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What Makes Outstanding Negotiators Outstanding?

By Stephen Liccini

Negotiating is persuading the other party to accept your way ... and for them to feel satisfied with the outcome. Negotiating is a critical business (and personal) skill ... which can be learned and improved.

Why are some people consistently very successful in their negotiations, while other people achieve only average results? Outstanding negotiators have certain characteristics that differ from those of other negotiators. Two key factors are common to many outstanding negotiators: i) their planning for the negotiations and ii) their behavior during negotiations.

Outstanding and average negotiators spend about the same amount of time in planning, but planning time is used differently in four ways:

- **Exploring Options** Outstanding negotiators consider twice the range of options and their potential outcomes.
- **Common Ground** All negotiators focus on conflict areas, but outstanding negotiators spend three times more attention on common issues.
- **Long vs. Short-Term** All negotiators spend planning time on short-term issues, but outstanding negotiators spend twice as much time considering longer term issues between the parties, including relationships.
- **Limits and Bundling** Average negotiators set single point limits (e.g., \$7/hour), while outstanding negotiators define ranges (e.g., \$5-10/hour) and they often bundle issues to reach a better overall settlement.

During negotiations, outstanding negotiators use words that may irritate the other party less frequently than other negotiators. They also listen and question the other party twice as frequently as average negotiators. Outstanding negotiators also test for understanding and summarize the dialogue much more frequently, both of which are also subtle techniques to control the discussions.

Work Highlights

Fired Equipment / Heat Exchangers

- *Software simulations were done for several fired heaters that are located at a refinery in the Far East. This was followed up by an onsite fired heater operations audit, and a two-day heater operations and safety training course that was attended by process and operations personnel. Recommendations were provided that, if implemented, will improve overall heater operations and safety.*

Process, Operations & Safety

- *Completed a design basis memorandum for a wastewater treatment upgrade for a Mediterranean refiner. This will significantly increase flexibility and processing capability, while providing for a phased implementation of new facilities. After initial review, the client expanded the DBM scope to include additional provisions.*
- *Consulted on proprietary catalyst intellectual property.*
- *Provided process and troubleshooting support plus planning ideas for a domestic refiner to address a reduction in excessive catalyst losses in their FCC unit.*

Surprisingly, outstanding negotiators offer about half the number of reasons to support their position ... they don't dilute their rationale with weaker justifications. Outstanding negotiators are more patient and persistent in their deliberations with the other party compared to their less successful counterparts.

Carmagen's Course 510, "Program On Negotiations," (<http://www.carmagen.com/services/training/technical/510.html>) discusses the above characteristics in detail. Other elements of this two-day training course, which includes case studies, are:

- Phases of negotiation and methods of persuasion
- Generic negotiation principles
- Guidelines for ethical conduct in negotiations
- Influence of culture on negotiations (international negotiations)
- Content of your negotiating plan ... and examples of typical negotiating plans
- Guidelines for negotiating single-source contracts
- Negotiating approaches in difficult negotiating situations
- Breaking deadlocks ... what if they won't negotiate?
- Self-assessment of negotiating skills and improvement plan

Applying effective and proven negotiating skills will yield better and longer-lasting results.

About the Author

Stephen Liccini has over 40 years international experience in project management, specializing in project contracting, negotiating, training, project planning, auditing, claims/dispute resolution, business controls, team building, and all procurement-related activities. If you would like more information, please contact Vince Carucci at vcarucci@carmagen.com.

Carmagen Engineering Capabilities at a Glance

CONSULTING SERVICES MATRIX

Plant Operations Support		Profit Improvement	Project Planning and Execution	Technical Training
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ FCC/TCC ▮ Coking/Resid Conversion ▮ Hydroprocessing ▮ Gas Treating/Sulfur Plants ▮ Separations/Fractionation ▮ H₂ Production/Mgmt. ▮ Catalytic Reforming ▮ Alkylation ▮ Environmental/Noise ▮ Petrochemical ▮ POX ▮ Lubes 	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Mechanical ▮ Heat Transfer ▮ Materials ▮ Machinery ▮ Instrumentation/Controls ▮ Civil ▮ Marine ▮ Offsites ▮ Electric Power ▮ Water Treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Margin Improvement ▮ Process/Equipment Audits ▮ Reliability & Maintenance ▮ Turnaround Planning ▮ Risk Based Inspection ▮ Safety/Risk Management ▮ Energy Management ▮ Licensing Reviews ▮ Forensic Reviews ▮ Oil Loss ▮ Blending Automation ▮ Product Quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Technology Selection ▮ Process Design ▮ Plot Layout ▮ Project Management ▮ Construction Safety ▮ Constructability/Lift Reviews ▮ Quality Assurance/Controls ▮ Contracting Strategies/Procurement ▮ Team Staffing ▮ Start-Up Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Pressure Vessels/Heat Exchangers ▮ Reliability & Maintenance Mgmt. ▮ Project Management ▮ Storage Tanks ▮ Machinery ▮ Refractory, Cathodic Protection, Paints and Coatings, and Corrosion ▮ Piping ▮ Process ▮ Safety and Loss Prevention





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