

Ongoing Discussion "Thought Piece"

***FROM NEGOTIATION TO A SYSTEM OF
PROFITABLE COLLABORATION***

Prepared by
John Carlisle

jcashby@btinternet.com

December 2013

Ongoing Discussion Host: Bill Bellows
william.bellows@rocket.com

for

Aerojet Rocketdyne's
InThinking Network

FROM NEGOTIATION TO A SYSTEM OF PROFITABLE COLLABORATION

The following piece describes the journey that I undertook when I began to study negotiation as a phenomenon in the 1970's as part of trying to understand the West's conflict-ridden economic system. The paper lays out a background to the ontology of negotiation as a relationship activity and then proceeds, using examples and data, to its role in understanding genesis of a collaborative system in organisations. Epistemology, which Deming calls Theory of Knowledge, is a constant companion on my journey.

INTRODUCTION: the importance of understanding Negotiation

So, when do we negotiate? Well, simply when we have to. In business we have to for a number of reasons, which include:

- We need the other party in order to achieve our goal and we do not have enough power to coerce them.
- We need to achieve our legitimate goal as a junior partner in a business relationship.
- We need to build an enduring relationship that will deliver a stable business or state of affairs which will profit both/all parties (for whatever reason) in the long term.
- Politically, when we want to finish a conflict or to avoid having one.

But, why negotiate? Because of the intentionality contained in the usage, i.e. the very use of the term or its equivalent, *parley*, indicates that, not only do you see the need to talk (The root of the word *parley* is *parler*, which is the French verb "to speak"; specifically the conjugation *parlez* "you speak"); but that you are prepared to be flexible or to trade.

A little (political) history of Negotiation

The activity of negotiating was once the preserve of the powerful only. The word is thought have originated from Rome when the Greek slaves were getting their freedom, which left the Roman nobility less time to enjoy and educate themselves, so they engaged in a friendly dispute with their friends (and perhaps the ex-slaves) to find more time for leisure (*otium*). The situation they found themselves in was *neg* (no) *otium* (leisure), so the discussion about this predicament became *negotium*, and eventually, negotiation. This found its way into the lexicon of the monarchs in the Middle Ages who used heralds to issue ultimata, and when these did not work, they used agents from the nobility to conduct negotiations. It was a very high flown and ritually elaborate activity, the key principle of which was the impunity granted the agents. (A marvellous modern example was in Season One of HBO's *The Wire* by Stringer Bell, Avon Barksdale, Proposition Joe and Omar when arranging a meeting between Stringer and Omar where the latter demanded assurances of their own safety.)

This impunity permitted the agents to "parlay", which appears to have a different root from *parley*, i.e. from Latin '*par*', meaning equal. In the USA this has morphed into *parliamentaire* which is defined by the U.S. Department of Defense as "an agent employed by a commander of belligerent forces in the field to go in person within the enemy lines for the purpose of communicating or negotiating openly and directly with the enemy commander." A great example of this is this historic letter, below, from the commander of the Japanese force invading Singapore to the British Commander.

*Lieut General Tomoyuki Yamashita.
High Com of The Nipon Army*

Feb 10 1942

To:- The High Com of The British Army in Malaya

Your Excellency,

I, the High Com of The Nipon Army based on the spirit of Japanese chivalry have the honour of presenting this note to your Excellency advising you to surrender the whole force in Malaya.

My sincere respect is due to your Army which true to the traditional spirit of Great Britain is bravely defending Singapore, which now stands isolated and unaided.

Many fierce and gallant fights have been fought by your gallant men and officers, to the honour of British Warriorship.

But the development of the General War situation has already sealed the fate of Singapore, and continuation of futile resistance would not only serve to inflict direct harms and injuries to thousands of non-combatants living in the city, throwing them into further miseries and horrors of war, but also would not certainly add anything to the honour of your Army.

I expect that your Excellency accepting my advice will give up this meaningless and desperate resistance and promptly order the entire front to cease hostilities and will dispatch at the same time your Parlimentaire according to the procedure shown at the end of this note. If on the contrary your Excellency should reject my advice and the present resistance be continued I shall be obliged though reluctantly from humanitarian considerations to order my army to make annihilating attacks upon Singapore.

In closing this note of advice I pay again my sincere respects to your Excellency.

