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## The negotiation style: a comparative study between the stated and in-practice negotiation style

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### Abstract

The awareness of personal negotiation style is the most basic step allowing the negotiator to learn, develop and conduct successful negotiation processes. The purpose of this study is to identify whether there is a correlation between the negotiation style as stated by the negotiator (the “SNS”) and the negotiation style in practice (the “INS”). The results of the study were unexpected: no correlation was found between what the participants stated and their in-practice negotiation style. An extreme expression of this discrepancy was found in the collaborating style that was chosen by half of the subjects as their stated negotiation style, while only 2.6 percent of the total sample was in-practice conducting negotiations in this style. Moreover, a stark contrast was found while the results in the INS indicate that competitive and accommodating styles are considered the preferred styles by the Israeli negotiator. This result is particularly interesting in light of the contradiction between the two styles.

Other interesting results have been observed on participants educated in negotiating or having experience in negotiations. The results contradicted my hypothesis that participants with experience probably recognize their own style. In light of the results of this study, I suggest that negotiators should use the model of this study in order to create for themselves a secure first step in the long journey of the negotiation process.

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### 1. Strategy in Conducting Business Negotiations

As an integral part of their skills, managers in various organizations are required to have expertise, leadership skills and the ability to conduct efficient negotiations in a wide range of business contexts, including business transactions, discussions regarding employment, corporate team building, contracts, and dealing with disputes. Over the past decades, many studies have tried to improve the understanding of the basic psychological processes which operate when conducting negotiations, such as the impact of emotion, motivation, communication, power, and culture. These studies have not only expanded the understanding of the importance of psychology in negotiations but

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have also provided important insight in coaching executives in conducting negotiations or resolving conflicts within the organization. (Graham, 2008)

Each party to the negotiation has a purpose, interests, opinions and attitudes that affect the way such party behaves. The manners in which parties act during the negotiation, affects the nature of the negotiation and its results, since the parties, by means of their thoughts, their speech, their acts and their activities maneuver and shape the negotiation. The way we conduct negotiations is referred to as strategy. Many factors can affect the parties' strategy in the framework of negotiations. On the one hand there are "external", objective factors such as personal goals, timetables, class (Devenyi, 2002), time, place, political and business environment, national cultural characteristics (Sheer, 2003), the context of the negotiations (Elgström, 2000), the area of the negotiation (Da Conceição-Heldt, 2006), time pressure (Stuhlmacher 1998), the stage of the negotiation. (Scharpf, 1997) In the other hand, there are "internal", subjective factors related to the partners themselves which may have an impact on the strategy employed by the parties. Such as: the gender of the negotiators (M. Teresa, 2007), their culture (Salacuse, 1998), their religious culture (Tu, 2011), their personality, education, training and intelligence (commercial, technical and/or emotional). (Graham, 2008)

## **2. The Importance of Recognizing One's Personal Style**

A good negotiation process starts with a good look in the mirror. What is your usual style of behavior? What is your natural place in the negotiation and how you can use your instincts as a solid foundation for becoming a better negotiator. If you do not know what your instincts are and how your intuition responds to different conditions, you will have a problem planning and conducting efficient negotiations. (Shell, 2006)

Understanding one's instincts and intuitions when facing different conditions, constitutes a great advantage when planning an efficient strategy for coping and being successful in negotiations. Insufficient familiarity with one's instincts and intuitions in different situations may cause problems in planning an effective strategy. (Shell, 1999, 2000, 2006)

Each negotiation begins with the negotiator himself. The first element of effective negotiation is knowing one's own negotiation style, the manner in which a party communicates in a situation of interpersonal conflict. The negotiator has to honestly assess his strengths and weaknesses. Once you know the tendency, the personal motivation, of yourself as well as of the other party, it is possible to start dealing with strategy. (Thompson, 2001) Some people can adapt themselves to different types of situations, while others are less able to do so. Some can be strong in a situation that requires strong competitive instincts but weak when it comes to relationships. Many experts believe that one teaching method or one style of effective negotiation has to be taught for all cases. Shell (2006) believes that this is unrealistic and ineffective. The role is to examine with whom we are negotiating, and act wisely with the help of one's existing skills instead of becoming someone else.

## **3. The "Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument" ("TKI")**

One of the models that were designed to assist individuals in becoming more aware of their characteristic approach or style in managing conflict were The TKI model, based on the work of Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann. (Thomas, 1976), (Thomas and Kilmann, 1988, 1992, 2002)

Conflict is at the center of negotiations. Conflict in terms of negotiation does not necessarily have to be an actual dispute or disagreement. It suffices that there is insufficient information about the other's wishes or about the other's perception of the events in order to create a conflict. Such phenomenon is reflected at the beginning of each negotiation. Conflict occurs when there is a discrepancy between the parties' activities (Nicholson, 1995). Also, in a situation where there is apparent or practical disagreement between two or more parties regarding values, expectations, processes or results, (Ting-Toomey, 2001) as well in a situation in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. (Thomas, 1976) Heiba (1984) explains that negotiations are characterized by two elements: a shared interest and a matter which is in conflict. The idea of negotiating is to use the common interests of the parties to negotiate on the matters at issue. Roloff (1992) argues that since negotiations are conducted when two or more parties have to reach a joint decision but have different opinions (i.e., have a conflict at the level of ideas), negotiation is a special form of communication focused on the lack of agreement and on reaching a joint agreement. In my opinion, there are cases where even only one of the elements (behavior or interests) will create a conflict, for example in situations where the parties' acts as being in conflict but in fact have compatible interests. Conversely, the

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