

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The International Journal of Conflict Management*  
1999, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April), pp. 191-196

*Negotiating and Influencing Skills: The Art of Creating and Claiming Value* by Brad McRae. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications, 1998, 195 pp., \$21.00, paper [ISBN: 0-7619-1185-5].

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Imagine that you have the power to wave a magic wand and immediately transmit new interpersonal skills to a group of employees. What skills do you want people to receive? Brad McRae, a consultant and facilitator, responds that people would be well served if they could negotiate problematic situations and influence others to achieve objectives. In *Negotiating and Influencing Skills*, he takes an applied, systematic approach to assess and develop these skills through a variety of self-reflective exercises. Facilitators can use his book to cover basic negotiation skills, employees can enhance communication and problem-solving skills, and individuals will develop by reading, reflection, action planning, and practice. The 194-page book contains eight chapters, an annotated bibliography, a complete set of exercises and forms, and beneficial references.

In Chapter 1, "Introduction," McRae vaguely defines negotiating skills as those needed to handle problems in work and personal life, but he clearly departs from traditional labor-management topics normally associated with bargaining. For him the concepts of "creating value" and "claiming value" mean producing acceptable options and meeting needs. He takes a decidedly individualistic approach to learning through use of "power" questions and "salient" feedback by adopting questions to help learners reflect on their style, skill, and flexibility levels. Feedback may be comments from others or intense reflection following the book's innumerable exercises. Chapter 1 concludes with a survey to assess one's status on several negotiating dimensions such as amount of time spent negotiating on the job, effectiveness as a negotiator at work and in one's personal life, and advantages to being more effective. Although the survey focuses us on the topic, the norms included for comparison are too general to be useful for significant insight.

Chapter 2, "Creating and Claiming Value," analyzes how well one produces value—listens and tells others about needs, and affirms values—meets needs through preparation and assertiveness. McRae lists behavioral descriptions and exercises to diagnose ability level and principal negotiating and influencing styles. We learn about our style, its impact, and chance of attaining objectives.

Chapter 3, "Assessing Your Current Negotiating Style," continues to evaluate negotiating styles and formulates ways to "fix" ineffective behaviors. Eight skill

sets separate effective from average managers. The first three are "intellectual" competencies and comprise planning, diagnostic information sharing, and conceptualization. The next four concern "influence" and embody concern for influence, directive influence, socialized power, and symbolic influence. The final competency, "self-confidence," examines the degree someone creates the impression that he or she is in charge and is stimulated by crisis, rather than being distressed by it. In another exercise the respondent identifies three skills that need the most improvement, followed by feedback from those who have salient comments. To apply this approach successfully, the learner must rethink earlier material that might be too difficult to recall for meaningful learning.

Chapter 4, "Principles and Techniques for Creating and Claiming Values," discusses ten differences between effective and ineffective negotiations. The first is being prepared about facts and assumptions in which an exercise to improve fact-finding is interesting but imprecise. However, McRae's suggestion to keep a log is simple, effective, and one that is easily utilized. He devotes considerable time to the importance of preparing an opening statement to create the belief that the sides can agree in principle and settle the details later.

The second difference is "The Power of Asking Questions," or how to pose the right questions in the right way. The third difference is "Awareness of Choice Points," the critical times when informal discussions may lead to conflict resolution. McRae successfully illustrates this point through a story about conflict in personal relations between a father and son who discuss differences while being distracted by a television program.

The fourth difference is "Identifying Interests," where McRae claims that parties often overestimate their ability to know their interests. He describes a couple who wishes to balance a critical work project with their honeymoon plans. The objective is to transform outwardly dissimilar issues into mutual interests. Although his example realistically illustrates the strain over differences, it does not solely situate the conflict in an organizational context, diminishing relevancy for those who wish to concentrate strictly on workplace problems.

The fifth difference is "Muscle Level," the amount of interpersonal power used in negotiating. Typically people err by applying too much or too little power. There are four escalating muscle levels (polite requests, stronger words, statement of consequences if no change, and application of consequences). McRae suggests that when we are angry, we should write an action plan for each level. I found this to be unrealistic and too time consuming in the crush of most negotiating situations.

The sixth behavior, "Taking a Break from the Table," details the benefits of taking an intermission before agreeing to a proposal. The seventh difference, "Balance," employs fairness to reach agreements. McRae's experiences in buying used cars reveal how objective criteria and the need to have others (e.g., sales managers, spouses) approve the deal create balance in negotiating with and influencing others. When the salesperson says he or she must meet with a manager, the buyer states he or she must also confer with someone even if that someone is the buyer.