Signed

Tomoyuki Yamashita

(1) The Parlimentaire should proceed to Bukit Timah Road.

(2) The Parlimentaire should bear a large white flag and the Union Jack

Five days later General Percival sent out an agent to the Ford Motor factory at Bukit Timah road where the terms of surrender were agreed. At 2200 hours that same day all hostilities ceased and an Imperial Army of over 80,000 soldiers had to lay down their arms to 36,000 Japanese soldiers. It was the worst ever British defeat, and the most humiliating since the battle of Yorktown in 1781. (A nod here to my American ex-colonials who would no doubt also contrast General Percival with a certain Captain John Paul Jones!)

Now these examples from *The Wire* and the Singapore debacle are not just to illustrate the etymology of negotiation, they also indicate a certain attitude that is brought into the actual interaction, and just how significant that is to the outcome, i.e. trust and safety so discussions with serious consequences can take place. The context of the parlay is as important as the skill of the participants – something that is often forgotten, and needs to be reintroduced into the equation. This begins with how the negotiator plans – which will be discussed in the *Systems Thinking in Negotiation* chapter.

The Emergence of Negotiation into the mainstream

In the meantime, what has happened to negotiation is that, as the West proceeded to democracy and people felt less "subservient" to leaders, it translated into an activity available to any individual, becoming identified most closely with commerce and industry, particularly in the last third of the 20th century. For example, at the same time as Bob Parker and I were applying the findings from Neil Rackham's negotiation research into the supply chains of Xerox and Motorola in particular, Chester L Karrass was drawing attention to the power of effective negotiating in purchasing by giving seminars based on his book, *The Negotiating Game* (1970). In this decade a whole slew of books appeared, some helpful some unhelpful, culminating in the setting up of the Harvard Negotiation Programme in 1979. Negotiation had arrived!

The importance of Bob and my activities was that we were changing the perception of negotiation from something that was seen to belong in the downstream, the sales arena, and M&As into (in my opinion) the more strategically significant area of purchasing and supply, where often up to 80% of a production company's budget could be spent.

Initially I focused on building the skills of the, mainly, purchasing professionals; but, then Bob, who had been head of Ford Tractor purchasing, and I began to look at the larger picture, the system of negotiation. So, this next section addresses these two activities in that order.

1. Developing Negotiation Skills
2. Systems Thinking in Negotiation

1. Developing Negotiation Skills (There is no knowledge without theory – Deming)

At Huthwaite Research, Neil Rackham, the founder, insisted on following the skills development model that he developed, which was not the simple learning loop of learn, practise, get feedback, practise improvements, incorporate into learned habits At Huthwaite the design was *Learn the Right Thing, Practise the Right Thing, Get Feedback* from someone who knows what the Right Thing is and can use valid data, then practise for improvement.

The key was the Right Thing, i.e. what was the proven model of success? So, using behaviour categories that had been proved reliable differentiators between good and average performance actual negotiations were studied by sitting in on the both the planning and the negotiation itself. A behavioural model of effective negotiation emerged and only then were we prepared to train people to it.

In many ways this was the typical of the Shewhart Plan/Do/Study/Act cycle. The plan was as above and then came the study.

So, how did we study them?

In psychology, which is my field in the study of organisations, the positivist movement had been influential in the development of behaviouralism. There were three key features of early behaviouralism that are valid today, namely its philosophy of social science, commitment to observable behaviour as the dependent variable in social analysis, and the commitment to 'scientific' methods. Unfortunately it is often confused with "behaviourism", epitomised by Skinner and Watson's *reductio ad absurdum* approach to knowing that has given behaviourism a bad name -and quite rightly so. I approach my work as a

behaviouralist, as an organisational psychologist who studies behaviour as well as the social systems which provide the context, and I studied negotiation initially by using behaviour categories that allowed me to observe negotiations and measure categories of behaviour identified by Rackham in his earlier research as significant to the outcome of the negotiation.

Study: Studying a negotiation.

The first step is to identify the criteria of a successful negotiation. Ultimately there was only one criterion: A successful negotiation was one where the agreements were implemented by both parties. Now, an argument against this parsimonious definition may be that it may not be a win/win, e.g. Singapore; but that only reveals the skill or lack of skill of the negotiators.

