

HUTHWAITE RESEARCH

1 BACKGROUND

Most of what is written about Negotiating behaviour tends to be 'anecdotal or theoretical' in approach.

Very few studies have examined what actually happens in face to face negotiations for 2 reasons.

- 1 Negotiators reluctance to be observed.
- 2 Lack of methodology.

Since 1968 a number of studies have been carried out by members of the Huthwaite Research Group using behaviour analysis methods.

2 THE SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATOR

What is the criteria for a successful negotiator ? The Huthwaite studies used 3 success criteria.

- (a) He should be rated as effective by both sides.
- (b) He should have a track record of significant success.
- (c) He should have a low incidence of implementation failures.

3 THE RESEARCH METHOD

For the purpose of this research comparisons have then been made between those who met this criteria (skilled negotiators) and those who failed to do so (average negotiators).

Researchers met negotiators before the negotiation and encouraged them to talk about their planning and objectives. For 56 sessions with skilled negotiators and 37 sessions with average negotiators this planning session was either tape recorded or extensive notes were taken.

In addition, negotiators were observed in a total of 103 face to face negotiating sessions.

4 PLANNING

(a) Amount of planning time

No significant difference was found between the total planning time which skilled and average negotiators claimed they spent prior to actual negotiation.

However, skilled negotiators spend more time planning how to use information and less time generating facts and figures.

(b) Exploration of Options

Skilled negotiators consider a wider range of outcomes or options for action, than average negotiators.

(c) Common Ground

Skilled negotiators give over 3 times as much attention to common ground areas as average negotiators.

(d) Long term or Short term ?

The studies found that both groups showed an alarming concentration on the short term aspect of issues.

However, skilled negotiators showed twice as many comments as average negotiators.

(e) Setting Limits

Skilled negotiators were significantly more likely to set upper and lower limits - to plan in terms of range. Average negotiators, in contrast, were more likely to plan their objectives around a fixed point or a particular issue.

(f) Sequence and Issue Planning

Average negotiators placed very heavy reliance on sequence planning. Whereas skilled negotiators planned issues separately rather than in a predetermined sequence.

FACE-TO-FACE BEHAVIOUR

(a) Irritators - certain words and phrases used during negotiation have little value in persuading other party and do cause irritation, eg using the terms 'generous offer', 'fair' and 'reasonable'. Research shows that average negotiators use them fairly regularly, skilled negotiators tend to avoid them.

(b) Counter Proposals - skilled negotiators use counter proposals (responding to a proposal with another proposal) much less frequently than average negotiators. The disadvantages of counter proposals are:

- they introduce an additional option, (sometimes a whole new issue) which complicates and clouds the clarity of the negotiation
- they are put forward at the point where the other party has least receptiveness, being concerned with his own proposal
- they are perceived as blocking or disagreeing by the other party, not as proposals.

- (c) **Defend / Attack Spirals** - average negotiators use more than 3 times as much defending/ attacking behaviour as skilled negotiators.
- (d) **Behavioural Labelling** - the research found that skilled negotiators tended to give an advance indication of the type of behaviour they were about to use. So, for example, instead of just asking 'how many units are there?' they would say, 'Can I ask you a question - how many units are there?', giving warning that a question was coming. In general, labelling of behaviour gives the negotiator the following advantages:
- it draws the attention of the listener to the behaviour that follows
 - it slows the negotiation down, giving time for the negotiator using labelling to gather his thoughts and for the other party to clear his mind from the previous statements
 - it introduces a formality which takes away a little of the cut and thrust and therefore keeps the negotiation on a rational level
 - it reduces ambiguity and leads to clearer communication.

The only occasion where the skilled negotiator avoids labelling his behaviour is in disagreement.

(e) **Testing Understanding and Summarising**

The research found that these were used significantly more by skilled negotiators. Both behaviours sort out misunderstandings and reduce misconceptions. The more frequent use of these behaviours by the skilled negotiator reflects his concern with clarity and the prevention of misunderstanding.

(f) **Asking Questions**

Skilled negotiators ask significantly more questions during negotiation than average negotiators.

- questions provide data about the other parties thinking and position
- questions give control over the discussion
- questions are more acceptable alternatives to direct disagreement
- questions keep the other party active and reduce his thinking time
- questions can give the negotiator a breathing space to allow him to marshal his own thoughts.

(g) **Feelings Commentary** - a skilled negotiator is more likely to give information about his internal events (what he is feeling) than the average negotiator. This contrasts sharply with the amount of information given about external events, such as facts, clarifications, general expressions of opinion, etc. Here the average negotiator gives very much more.

(h) **Argument Dilution** - skilled negotiators used fewer, not more reasons to support their case, unlike average negotiators, who use more and so dilute their case.

5 REVIEW THE NEGOTIATION

Over two-thirds of the skilled negotiators claimed they always set aside some time after a negotiation to review it and consider what they had learned. Just under half of average negotiators, in contrast, made the same claim. Interestingly, management representatives, with other responsibilities and time pressures, were less likely to review a negotiation than were union representatives.

SUMMARY OF SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATOR'S BEHAVIOUR

PLANNING

	Skilled Negotiators	Average
Overall amount of time spent	No significant difference	
Number of outcomes / options considered per negotiable issue	5.1	2.6
% of comments about areas of anticipated agreement or common ground	38%	11%
% of comments about "long term" considerations of anticipated issues	8.5%	4%
number of mentions implying sequence in planning (per session)	2.1	4.9

KEY FACE TO FACE BEHAVIOURS

	Skilled Negotiators	Average Negotiators	
Use of Irritators Per Hour of Speaking Time	2.3	10.8	
Frequency of Counter Proposals Per Hour of Speaking Time	1.7	3.1	
% of Negotiators' Comments Classified as Defending / Attacking	1.9	6.3	
% of Negotiators Behaviours immediately preceded by a behaviour label (except disagreeing)	6.4	1.2	
Testing / summarising as a % of all Negotiators' Behaviour	17.2	8.3	
Questions as a % of all Negotiators' Behaviour	21.3	9.6	
Information giving as a % of all Negotiators' Behaviour	17.3 12.1	Ext Int	28.9 7.8
Average number of reasons given by Negotiators to back each argument / case advanced	1.8	3.0	

AVOID	USE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irritators - Counter-proposals - Defend / attack spirals - Argument dilution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behaviour labelling (except disagreeing) - Testing understanding - Lots of questions - Feelings commentary