

Critical factors of influence in the negotiation process; an empirical conceptualization

Factores críticos de influencia en el proceso de negociación; una conceptualización empírica

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Resumen

Esta investigación documental explica la conceptualización de cuatro factores críticos que pueden llegar a tener influencia en el proceso de negociación, y la forma en que estos factores podrían hacer que los negociadores se sientan de manera cercana o lejos a la posición de poder en un proceso de negociación, en el que el papel del negociador puede ser el factor de influencia al mismo tiempo, al buscar obtener un acuerdo favorable como objetivo final entre las partes involucradas; así como el analizar cómo estos enfoques pueden cambiar el rol de las posiciones en las negociaciones.

Palabras clave: negociación, factores, poder, influencia

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Abstract

This documentation research explains the conceptualization of four critical factors that may have influence in the negotiation process, and how these factors could make negotiators feel as close or far to the position of power in a negotiation process. In which the role of negotiator can influence at the time, in getting the agreement as a final objective between

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parts involved, also, start analyzing how these approaches can turn the table in positions in negotiations.

Key Words: negotiation, factors, power, influence

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The power of influence in negotiation

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” Walker (1989). Around the world through national or international negotiations there is currently the non-proved theory about the feeling far or close to the power could dictate the outcome of a negotiation since it is something that can not be recorded in percentages or numbers that assures if that is true or not. In the lack of proven data, this document encourages and focuses to explain the approaches of this theory having said that, power feeling has approaches like: a strong “BATNA” (stands for Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement), culture, psychological profile, and the role of power that make negotiators weak or strong into the process of negotiation. So, is this theory a question of perspectives? And does being the negotiator with less power in the negotiation, means you are destined to get a bad deal? According to the above the research problem is focusing on the approaches that might make a negotiator feel close or far to the power in a negotiation and define if it is a question of perspectives.

How is to be close / far to the power theory?

The underlying element of the various forms of relations between the negotiation partners is power. According to Weber (1964) the standard definition of power is the ability to move a party in an intended direction, this relays in the tradition of the realist view on

structural resources that determine the outcome in favor of the stronger. And as Morgan (1994) explains, actors with overwhelming resources decide the outcome in their favor.

So, as it has been cited above, there was and there is the believe that being close to the power gives you the greatest advantage in a negotiation, however in negotiations the structural pattern of the strong and weak does not always prevail, multiple factors can be at work to empower the weak against the strong as mentioned before it is a question of perspectives according to the given approaches in a negotiation situation, the main purpose of this contribution is to show how these approaches can turn positions in negotiations.

The four power approaches

In negotiations, the way to define which party is closest to power it depends on factors like:

- a strong “BATNA”,
- culture,
- psychological power,
- In addition, the role of power; sometimes there is more than one of these approaches when people are facing a negotiation. Power Imbalances during a negotiation represents clear dangers to the satisfaction of the needs of both parties and to the collaborative process.

However, who really has the power in the negotiation? Well, we truly believe that power in negotiation is a question of perspectives depending on the circumstances, which could be many of them.

a. Strong BATNA

This is Harvard's concept, according to Subramanian (2019) BATNA is the definition, or the ability to identify a negotiator's best alternative to a negotiated agreement. Information represent the main source of power in a negotiation, good negotiators are persuasive, they ask questions in order to gather information and then with that information analyze their positions and interests. BATNA gives negotiators power and leverage in relation to the other party, when BATNA is strong negotiators can negotiate for a more powerful position. The first step is to identify how powerful the other party is by finding their BATNA, nevertheless finding other's party BATNA is not that easy, for example: if one party has a weaken BATNA they would not say it cause they would be losing, in the other hand when BATNA is strong they might say it in order to show power, and to make clear that they have other alternatives, consequently easily walk away from the negotiation. But that does not mean that the weakest party is destined to have a bad deal or not deal at all because they can use tactics in order to strength their power, consequently, to improve their power during the negotiation process and get a better agreement.

b. Psychological power

People tend to have strong feelings when negotiating and the physiological factor could beneficiate one party in the negotiating table. This is related to being close or far to the power because the feeling of being powerful due to different factors gives negotiators a psychological security advantage over other parties, but negotiators need to understand, channel, and learn from emotions in order to adapt to the situation at hand and engage others successfully. So being a skilled negotiator requires attunement to one's own emotions and the ability to relate affirmatively to the emotions of others. specifically, emotionally intelligent people have the capacity to identify the emotions they and others are experiencing, understand how those emotions affect their thinking, use that knowledge to achieve better

outcomes, and productively manage emotions, tempering or intensifying them for whatever purpose. Leary et al. (2013)

c. Culture

The cultural aspect has a big influence in how negotiations are manage. According to Hofstede Insights (2019) Professor Geert Hofstede conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. He defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others”. For the purpose of this essay, the focus it’s on the power distance dimension, that according to Hofstede (1980) “This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of Power Distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, and which needs no further justification. In societies with low Power Distance, people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.

For example, based on Power Distance Index (PDI) Mexico has a score of 81 and Mexico is a hierarchical society, this means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, and which needs no further justification. Hierarchy in an organization seen as reflecting inherent inequalities, centralization is popular, subordinates expect to be what to do and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat.

d. Roles of power

The role of power can come from different factors to negotiators in a negotiation, factors of power such as: positions, necessities, money and expertise.

For example: the role of power can come from a strong role, title, or position, such as a high rank in an organization, it can also come from “who needs the other the most”, also from who is more powerful in terms of money, and the role of power as well come from the expertise from negotiators that empowers them in a negotiation.

Does being the weaker negotiator means to get a bad agreement?

Going into a negotiation with someone who holds more power than other or other parties, can be discouraging according to O’Hara (2014). But being the weaker negotiator in the negotiation does not mean you get to have a bad deal. As Neale (2014) says “There is often strength in weakness”. Because having power typically reduces a person’s ability to understand how others think, see, and feel, so being in the less powerful position gives you a better advantage to accurately assess what the other party wants and how you can best deliver it. When negotiators do their homework, they often find they underestimated your own power, and overestimated theirs, according to Jeff (2014).

Final remarks

As it has been written above there are some factors that can make feel negotiators close or far to the power in a negotiation. Nevertheless we can conclude that there could be more than one of these factors in a negotiation, that can turn positions in negotiations, and the structural pattern of the strong and weak does not always prevail, so the power in negotiations it is a question perspectives in every negotiation.

Literature review

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