So, what is a skilled negotiator? This, Deming would call an Operational Definition. In the initial negotiation research carried out in the late 1970's by Neil Rackham the successful people selected for study were:

1. Someone who *both* sides agree is good. Having your own side say that you are good may just mean that you set your targets too low. When the other side says you're good it is with professional respect, usually accompanied by qualifications such as "I had better get my homework right before we meet" or "it's always tough; but it always works."
2. Someone who negotiates for a living as a key part of their work. What happened here was that in the heady days of 25% growth for some organisations it was all too easy for a high flyer to negotiate what on the face of it was a brilliant deal; but was in fact a win/lose, knowing that they would have moved up and away from it by the time the manure hit the fan.

So one-shot deals were ignored and instead only those commercial negotiators who were consistently involved in deals of \$100,000 and over, or those labour negotiators who were full-time (both union and management) were included in the research as possible skilled performers.

3. Finally, and this really is the key, a successful negotiator was identified as someone who did not only get good agreements; but also had the highest hit rate of successful implementations. Just as you judge the best sales people on their conversion ratio of calls to sales ' so you judge the negotiators on their conversion of agreements into implementations. And the very best were those whose outcomes were seen as win/win.

Here are some examples of these interactive behaviours taken from my paper: *Logic is not Persuasive* (1997).

Behaviours to Use

Seeking Information.

Table 1 Seeking Information

Seeking Information as a Percentage of all Negotiators' Behaviours
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Skilled Negotiators	21.3%
Average Negotiators	9.6%

One of the most consistently successful traits in anyone skilled at interaction is the ability to ask questions. Research shows this particular behaviour prevalent in chairpeople, appraisers, sales people and informal persuaders. It was no surprise therefore to find it in negotiators; but the extent of it, in particular in comparison with average negotiators (see below: 21.3% compared with 9.6%) was a surprise. In fact, many experienced negotiators also found it extraordinary and some even denied the veracity of the information saying that it seemed to indicate that the skilled negotiators had not done their homework. Otherwise, why the lack of information?

However, when people are shown their own profiles and think through what they really had been doing, as opposed to what they thought they were doing they conceded that asking questions did not just have a utilitarian value; but also a strategic value. The latter included:

- (i) Checking assumptions made during planning
- (ii) Helping to control the direction of the discussion
- (iii) Gaining breathing space when under pressure
- (iv) Sometimes questions are a more acceptable alternative to a direct disagreement.

and,

most important,

- (v) Finding and exploring Common Ground.

Testing Understanding and Summarising

These are crucial to the success of the interactions. Over 17% of the skilled negotiator's behaviour comprises these two categories, while the average negotiator's level is half that (see below)

Table 2 Testing Understanding and Summarising

Percentage of all Behaviours by Negotiators		
Testing	Summarising	TU &

	Understanding		Summarising
Skilled Negotiators	9.7	7.5	17.2
Average Negotiators	4.1	4.2	8.3

Although these behaviours occur throughout the negotiation, they tend to cluster at the end, the agreement phase. And this highlights an important difference between skilled and average negotiators. Average negotiators, in their anxiety to obtain an agreement, would often quite deliberately fail to test understanding or to summarise. They would prefer to leave ambiguous points to be cleared later, fearing that making things explicit might cause the other party to disagree. In short, their predominant objective was to obtain an agreement and they would not probe too deeply into any area of potential misunderstanding which might prejudice immediate agreement, even if it was likely to give rise to difficulties at the implementation stage. The skilled negotiator, on the other hand, tended to have a greater concern with the successful implementation (as would be predicted from the success criteria earlier in the article). Consequently they would test their understanding and summarise frequently in order to check out any ambiguities at the negotiating stage rather than leave them as potential hazards for implementation. As our subsequent research has shown that successful implementations are the primary conditions for trust-building, these would appear to be crucial behaviours. (Carlisle & Parker 1989).