To reflect on how well we create balances, McRae includes a simple form that analyzes one's past use of balance of power.

The eighth behavior, "The Power of Apology," puts negotiations on track after a breakdown due to tension or anger by simply using the words, "I'm sorry." There is an exercise to review how an apology worked for and against you. McRae contends that an expression of regret is a diagnostic tool to produce more information. The ninth difference is "Acknowledging Progress," a simple verbal skill that sincerely registers progress in negotiations by summarizing movements from the parties' original positions.

The tenth behavior, "Debriefing the Negotiation," uses pre-negotiation prediction and logs to mark success and failures. Individuals could obtain feedback on style and skill level by asking the side that rejected an offer to criticize the failed proposal, thus illustrating their real interests. McRae includes worksheets to identify what went well and what areas need improvement.

Chapter 5, "Dealing with Difficult People and Difficult Situations," stresses the importance of developing self-control by cultivating eight essential negotiating skills. Since first impressions persist, McRae stresses the need to accurately diagnose the situation and poses several critical questions to ascertain why the other party behaves as it does. For example, is the other person under exceptional stress? The second skill is the "power of perspective management" in which we compare current negotiating problems to worse situations. Unfortunately, his self-examination exercise was not specific enough. The third skill is "Knowing Your Core Values," or the "hot buttons" that make one lose perspective. To uncover core values, one keeps logs of difficult people encountered and then identifies values that worked for and against you. These exercises expose a weakness in McRae's book since many of the stories and examples, though clear and helpful, focus on individual reflection and change, rather than on organizational change.

The fourth technique is "effective anger management" in which McRae employs a situational diagnosis, followed by action such as taking a break from negotiations to write strategies. In "doing the unexpected," we change our behavior first (e.g., apologize to boorish customers to see if this "repairs" the settlement process). The sixth technique is "role selection," where one chooses a role (e.g., teacher, parent, spouse) to increase power, followed by peer debriefing or self-reflection to receive feedback on the effectiveness of one's self-control. Employing "the power of resiliency," one accepts his or her mistakes, takes time to recover from errors, and talks to understanding peers.

Chapter 6, "Developing Higher-Order Skills," uses the 5-step PRICE methods to develop negotiating skills. These are: (1) Pinpoint—establish concrete, change goals, (2) Record—establish areas for measurement, (3) Intervene—try solutions for 3 weeks, (4) Coach—ask for feedback, and (5) Evaluate—after 3 weeks appraise the self-change project. McRae includes his usual supply of exercises, but one idea bears special attention. He urges us to apply two paradoxical elements (e.g., listening actively while being assertive) at the same time, thereby seeing the situation from the perspective of the other party. For example, will the

other person react more favorably if you appear as an out-of-town stranger with a personal problem or a customer who needs help? McRae again suggests using role reversal to test assumptions the other party may exhibit. At the end of the chapter he includes exercises like memo writing to enable learners to work on two skills concurrently.

In Chapter 7, "The Power of Commitment," McRae tells his story about negotiating safer conditions in department stores after his young daughter seriously injured her eye. His narrative examines a long-term contentious negotiation, the importance of building coalitions, increasing muscle level, and using objective criteria to reach a satisfactory settlement. This final chapter-length example summarizes and integrates the concepts the author discussed throughout his book. His account is effective because it stems from a real experience to which many readers will relate.

Chapter 8, "Conclusion," discusses resources for additional learning like attending courses, completing exercises and inventories, using mentors and peers, and participating in school mediation programs. Appendix A is an annotated bibliography, while Appendix B contains a complete listing of all exercises and forms introduced earlier. This structure provides a convenient review and summarizes the author's intention to facilitate learning through reflection on and diagnosis of experiences, coupled with action planning.

I recommend *Negotiating and Influencing Skills* to those who want to review these interpersonal skills and plan action steps to improve their individual effectiveness. Although McRae requires feedback to learn, much of the text relies on self-examination, especially if peers are unavailable. The book could complement a negotiation course by making participants aware of their styles, strengths, and weaknesses. These data would then form the basis for class interactions and discussions. McRae has written a direct, application-focused book geared for individual use that could be readily adapted for team development purposes.

*Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: Patterns, Problems, Possibilities* by Laura Zittrain Eisenberg and Neil Caplan. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998. 253 pp., xiii, \$16.95, paper [ISBN: 0-253-21159-X].

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In the context of the always-momentous and often Byzantine developments coming out of the Near East these days, those interested in world affairs and especially in conflict resolution now have a useful volume of summaries and sources about peacemaking ventures in the biblical lands. Specifically, *Negotiating Arab-*