

KOPPELVLAKKE/INTERFACES

Comment by Michael Meyer on "Bargaining and Negotiation Strategy", by Grant Robinson, in Nasser, Schmickl, Van Veijeren and Venter: Organizational Behaviour, McGraw-Hill, 1977, Chapter 12.

At last the field of bargaining and negotiation has been tackled by a South African writer and thus must be welcomed, as this is an area which receives much attention in America and also in Europe.

To deal with this subject in a chapter creates a difficulty and accordingly must be taken into consideration when reviewing this chapter. The writer does not make a distinction between bargaining and negotiation and is dealing with them as if it is the same thing. He is covering mainly the bargaining field. He distinguishes between integrative bargaining and distributive bargaining, a distinction which has been followed by other writers.

Whilst drawing this distinction has some merit, it is not explained what the distinguishing feature really is as very often in a bargaining situation we will find that there is a grey area and one cannot clearly distinguish between integrative and distributive bargaining, as there are elements of both present.

This is important in a bargaining situation. If it can be structured to be an integrative bargaining situation a mutually more profitable position for both parties will emanate.

A distributive bargaining is stated to be a situation where the gain for one party means some loss to the other. Therefore bargainers would be wise to try to move towards the integrative bargaining area.

Unfortunately often due to the emotional involvement of/or inborn competitive spirit of negotiators they do not fully explore this opportunity to their own detriment.

An obvious opportunity in any bargaining situation is the question of tax. The tax man is never present at a negotiating table and the parties are entitled to structure any agreement in such a way that they can take maximum tax advantage.

The writers approaches conflict as follows "conflict is regarded as a contest in which both parties try to win and try to control or influence the outcome of the process". Without going into semantics I suggest that

conflict is the competing needs of parties for certain resources.

He removes the base of rationality when he states: "... danger exists in the implicit assumption of most naïve negotiators of rational behaviour, the assumption of explicit and consistent value systems on both sides and an assumption of the ability to calculate advantages correctly."

It would seem as if he has excluded rationality. Surely the obvious basis would be to work from the assumption that a negotiator is acting rationally viewed from his own point of view and value systems. The writer seems to follow a rational line when he says: "... a party concedes because he thinks the other will not, and the alternative outcome suggested appears to be better than no bargain at all." Surely this is a purely rational outcome. He continues his thinking in this line where he states: "Pure rationality is not always a good guide in estimating the personal factors."

He does suggest what is a good guide in estimating personal factors which is surely needed to assist anybody in negotiation. He sums up the law of concession with 5 steps that can be taken but does not lay any basis for these 5 simple rules. The validity of the rules is seriously questioned.

He is inclined to over-simplify matters when dealing with a threat. A person using a threat may be naïve or in a weak position and should use the threat in such a way that it is interpreted by the other party as a threat without in fact making the threat. I would suggest the use of the word a veiled threat.

A problem always arises what happens if the threat must be executed. This can weaken the base of the negotiator severely. The afore-going remarks are made on the basis of constructive criticism on an area which is most difficult and will be of ever increasing importance in the future.

The chapter makes good reading for managers who are often active in this field. Hopefully the writer will deal with this area more fully in a book on this subject.

REGSTELLING

In die inleidingsartikel "Belastingtoegewings en Koste Verbonde aan Voortgesette Opleiding" in *Bedryfsleiding/Business Management*, 8, no. 2, 77, is daar verkeerdlik verwys na die Nasionale Onderwys- en Beroepstigting. Ons stel dit hiermee graag reg. Dit moet lees: *Die Nasionale Ontwikkeling- en Bestuurstigting van Suid-Afrika*.