Referring to Peter Stonefield's paper, *The Leverage Point at the Heart of Systems Transformation* (April 2013, p 60), the chapter *Loosening Identification in Others* I would offer that these behaviours are perhaps the behavioural mechanism that provide a platform for the desire "for people to think and interact together in a way that generates light in the stream and innovation participants need to be loosely identified and utilize the appropriate self-management, thinking and communications skills to fully understand each other." . . . "The first step is to remain loosely identified with your own viewpoint and maintain a presence born of calmness and childlike curiosity. Second is to make inquiry to explore and understand their mental models, beliefs, opinions and judgments in a way that makes them visible to them without evoking a defensive response. Maintaining a calm curious listening presence is even more important when they get defensive. A few of my favorite questions are:

You know, my assumption is that you mean...., but I'm not clear. I'm asking about your reasoning or underlying assumptions here because I'm interested in(Testing Understanding)

Please help me understand from your perspective?(Seeking Information)

Hmm, What do mean when you say? What does that mean to you? Could you give me an example of what you mean by that?(Summarising then Testing Understanding)

When someone gets uptight or you sense defensiveness, slow things down and let them talk it out. *Is there something about (my question, statement, action etc.) that is disturbing or problematic for you?Say some more.....(Seeking Information)*

What I hear you saying is that you are deeply concerned about meunderstanding your POV. (Testing Understanding)

Do I understand you correctly?(Testing Understanding)"

For learning purposes, we treat the behaviour as a skill, as we would hitting a tennis ball. Before the learners can play top spin or passing shots they need to experience what a good stroke feels like from backswing to follow-through on both the backhand and forehand. Then the secondary elements can come into play. As an example from the workplace, one of my best experiences of this was when I told a particularly unpersuasive CEO to attempt to try ask two questions – any questions - at the beginning of the next planning meeting. (I sat on the sidelines just in his vision so he could see my finger crooked into a “?”.) He was amazed at how much good conversation his simple questions raised.

BEHAVIOURS IMPORTANT TO AVOID

Defend/Attack Spirals. Because negotiation frequently involves potential conflict, negotiators may become heated and use emotional or value-loaded behaviours. When such behaviour is used to attack the other party or to make an emotional defence, it is called "defending/attacking". Once initiated, this behaviour tends to form a spiral of increasing intensity: one negotiator will attack; the other will defend, usually in a manner which the first negotiator perceives as an attack. As a result the first negotiator attacks more vigorously and the spiral commences.

Table 3 Defend/Attack Spirals

	Percentage of Negotiators' Comments Classified as Defending/Attacking
Skilled Negotiators	1.9
Average Negotiators	6.3

Average negotiators use more than three times as much defending/attacking behaviour than skilled negotiators (see below: 6.3% to 1.9). There is a real appreciation among seasoned negotiators that *ad hominem* remarks not only do not address the issues, but, more seriously, they are remembered well after the conclusion of the agreement and therefore damage the long term relationship that needs to carry the implementation.

2. SYSTEMS THINKING IN NEGOTIATION

It was only during the training of thousands of purchasing people and civil servants that I began to identify the system and its impact on the way they could operate in negotiations which led to the more strategic interventions in major construction projects, beginning with the oil and gas industry. The question I kept asking myself in what were basically daily meditations was “what kind of system/organisation stands behind a successful negotiator?” Here is what emerged – an Iceberg image: Figure 1.



Figure 1.

There were actually three negotiation sets in every major negotiation. The External Negotiation, i.e. between two parties, which was the one that I had been studying, and the two internal sets, i.e. Planning for the Negotiation and Selling of the Agreement. So, I had been looking at just the tip of a negotiation iceberg. In fact, the outcome of a series of Internal Negotiations actually had a more significant impact on the results than just the skills of the negotiators, and, unless this was understood, the system could not be optimised. Unfortunately, the hidden part of the iceberg is not as "sexy" as the visible part, as any study of the negotiation literature of that era shows. The external negotiation was presented by many of the so-called negotiation experts as a drama with all its attendant bargaining tactics such, stand-offs, flinching, walk-aways, and snow-jobs etc. was conveying a wrong picture. As anyone who has negotiated knows, in the real world a negotiation is a demanding, drawn-out, carefully considered and sometimes gut-wrenching process. The only drama occurs when things are really going wrong or when someone is attempting a win/lose outcome.

