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| HUMAN RESOURCES |

HR's Diary

● Hindsight

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Successes in introducing 'group working' and 'group briefing' bred tremendous amount of confidence in Zahid. But it was like jumping into water just after having learnt to swim - splashing, floating and gliding through water. Zahid was pleased with his own actions but knew for sure he would have to learn more and practice hard to swim against the stream - moving counter to the prevailing trend.

He analysed his own actions vis-à-vis the demand of the situation in both the cases. He would have felt more prepared if he knew exactly what he wanted and he would settle for - in more concrete terms. Well, he prepared and made his homework alright but that consisted of only creating wish list, with a minimum fallback position. He realized it was a kind of negotiation he had just stepped into - quite unknowingly. He was not ready with stating desires/demands and making concessions which now he knows would have been a positional negotiation. In both the cases, quite unknowingly he actually negotiated with all the contending parties - the management and the union leaders. He analysed all his actions bit by bit and could find a sequence. He tried to shape those by grouping all of his actions and got amazed in seeing the following pattern of successful negotiation:

- Interests

He firstly didn't think that he would be needed to quarrel about own positions. He also saw emergence of counter demands from both union and management. Simultaneously, he also had to convince himself as to what he wanted. He often asked himself, "Am I sure?" Subconsciously at the initial stage and later deliberately he started patronizing the issues that were felt important to him. At times he had to clear his own confusion about 'where they were coming from?' He maintained all through and did not fail to consider what he would want if he was in their shoes (affected people). These points emerged as near-central to his negotiation with the CBA as well as management.

Now Zahid can feel 'interests' as the universal factor - whatever our demand or 'position' may be, we and others involved in the negotiation would like an outcome that meets our underlying interests - the things we need or care about. The more we have thought about our interests in advance, the more likely we meet them.

- Options

He then thought about the situation. Initially it appeared as though someone must win,

the other loses. But in a subtle way he found that it was an industrial situation where both management and employees have had things to gain. He observed that it was possible to make their interests (both the parties) compatible. Although utopian like thinking - he wished he could engage joint brainstorming of possibilities. However, he was careful enough not to reach any stalemate at any point. These points also emerged as near-central to his negotiation with the CBA as well as management.

Zahid observes now - a good outcome should be among the best of all possible ways to deal with our differing interests. Option meant possible agreements or pieces of a possible agreement. The more options we are able to put on the table, the more likely we are to have one that will reconcile our interests.

- Alternatives

Zahid always felt the compulsion to reach a clear cut understanding on the issues and settlement of those issues. He was not very sure at the outset but later felt that they (CBA) also had to. He was uncertain at the beginning as to what he would do if the negotiations ended without clear agreement /understanding. He tried to assess whether the CBA were more powerful on the issue. He also knew what they (CBA) would resort to if there were no understanding reached on the issues. These points also emerged as near-central to his negotiation.

He now knows for sure - a good outcome should seem better than any alternative away from the table, better than things we might do by ourselves or with others. Before we sign a deal or turn one down - we should have a good idea of what else we might do.



- Legitimacy

He always had the concerns that he might get ripped off - treated unfairly. Out of concern, he felt that it would help to give them (CBA) convincing arguments as to why his proposal was fair for them. Zahid also asked himself, "Will I have to explain to others why I agreed to whatever it is we agree on? Will they (CBA)?" For some time he also had to think about the critics - who were likely to go after him or the both (him and CBA). These points also posed equally important to his negotiation.

Zahid advocates now on negotiation - we do not want to be unfairly treated, nor do others. It will help to find external standards that we can use as a sword to persuade others that they are being treated fairly and as shield to protect us from being ripped off.

- Communication

Zahid knew what he wanted to listen for. He was ready to listen actively and empathetically to whatever they (CBA) said. He also checked back whether the messages he wanted to deliver was clear. Interestingly he also thought to the extent of how to speak in ways that would make them (CBA) want to listen. He also considered these points as important as others to his negotiation process.

Other things being equal, an outcome is better if it is reached efficiently. That requires good two-way communication as each side seeks to influence the other. We want to think in advance about what to listen for - and what to say.

- Relationship

Zahid was also careful as to whether the prevailing working relationship was likely to be difficult. While in the process, he tried to remember whether he was defensive or antagonistic with CBA. Could the negotiation damage the relationship that he grew with the CBA over last few months - was a point of concern for him from the very beginning. It was difficult for him to broach the ultimate objective to them (CBA) - the long run rationalization. He knew he would need all of them (CBA) to continue to work with him in the future. Obviously, these factors came as equally significant in the negotiation.

He believes now - a good outcome will leave our working relationship strengthened rather than damaged. Preparation can help us think about the human interaction - about the people at the table. We should have some idea about how to build a relationship that facilitates, rather than hinders, agreement.

- Commitment

He tried to fathom out the kind of commitment he could realistically expect at the end of the negotiation. He reckoned the actual time - he was approaching on to make the decision. The question arose in his mind, "Is there more to do, after we both say yes?" Of course, Zahid found out and made himself clear on who had the authority to make the commitments.

The quality of the outcome is also measured by the quality of the promises that are made. Those commitments are likely to be better if we have thought in advance about the specific promises that we realistically can expect, make, during or at the conclusion of negotiation.

Zahid bit by bit put all his findings together and found that just about everything he would like to know in advance of a negotiation can be discovered by thinking about these elements stated in these seven points. They provided him a kind of checklist, an organized way of diagnosing an upcoming negotiation, and a way or preparing for it. By thinking about each of these elements - the building block of negotiation - we can get our "arms around the problem." That will enable us to go into a negotiation well equipped to produce a good outcome, or, if we can't, know when to walk away to something better.

(This is sequence 10: to be continued)

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