Selecting a Negotiator

Michael Morales posted May 22, 2018 3:55 PM

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Team negotiations tend to result in positive outcomes. Our text describes assessments used in the selection process. These assessments include flexibility, perspective-taking ability, cultural intelligence, and positivity. Flexibility helps negotiators cope with the unexpected. Prospective-taking ability is the ability to actively consider the the other person's point of view. Cultural intelligence is the ability to behave in situations characterized by cultural diversity. Positivity is a quality that is reinforced by studies which suggest that the mood of the negotiators at the time of negotiations take place affect the outcome of negotiations. (Maude, 2014) Each of these assessments can be used for either individual people or for teams as a whole. According to Elizabeth Minnex from the Harvard Business School, teams stimulate more discussion and more information sharing than individuals do, particularly concerning issues, interests, and priorities. (Mannix, 2005) The introduction for Module 4 introduced an example of a single negotiator in an international arena with limited knowledge of entities pertaining to the ultimate goal. Had a team with SMEs been present, the negotiations could have been more productive. When I first started working with my present employer, there were four of us on a line that didn't know each other very well. As time went on, we got a feel for each other and ended up making a great team. Each of us brought something different to the table and were successful at meeting our goals.

Assessment methods that I would recommend to determine whether a candidate possesses qualities include cross-cultural communication ability, emotional intelligence, and integrity tests. Cross-cultural communication ability is a set of abilities and knowledge that enables a person to engage in meaningful communication with business people from other cultures. (Maude, 2014) This quality includes a person who has the ability to speak the language of the other country and understands the cultural norms of that culture. This gives the negotiation team a better understanding of the nuances of that culture. Emotional intelligence measures an individual’s ability to identify, control and assess emotions. (Sadday, 2010) This assessment allows for a measurement of how well an individual will perform under stressful conditions such as a negotiation. Integrity tests are designed to investigate a candidate’s truthfulness and trustworthiness, and can be a measure of overall job performance. (Sadday, 2010) Using this assessment aides in building trust between team members and exudes a vibe of confidence to the other party.

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               Effective negotiation team managers possess certain qualities which make them successful during the negotiations.  These qualities include flexibility, perspective-taking ability, cultural intelligence and positivity.

               Flexibility is the ability to deal with unexpected during negotiations (Maude, 2014).  Managers must be able to adapt to different negotiating teams and unexpected changes during negotiations.  Inflexible managers will not adapt to the situation and could harm the process by being seen as unwilling to negotiate or adjust their teams to reach compromises (Maude, 2014).

               Perspective-taking ability is the ability to understand the other team's point of view or position (Consensus Mediation, 2014).  This is important for a manager because it allows him to understand all of the possible options the other side might find acceptable (Consensus Mediation, 2014).  Once the manager knows the options, he can consider how to frame his proposal to meet these options.  Without this understanding, managers might not be able to generate options that benefit his company but are also acceptable to the other side.

               Cultural intelligence is similar to emotional intelligence but goes a step further to look at how culture influences behaviors and mannerisms (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).  Cultural intelligence looks at the manager's ability to interpret unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures in the same manner someone from the other company’s country would interpret them (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).  As we have pointed out numerous times in the last few weeks, cultural understanding and sensitivity is very important when conducting international business negotiations.  If a manager cannot understand the opposing team’s cultural norms and act accordingly, the manager will not be effective during negotiations.  The manager will not understand the proper language or emotion to use during certain situations or who to act or adapt during negotiations (Maude, 2014).

               Positivity is an important quality because it can influence the outcome of the negotiations.  People with positive mindsets or outlooks will be more ambitious, have higher expectations and be more cooperative during negotiations (Maude, 2014).  The positivity generally leads to better outcomes.

               Several methods exist to measure whether a manager possesses those qualities.  The Cross-cultural Adaptability Inventory can be used to measure a manager's flexibility, perceptual acuity and emotional resilience (Maude, 2014).  Other tests that examine intelligence, competence, psychological profiles and other variables can also be used to determine if a manager is suitable (Maude, 2014).  Other intangible means such as "gut feelings" or first impressions can also be used (Maude, 2014).  No matter the method used, managers must be able to effectively conduct business with companies from different countries and cultures.  One way to test perspective-taking is to have the manager snap his fingers of his dominant hand five times then draw an E on his forehead (Consensus Mediation, 2014).  If he draws the E so the tester can read it, the manager is thinking in the tester’s point of view.  If he draws it so the E would be correct for him, the manager is thinking about himself (Consensus Mediation, 2014).  Psychology Today also provides a “Negotiation Skills Test” to test your ability to negotiation (n.d.).

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