Also, too much attention is given to the Bargaining part of a negotiation (the sexiest bit), which is only the tip of the tip of an iceberg. Let me illustrate (Figure 2):

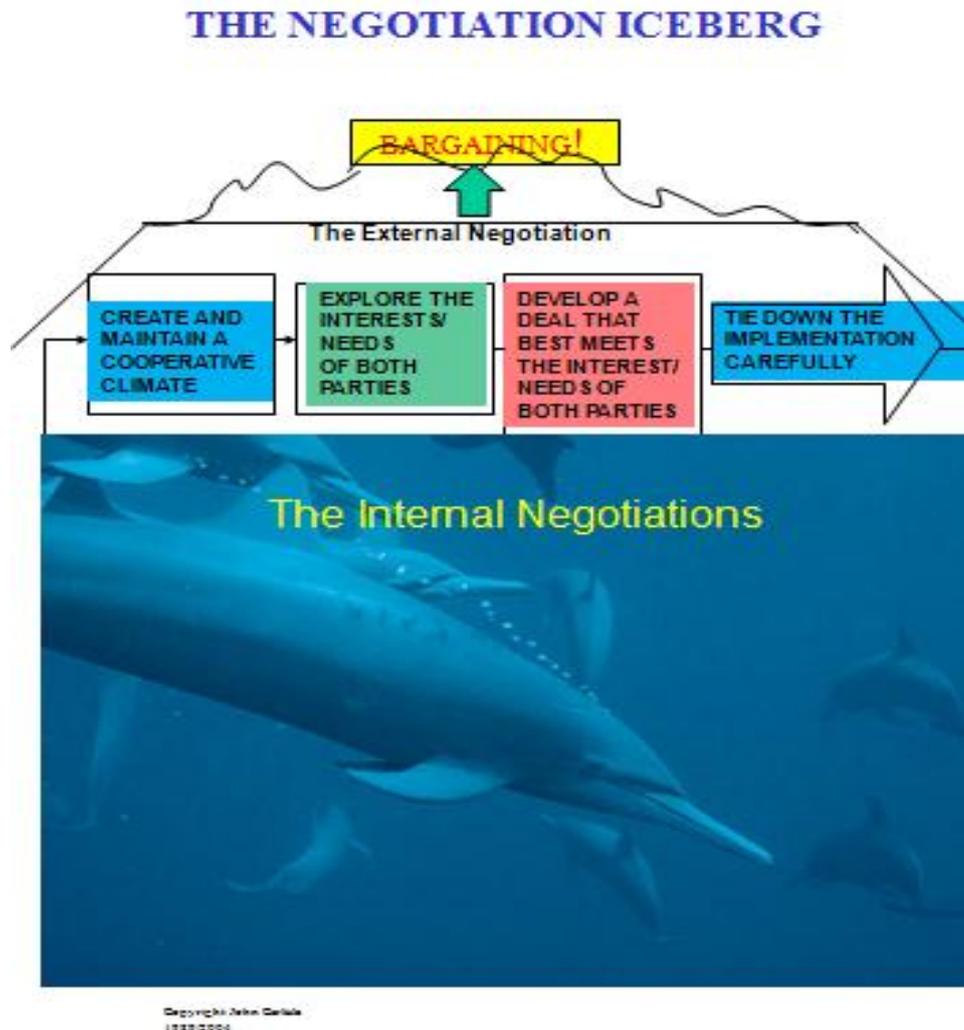


Figure 2.

There are actually four phases as parts of a flow, with Bargaining sitting mainly near the middle, but, as an interaction it can move anywhere in the flow. The negotiator needs to understand this flow, as each phase demands a different approach, and the planning team and bosses absolutely need to understand it. (As I write this we have a negotiation going on with Iran. The British Foreign Minister said an hour ago that it is going very well, but do not expect results today as we are only in the exploratory stages. He understands, and because he does he is empowering his team. This is part of what is called *The Risky Shift*, where a negotiator feels sufficiently empowered by his group to take some necessary risks for the sake of the right outcome. This includes walking away!)

