

Kennedys' Simulations For Negotiation Training

3rd Edition

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GOWER

How to Use the Collection

USING SIMULATIONS

Simulations are not ‘role-plays’ which require people to imagine that they are somebody else and ‘act’ accordingly. When playing a simulation in an interactive training session it is important to remember that the negotiators will learn most by being their normal selves, rather than trying to act an imaginary role which may be completely alien to their normal, let alone professional, selves.

What constitutes the participants’ normal selves will usually be known only to themselves and their colleagues, but by making a determined effort to lead them away from the imaginative play-acting of a role, about which they feel strongly, you can help them secure more profitable learning experiences.

It is because role-playing encourages acting out arbitrary roles that modern negotiation training has adopted in its place the practice of ‘case playing’.

Preventing ‘acting’

In the simulations that follow, participants should concentrate on the negotiating issues, rather than on playing imaginary roles. This is not always possible as anybody who has asked professional buyers to develop negotiating stances as if they were sellers, or sellers to behave as buyers, knows. We all have difficulty in transferring ourselves across what we regard as an unbridgeable gap with the people we deal with.

Sometimes shop stewards, for example, thrust by the accident of a training session into the role of managers, forget the main purpose of the training method – namely to improve their negotiation skills – and slide into stereotypical portrayals of how they believe managers think and act. The reverse, of course, happens when managers role-play their version of how shop stewards behave.

Overcoming these disabilities is not easy if you do not recognize the problem. For this reason the simulations presented here are devoid, as far as possible, of cosmetic additions to the roles assigned to individuals or teams. True, participants are tasked in their confidential briefs to represent the ‘side’ to which you have assigned them, but they should not let personal

prejudices intrude into their conduct. Certainly, everything should be done to eradicate the acting out of fantasies. Usually this can be accomplished in the pre-simulation briefing by drawing their attention to some simple ground rules, which are set out here for reproduction and distribution to the participants.

One simple sign that the negotiators have not understood is when they introduce props into their negotiation, such as cloth caps, desk organizers, brochures or, as we once witnessed in a golfing simulation, the wearing of golfing gloves!

Concentrate on the issues

In playing an exercise you should brief the negotiators on the necessity for them to concentrate on the issues in the negotiation and to refrain from acting out their version of the players' personalities. They should study the context and the negotiable issues and, from these, develop a negotiating stance as if they themselves were faced with the task of negotiating those issues in order to achieve the outcome they would seek.

Negotiate towards a settlement

The aim is to seek a solution through negotiation, not through intransigence or intimidation or through giving in. If agreement is not possible, the negotiators should be able to state in the review session – without undue controversy – what they continued to disagree about (and why) and what, if anything, they were in agreement about.

BREVITY OF THE SIMULATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

The simulations, in the main, are short. Long cases, with numerous pages of background detail, address needs other than those of negotiation skills deficiencies. The Harvard University case method, rightly, is universally acclaimed for its powerful impact on the honing of managers' analytical skills. This book does not consider analysis other than in the most general terms and within the confines of rigidly restricted briefs. This is deliberate.

Negotiation is an unscripted interactive skill, and trainees benefit most by *experiencing* the interactions. The sharper the brief, the greater is the concentration on the interaction of the people negotiating the issues. Without doubt, analysis plays an important part in preparing managers for negotiation, but analysis is no substitute for experiencing and learning from their interactions with other players.

Use several short simulations

A number of short simulations, played over one or two days, is the best foundation for improving individual skills performance. Longer cases, with the attendant concentration on analysis, are best handled in a more

advanced training environment, particularly one in which the case contents are customized to the managers' business environment.

Teach the basics first

Interestingly, when running strategic negotiation programmes for senior managers (who are conscious of the high opportunity cost of the time spent in training), we have found that they need to spend time on simulations of the briefer and simpler variety, before they can benefit from the in-depth analysis of complex negotiations.

GRADING THE SIMULATIONS

The simulations are graded according to their difficulty, and this also acts as an indicator of the length of time needed to prepare and play them effectively. We use:

- *basic*, which normally can be prepared in 30–40 minutes and negotiated in about 40 minutes;
- *intermediate*, which normally can be prepared in 60 minutes and negotiated in about 60 minutes;
- *advanced*, which requires more than 80 minutes for preparation and more than 60 minutes (perhaps over several sessions) to negotiate to an outcome.

The basic, intermediate and advanced descriptions are only a rough guide based on our observations of what participants can cope with; participants who you know well may be more than capable of meeting the challenges of the more complex simulations.

Decision-making levels

The issue is not one of matching the difficulty of the simulation to the job level or apparent intelligence of the trainees. The question that needs to be answered is not necessarily that of whether they can cope with a highly complex simulation, such as 'Inward Investment', but whether their experience extends to making decisions involving complex contract provisions or whether they would be better served by practising negotiation skills on a simulation such as 'The Car Sale', which is closer to their level of discretion. In our view, this is the best way of using the selection criteria for different grades of staff, not their inherent abilities.

Selecting the right simulation

The higher the level of discretion that the negotiators have in their job functions, the greater is the benefit of practice in analysing complex simulations that require high levels of discretion. It comes down to why you are training your negotiators. Is it to impart generic skills only? Then almost any simulation on any subject would do. Is it to enhance their abilities to conduct daily negotiations? Then select simulations that are closest to their experience and discretion level. These simulations may involve

some complex analysis; sorting out interpersonal problems between two departments can be as complex as choosing between two suppliers, but the emphasis will be on exploiting their decision to its fullest extent.

A great deal also depends on the spirit that is generated by the team tackling the simulation: some demonstrate a high attention span; others are easily distracted. It probably makes sense to begin any workshop with one of the basic simulations, whatever the experience and discretion levels of the negotiators, and to postpone a decision about moving on to more complex simulations until you have evaluated your negotiators' capabilities and commitment to learning.

The grading system does not imply that those who undertake advanced graded simulations have a greater level of ability. For this reason, the level of complexity does not appear on the briefs that are given to negotiators.

Pre-course briefing

You will find it helpful to have the participants complete a set of pre-workshop questions on their needs in terms of their self-assessed current negotiation performance (such as those set out in Handout 2.1). If, however, you are assigned participants who are said to be in need of negotiation skills training, without a briefing on which skills they need to improve, you should start by using a basic simulation to help you decide on how to order the rest of the simulations you use in their workshop.



PRE-WORKSHOP BRIEFING FORM

Name:

Job function:

Organization:

Address:

Tel / fax:

Date of workshop:

Email:

Name / Title of your manager:

Outline briefly those of your responsibilities which could involve some negotiation

1. What do you find most difficult when negotiating?

2. What do you consider to be your strengths as a negotiator?

3. What do you consider to be the areas in negotiating you need to improve?