

E.Q. Versus I.Q. in Business Negotiations

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"Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way." -**Edward de Bono**

How important are E.Q. skills (soft/people skills) vs. I.Q. skills (hard/process skills) in business negotiation?

Edward de Bono gave us some clues with his creative thought mapping book..."Six Thinking Hats". Edward argued successfully I believe that if we were able to categorize thought into White Hat (Straight Data), Blue Hat (Straight Process) that we could look at problems without emotion. He also argued that looking at problems or opportunities with Yellow Hat (Unbridled Enthusiasm) and Red Hat (Unfettered Emotion) we could bring our gut feel and wonderful sense of alacrity to almost any situation. Red Hat can also bring in a sense of uneasiness as well...it is a raw emotive state. Finally, Edward gave us Green Hat (Unbridled Creativity) and Black Hat (Devil's Advocate) to balance both E.Q. and I.Q. into a single thought process.

Soft skills in business negotiation is largely overlooked or undervalued against the sexiness of cool terms like BATNA (Best Alternative Next Agreement) or ZOPA (Zone of Potential Agreement) by the academic crowd. How did we get deals done in the B.B.Z. days (Before BATNA and ZOPA)?

Did soft skills play a more significant role B.B.Z.? Have we supplanted soft skills with process that may be unbalancing our bargaining effectiveness? As a negotiator of multimillion deals in a past life I recognized that I used my soft skills to gain information and pull negotiation partners closer to my objectives by observing their language, body language, energy levels, emotional swings, deferral tactics and anxiety levels. I also prided myself on the types of questions I asked and my listening skills and sense of empathy/compassion in order to get deals done.

Winston Churchill was superlative negotiator in his time. He knew how cut to the pith on complicated subjects and negotiations to bring them to life. We know he was a charismatic, master of reconnaissance and strategy. Strategy in itself contains a ranking of plans and back up plans. What skills did he use before BATNA and ZOPA? Is it possible he used more soft skills than we use today?

Back to Edward De Bono, you don't have to agree with the concept of "Six Thinking

Hats” but you have to admire him taking a stab at trying to create a new model from which to solve problems or capitalize on opportunities using E.Q and I.Q. transparently.

It’s a little like training your mind to relax or ignore pain. It's just a style of thinking to lift us to a greater sense of awareness.

One of the elements of negotiation that is undeniable is momentum. Momentum leads toward tipping points. How do we gain momentum if the negotiation is just process? You could argue that our BATNA is better than our bargaining partner but process does not feel. So if we feel momentum then what does it mean and what is it worth?

Like watching great quarter-backs who tell their football teammates...”we are now into the two minute drill and we are down by 10 points in the bottom of the 4th quarter. We have to raise our game!” It's so much driven by emotion as are great negotiations that are tipped by momentum.

We need to incorporate soft skills more in business negotiation because if we sell something with passion, we cannot just turn off the emotional side of our persona when it comes to the negotiation. It just doesn't add up.

So the next time you are engaged in an important business negotiation. Take note of how the other side is reacting to your physical and emotional presence:

1. Are they quiet and just trying to make it thru the negotiation?
2. Are they anxious and overly talkative?
3. What kinds of questions are they asking?
4. How is their eye contact?
5. How is their body language? Arms folded? Stressed facial expressions?

What does your E.Q. tell you about your negotiation partner? Is there an opportunity staring at us if we can just tap into their needs or help them thru a tough bargaining situation? Remember, not everyone hopes to make money on a deal. Some bargaining partners are just as fulfilled by getting a negotiation over with so they can move on the things that they do best.

“Most executives, many scientists, and almost all business school graduates believe that if you analyze data, this will give you new ideas. Unfortunately, this belief is totally wrong. The mind can only see what it is prepared to see.”

-Edward de Bono

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