So, what does submerged part of the iceberg reveal when it is studied as part of a negotiating system? Like this (Figure 3):

THE NEGOTIATION ICEBERG

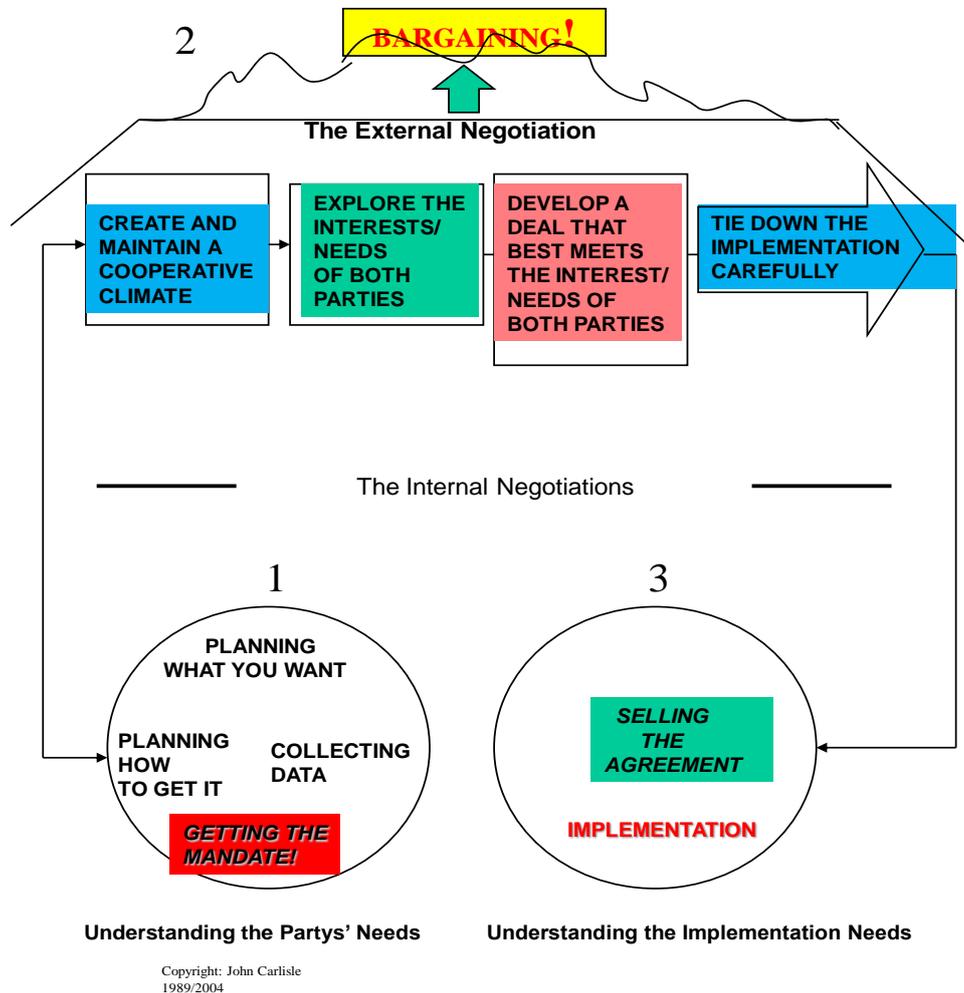


Figure 3.

The Planning phase is a misnomer. Planning is only part of the Getting the Mandate Phase. The really good negotiator knows that the most important part of planning is to be allowed to play the hand as he knows best to get a win/win. This hidden part of the negotiation is the main determinant of success or failure. You can have as many skilled people as possible in your team but you will not succeed if you do not have enough data or the right data, and if your leaders are inflexible. This latter situation happens in many Labour and political and religious negotiations.

Consequently, the most important negotiation is often the internal one of getting the right mandate to get the right result. The most empowered negotiators are those who do this. One of the best examples was the very successful Sydney Olympics in 2000. Three years into the project it was in danger of falling apart, caused mainly by the fact that there were too many politicians involved. The organising committee was haunted by the debacle of the Atlanta Olympics, so the President, Michael Knight, called a meeting with the Premier of New South Wales and his Cabinet and told them that unless all the powers of committee

over the Games were given to him, they would be another Atlanta. The Premier said: "You can have mine". The dominoes fell and the Games went on to be the most successful ever, and the model for the marvellous London Olympics. (Webb, *The Collaborative Games*, 2001)

Sometimes the most empowering act of the Planning team is to agree a bottom line and a walk away position. But you need to agree, not only that you can walk away, but also what you will do as a result. This is what Fisher and Ury (1981) called a BATNA - Best alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. In the early example of the defeat of Singapore, not only was General Percival woefully lacking in battlefield intelligence, i.e. he did not know that the Japanese army was half his size, or where exactly they were. He also went into the meeting not really knowing what he wanted and how he needed to portray himself, and, importantly, what his options were. But, most important, he certainly did not work out his BATNA, so he could be prepared to walk away from the table – which he should have done. To take an industrial example, Chrysler should have walked away from the disastrous deal with Daimler. Early on it was clear that this was not going to be a win/win.

