



Conscious Communication

The Soup of Negotiation

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When we explore the world of negotiation, we are presented with a myriad of recipes. Because each negotiation is different, there isn't any one recipe which covers all situations. Like a soup, each negotiation is different depending upon the ingredients. As every soup has common elements, such as a bowl, spoon, and broth, so too with negotiations. Every negotiation has context, strategies, and most important of skills, communication.

If we could use only one ingredient then communication would be essential. Therefore we will be focusing mainly on communication, the ability to convey and receive information in the heat of negotiations. To be able to listen in a way that draws us closer to the other parties in the negotiation and connects us so that we are more likely to get resolution.

Some of the more important ingredients:

The Relationship (1 cup):

The process will be more efficient if there are good relationships. This will depend on effective communication. Separate the problem from the people. Be hard on the problem, and soft on the relationship. Identify the present nature of the relationship: any problems or difficult issues? What is the desired relationship? What can be done to resolve the differences and reach the desired relationship?

Communication (3 cups):

The process will be more efficient if there is effective communication. Remember to listen first and be understood second. Use empathy skills to get to underlying issues, interests, and desires. Translate and give feedback to what the other is saying to their satisfaction, establishing trust. Be open to new possibilities.

Interests (1 cup):

Focus on interests as opposed to positions. Seek to satisfy everyone's interests. Prioritize your own interests.

Speculate, research, and understand the other's interests. Compare and list those that are in common, compatible, and conflicting to yours.

Alternatives (a pinch if any):

Negotiate for better than your BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement).

Options (1 cup)

Look for many options to the problem without deciding on any particular one. Look for possibilities. Look for mutual gains and low cost tradeoffs. Look for answers, not problems.

Precedence (1 Tbsp.)

Look for possible criteria to base an outcome. Has this situation occurred for others? How did they settle it? Are there standards outside that might influence our attitudes? How might an objective outsider decide?

Appraisal (Simmer till done)

What's working through this process and what's not? Do we need to change anything?

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