
Research Digest

It Really Depends on the Situation

There's an old saying, "You don't get it if you don't ask." But why are some people shy about asking their boss for a raise while others seem to have no qualms? A recent paper proposes that willingness to initiate negotiation is affected by both situational factors (relative bargaining power) and personality (risk propensity and Machiavellianism).

A current study looks at how situational factors and personality affect the three stages of the initiation process: engaging, requesting, and optimizing. Using a multiple scenario approach in which participants indicated their initiation preference for three distinct negotiations, the study found that bargaining power influences an individual's decision to initiate negotiations, and Machiavellianism is associated with engaging (choosing to initiate negotiations) even when relative bargaining power is low, while risk propensity was associated with optimizing their requests.

Negotiations are an everyday challenge for most people, and simple engagement is an essential prerequisite for negotiations. This study shows that while phases of the initiation process are connected with personality characteristics, such as risk propensity and Machiavellianism, engaging and requesting require situational power. Negotiators should concentrate on what constitutes bargaining power in a negotiation and how to increase their own power or decrease their counterparts' power.

Source: Kapoutsis, I., R. Volkema, and A. Nikolopoulos, 2013. Initiating negotiations: The role of Machiavellianism, risk propensity, and bargaining power. *Group Decision and Negotiation* 22: 1081-1101.

Maintain Your Poker Arm?

Some negotiators try to chest their cards and maintain a poker face. According to a recent report, maybe they should watch what they are doing with their arms, too!

In a group of studies showing video clips randomly sampled from the 2009 World Series of Poker, researchers found that motor action can sometimes betray intentions. They found that the same action, in this case, player's arms pushing chips onto the table, can have different movement dynamics depending on the underlying intention. And while the professional players may be able to regulate facial expressions, how they pushed the chips could betray the quality of their hand.

Observers in the studies were able to more easily judge poker-hand quality from merely observing arm motions than from observing just

players' faces. Even in restrictive settings, motor actions can yield important diagnostic information.

Source: Slepian, M. L., S. G. Young, A. Rutchick, and N. Ambady. 2013. Quality of professional players' poker hands is perceived accurately from arm motions. *Psychological Science* 24(11): 2335–2338.

Scholarly Deceptions

A working paper by Benjamin Edelman and Ian Larkin reports disturbing findings about deceptive practices by social scholars whose work is posted on the Social Science Research Network (SSRN). Their data set is not limited to negotiation research, but it does include such relevant fields as social and organizational psychology, as well as decision making and organizational behavior.

Researchers used a comprehensive database of paper downloads from SSRN. The network has long observed that some authors deliberately download their papers many hundreds (or thousands) of times to increase the paper's reported download count. They used SSRN's existing analysis and built a monthly "deception" variable to measure the extent to which an author engaged in deceptive downloads on a given paper in a given month.

In both their field and experimental studies, researchers confirmed findings of recent research that negative social comparisons lead to deceptive acts. The studies also suggest that employees higher in the hierarchy are more likely to engage in status-enhancing deception, especially pronounced for employees with a high degree of previous success.

Source: Edelman, B. and I. Larkin. 2013. Social comparisons and deception across workplace hierarchies: Field and experimental evidence. *Harvard Business School Working Paper 09-096, August 22, 2013.*