Bob and I captured our learning in a book: *Beyond Negotiation* (1989), which Dr Deming endorsed, and, with Persona, produced a manual, *Cooperation and Beyond*, to bring the system of negotiation into the business realm. The oil and gas industry and construction became our biggest clients, not least because, when they got the negotiation relationship wrong in their projects the cracks showed early on, and some of the consequences were dire. It was from our experience with training them that we produced what I consider our most useful working model, which derives from phase 3 of the Iceberg, i.e. join phases 1 and 3 by involving the implementers in the planning (Figure 4).

A good example of this is at a De Beers mine in South Africa when they were planning to move from open cast to underground, as the sides had become too steep for the trucks. They introduced the plans at the blueprint stage to the contractors who were in the framework. Two very important questions were asked. One was by the shaftsinkers: "why do you need a separate ventilation shaft (they didn't). That saved millions of rand. The second was by the mining contractor who told them that the shaft headgear they had chosen was not the best for the kind of work that was to be done. This cut the cost of operating significantly for the life of the mine.

THE NEGOTIATION ICEBERG

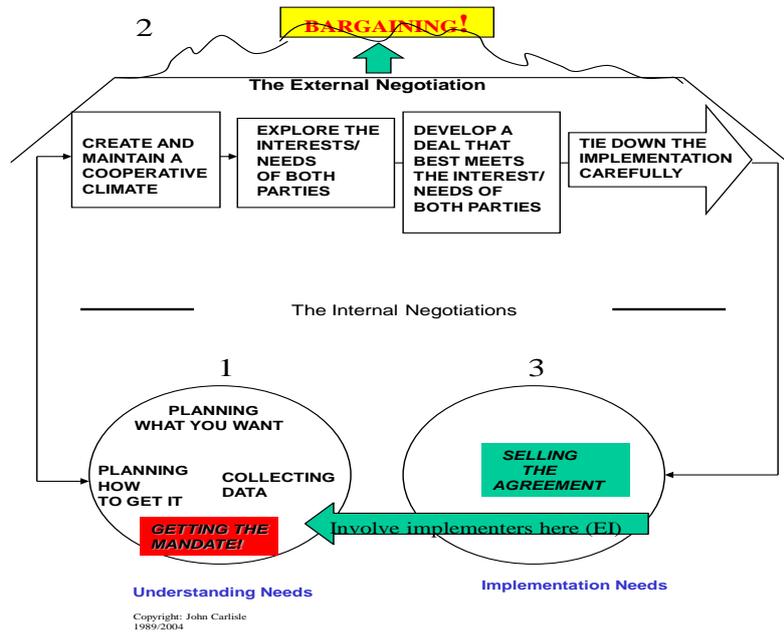


Figure 4.

We called this early involvement or EI, and its development into a working model called Risk Management through Early Involvement led to a major breakthrough in major project delivery strategy through integrated planning (Figure 5).

Risk management through Early Involvement

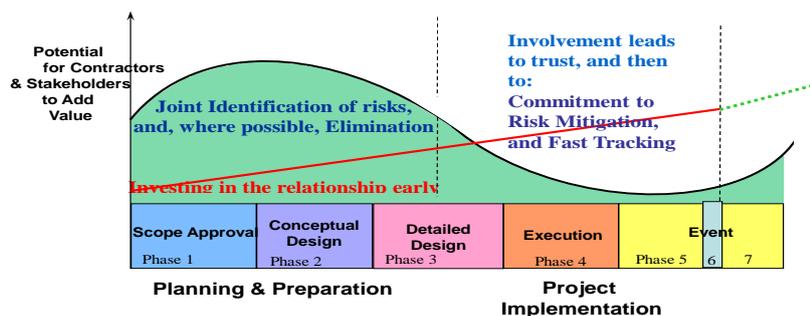


Figure 5.

