

NEGOTIATING UP: Getting Past “YES, BOSS”

By

Dr.Boyd Fuller

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Speakers : Dr. Boyd Fuller

About The Seminar

Many bosses don't want to negotiate with those who work under them. They are busy and must allocate their time efficiently. They have reputations to protect. They may be just passing on instructions from their bosses. They may be unsure of the motivations of those underneath them. They may worry about looking "weak".

On the other hand, bosses get better results when they get good help. Those underneath can have knowledge that their bosses don't. They may have a better idea of the implementation challenges and capacity. Their morale may be impacted by how they are involved. They may have to juggle conflicting instructions from multiple bosses.

In the talk, Dr. Boyd Fuller introduced key concepts from the best thinking about negotiation that can help identify the various sources of power and how to best prepare for negotiating up.

Summary

Dr. Fuller explained to the audience that when working in an organisation, one cannot avoid the concept of power. He stated that there are two types of power - negative and positive. He said the negative aspect of power involves 'pushing down' to obtain what one wants while the positive aspect of power is about making things happen.

He however is a proponent of going towards one's goal without 'pushing' someone. He believes that to be successful in negotiating, one needs to understand the interests of the party we are negotiating with and be able to create added value (benefits) for both parties.

Dr. Fuller then talked about creating conditions where we can negotiate with our respective bosses. He said the three components are needed to build a conducive environment for negotiations are: firstly, a relationship plan; secondly, a substance plan; and finally, a communication plan.

He explained that we face our bosses daily and that in itself constitutes a relationship. In order to create a positive relationship, one must start building it from the beginning and not just before approaching one's boss for a negotiation.

Key lessons Imparted

Building a relationship with our superiors takes time and there is no short-cut to the process. One must have a strategy when negotiating up with the boss, and part of that strategy is establishing a productive working relationship

People usually go into a negotiation with a 'want'. There are a lot of reasons why a person 'want' something. When raising concerns, one should understand their own underlying motivations. Understanding the 'why' behind the needs and wants will help us negotiate for a better outcome.

The word 'no' in negotiations is an alternative. Therefore, one must know his or her alternatives before going into a negotiation. Dr Fuller recommends using "Yes, and ...", instead of "Yes, but ...".

Do not assume that message intended is the message received by the other party. This is where the communication plan, i.e. choosing the best and most effective way to get the message across comes into the picture.

Before approaching one's boss, it must be ascertained if the boss is ready AND able to listen and act on views and concerns. Both are requisite. It is not enough that he or she is 'ready' to listen but is unable to act.

Questions Raised

Many a time, especially in the public service, bosses are merely disseminating instructions from a higher authority. How do you manage the one above your boss?

A: It takes time, connections and building a reputation of credibility. Bosses too want is to manage his/ her boss. Work with them to manage the bigger boss. Do not bypass the boss to get to his/her boss as this would undermine

their authority and erode any trust that has been established. Instead, help your boss to devise a plan together to manage the higher authority.

Should we allow negotiations between the staff and boss be based on a cosy relationship where they understand each other's likes and interests and manipulates these tactically to get one to go along with the other's ideas?

A: It can be tactical but yet genuine. For instance when an individual wishes to please his/ her spouse, they would play to their likes and interests, but the motivation is genuine. On the other hand, one can also be tactical but not genuine or self-serving in a negotiation. However, more often than not, when one is not genuine and you try to 'push' things through, the insecurity will eventually show. But when one is genuine, the interests and needs will be apparent and the believability continues. Many a time people get away with the tactical approach, but in staff-boss relationships, negotiations are not one off. When dealing with the same people day after day, insincerity and self-interest will show.

How should one deal with unrealistic or overly challenging demands from a boss, especially when one has the security of their careers in mind?

A: If new in a job an employee may want to 'do whatever it takes' to prove their capability. Once that has been established, the employee would be in a better position to raise the issue of unrealistic tasks and propose a few alternate solutions that may be able to address the issue in a mutually beneficial way.

About the Speaker

Boyd Fuller (Ph.D., MIT) is the Founder and Chief Trainer of Fuller Negotiation, which provides negotiation and mediation training, executive coaching, facilitation, and consulting to clients around the world. He taught negotiation, mediation, and public policy to students from all over the world at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore. Boyd has provided training for hundreds of private and public sector executives, professionals, and other leaders from over 50 countries from every continent in the world. He has also personally coached over 60 mid-career professionals to improve their results, position, and relationships.

In addition, Boyd mediated conflicts, managed organizations, and designed and implemented water projects in South East Asia. He researched mediations and negotiations for environmental disputes, peace building, and post-conflict development throughout Asia and in North America. One published paper won the Best Paper award for 2011 from the Academy of Management, which compares papers from the top 16 journals on public policy and management.

At MIT, Boyd studied under Professor Lawrence Susskind, the founder of public dispute resolution. He also has two degrees in water-related engineering at McGill University, Canada. He sees all of these as part of his trajectory towards solving problems through careful analysis and reflective innovation.

Contact

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