpart's script makes little sense if he/she is embracing yours

Good chart on page 92 about what choosing different strategies may mean for the negotiations - which ones are complementary and which are conflicting

Step 5: Choose a Strategy

5 selection criteria (in order):

1. Must be feasible given the counterpart and cultures involved
2. Able to produce a coherent pattern of interaction given the counterpart's likely approach
3. Appropriate to the relationship and circumstances
4. Acceptable ideally but not necessarily to both parties
5. Optional 5th: Your degree of comfort with the strategy - if more than one choice could work, choose the one you are most comfortable with

Implementing Your Strategy

In implementing your strategy, to decide on timing, you should weigh the benefits of additional information against the cost of losing an opportunity to take leadership and set the tone of the interaction, a loss that includes being limited in your strategy options by the counterpart's strategy choice