This diagram was sketched out at two in the morning (when some of my best research is done) on a Shell platform in the North Sea by a contractor from Baker Hughes Inteq after a lengthy discussion with me as to why the programme was not running to schedule. We named it *The Opportunity Curve*. I am most grateful to him for his insights. It reinforces an adage of mine that the client seldom knows as much as the contractor about the technology of projects. In a North Sea survey of innovation it was revealed that 80% came from the

contractor/upstream community. Lack of cooperation (normally by the client) ensures that that intellectual value is not deployed on the project.

But, none of extensive benefits from the early involvement would be possible if the initial contract conditions are not negotiated in a spirit of cooperation; a spirit that leads to the intellectual capital of all parties being deployed to achieve the aim of the system. It is the affective lynchpin of success in project systems, building trust and commitment, and taking out swathes of cost, the best example of which is the TKE metro project in Hong Kong, which was completed in 2002, four months early and \$1.5 billion under budget.

This concept now underpins, *inter alia*, the UK Government Public Sector Construction Strategy, which is saving 20% on its original cost base.

Summary - Profound Knowledge of Negotiation

Finally, I will try to capture the negotiation journey from a simple study of interactions to a system of successful delivery of major projects in SoPK.

Appreciation for a System: as illustrated, with the breakthrough being to get all the parties to agree that the project client is not the commissioner of the work, but the project site.

Understanding Variation: the measures taken during the life of the project are not to find variations from the contract, but to understand trends so that continual improvement happens and corrective actions can be taken in time. This can only happen if there is a climate of cooperation, initiated by a win/win contract, which brings us to the next point in SoPK

Psychology: By early involvement the parties gain a real commitment to the agreed outcome as they have invested their intellectual capital, experience and good will in the planning.

Theory of Knowledge: the PDSA cycle has been illustrated not only as skills development, but also improvement from one project to the next, e.g. Sydney Olympics to the London Olympics. But also there is the epistemological dimension: by illustrating the systemic nature of negotiation and the collaborative principles underpinning it, we are changing the mental model of the phenomenon and the culture within the supply chains in both manufacturing and construction.

"Thank you, Dr Deming."

John Carlisle November 2013

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Biography

John Carlisle's work has always been in the realm of Applied Research. His early work was researching the Zambian mining industry in the late 1960's to identify black school leavers who would replace the less educated white supervisors and managers. Primary tools were education, aptitude and intelligence tests that were normalised for the Zambian conditions.

It was here in 1969 that he discovered the link between nutrition and intellectual performance, including innovative thinking – and the negative consequences of not working on changing the organisational culture to one that allowed black Zambians to succeed.

Later, working with behaviour analysis in the Huthwaite Research Group, they identified the importance of skilled behaviour in team innovation and negotiation, as opposed to relying only on innovative aptitudes. In the 1980's the work with supply chains, and later on, with major projects, revealed cooperative organisational cultures that suppressed or encouraged innovative thinking and application

John has delivered over twenty papers on this topic across the world, discussing over 200 (mainly construction) projects and applications of Dr. Deming's System of Profound Knowledge. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Sheffield Hallam University for his work internationally on delivering profitable cooperative projects.

Major Projects involving innovative behaviour change:

Motorola, Xerox and Chrysler supply chains in the 1980's. In 1991 Chrysler's collaborative Platform Teams delivered \$3 billion worth of savings

Railtrack (UK): major infrastructure projects in signaling and track upgrades, and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Value: £2.5 billion.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd: Strategy and implementation of the partnerships with the major contractors on the spent fuel storage facilities to the value of £20 billion over the next twenty years.

Shell: introduced the partnering alignment strategy to Shell, Mobil and AMEC, where his approach was carried out in the North Sea, Holland and Brunei.

Hong Kong Mass Transit Rail Corp (the metro): oversaw the £3.4 billion TKE partnership which delivered over £1 billion savings and was completed four months early in August 2002.

Academia

In 2001/2002 John Carlisle was Professor and Chair of the Johnson and Johnson Leadership Development Institute at Rhodes University, South Africa. One of his initiatives, as professor, was to introduce cooperative project management to the commercial sector of the Eastern Cape in order to bring down corruption levels through transparency.

Visiting Professor at the Sheffield Business School

Previous Chairman of the Alliance of Deming Consultants in the UK

Editorial Board member of the International Journal of Innovation Science.

Contact

John can be reached by e-mail at jcashby@btinternet.com for additional information about this Ongoing Discussion.