
Research Digest

Setting the Tone Online

Negotiation power is, in part, a function of the cards one holds—one's resources, alternatives, and allies. But a recent study by Liuba Belkin, Terri Kurtzberg, and Charles Naquin indicates that it is also determined by how one behaves and expresses oneself during a negotiation.

Their study looks at how people interpret power in negotiations through electronically mediated communication and finds that perceptions of dominance can be signaled to others through affective displays in the online context. Their linguistic analysis of the text of e-mail messages exchanged by participants indicates that communicating negative affect (such as anger) in an e-mail can signal greater levels of dominance to one's opponent, while communicating positive affect (such as happiness) can signal less dominance. Being nice is not always a bad idea, however. If the opponent is viewed as having less resource power, communicating happiness is seen as beneficial. One needs to be careful with both genuine and strategic affective displays — the ramifications of those displays depend in part on the expectations of the other side.

Source: Belkin, L. Y., T. R. Kurtzberg, and C. E. Naquin. 2013. Signaling dominance in online negotiations: The role of affective tone. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research* 6(4): 285–304.

Measuring the Calm and the Storm

Many negotiation teachers use the Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) to prompt their students to consider their reflective approach to conflict. But some conflict experts have criticized it for wedging individuals into static categories, when in fact people are more fluid and responsive to circumstances.

In a recent article, Andrea Kupfer Schneider and Jennifer Gerarda Brown discuss a classroom alternative to the TKI, which they call the Dynamic Negotiating Approach Diagnostic (DYNAD). They look at how TKI is used in negotiation classes, its strengths and weaknesses, and discuss how the new instrument differs from it. While both tests encourage students to think about alternative approaches in positive ways, the DYNAD asks participants to assess themselves at the start of a conflict, then assess themselves again after it becomes difficult. It attempts to capture the changing states of negotiators as they proceed through various stages during the negotiation process.

Determining your default style is one step toward understanding how you react in negotiations, but recognizing how your style could adjust over

the course of a negotiation is an important step toward improving negotiation effectiveness. The DYNAD, by measuring negotiators during the calm and the storm, can give teachers and students a more useful negotiation barometer.

Source: Schneider, A. K. and J. G. Brown, 2013. Negotiation barometry: A dynamic measure of conflict management style. *Ohio Journal on Dispute Resolution* 28: 557-580.

Negotiating Foreign Investments One-On-One

When it comes to negotiating international trade agreements, are countries becoming more or less agreeable?

According to Eugénia da Conceicao-Heldt, the answer may be “both.” She notes that while the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations have stalled, bilateral and regional deals have become more common. She argues that there is a connection between these fora.

She first outlines a theoretical framework conceptualizing the impact of outside negotiating options on negotiation outcomes, and then analyzes the negotiation process at the multilateral level, linking it to the proliferating number of preferential trade agreements (PTA) under negotiation by the European Union, United States, Brazil, Australia, and India.

The evidence suggests that because all major trading nations are currently negotiating PTAs, it gives them attractive BATNAs (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) and increases their bargaining power more generally at the international level. The increased power of smaller nations threatens to marginalize the World Trade Organization multilateral system. The relevance of the BATNA argument, however, varies from one issue to another (e.g., investment versus intellectual property rights).

Further analyses of the multilateral trading system revealed another problem that contributes to the deadlock. These negotiations increasingly address such controversial issues as public health, labor, and the environment and are often perceived by developing countries as protectionism in disguise.

Source: da Conceição-Heldt, E. 2013. The clash of negotiations: The impact of outside options on multilateral trade negotiations. *International Negotiation* 18(1): 111-130.

Time to Reframe the Conversation about Conflict

Conflict within organizations is inevitable. Employees, agendas, responsibilities, perceptions—and “personalities”—vary and often diverge. For leaders, managing conflict constructively is a key responsibility. A study by Neil Katz and Linda Flynn that examined workplace leaders’ and managers’ aware-

ness, perception, and conflict management approaches illuminates different systems and strategies. They used a qualitative and quantitative mixed design to collect data from a sample of public, private, and nonprofit organizations in Florida.

While major studies have indicated that dispute resolution practices have become more common in workplaces, Katz and Flynn's study found a distinct lack of awareness of the value of effective conflict management systems and strategies. What they did find was an overwhelming reliance on traditional practices of dealing with conflict through denial, managerial avoidance, or threats of litigation.

Their research illustrates that while conflict management has the potential to play a key role in the success of an organization, it struggles to be recognized as a viable response by many organizations. To be effective, the authors conclude, conflict management models must be flexible, easily adaptable to a wide range of cultures and leadership approaches, and easily communicated, as well as practical and cost-effective.

Source: Katz, N. H. and L. T. Flynn. 2013. Understanding conflict management systems and strategies in the workplace: A pilot study. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 30(4): 393-410.