Chapter 5: Persuasion Techniques

Once the delegation has determined the delegation’s goals (both long-term and short-term), a critical part of the delegation’s preparation is to determine how to persuade the other party in order to achieve these goals. “Persuasion” refers to the manner by which the delegation approaches a specific point in the overall negotiation process. Determining the delegation’s persuasion technique is a critical part of preparing for a negotiation. There are many techniques that can be used to persuade the other side. There is no single technique that is appropriate in all situations. Therefore, it may be appropriate to utilize more than one technique at any given time. If one technique is not working, it is best to be flexible and adopt another technique.

In assessing and developing these persuasion techniques, it is important to recognize what persuasion techniques the other parties (particularly the mediator) are intentionally or unintentionally utilizing as well.

Communicating Persuasively

The use of language is the principal means of persuasion. Persuasion, however, includes not only the spoken word, but also body language, facial expression, tone, and even silence. All are tools to be used in the negotiation process. Due to the volatility that can result from the spoken word, when possible, the delegation’s statements should be well thought out, clear, and precise.

• Even the manner in which a person sits can communicate the way the person is feeling.
  – Leaning forward in the seat as someone else is speaking can convey intense interest, or an aggressive attitude.
  – Leaning back in the seat as someone else is speaking can convey a calm and receptive listener, or that the listener is not paying attention to the speaker.

• Raising or lowering your voice, as well has emphasizing or deemphasizing different words, can give be interpreted in entirely different ways.
  – “You can sit over here.” Depending on how the tone and emphasis, this sentence can be taken as a command, and invitation, or a direction.
No matter how your delegation chooses to communicate, the key is to do so purposefully in all respects. Each of these techniques may be effective in one case, and not effective in another. It is important to learn to recognize when the use of one of these techniques would assist your delegation in the communication of a particular message.

In addition, the delegation should ensure that its members observe the other delegations’ actions (body language, facial expressions, particularly) for insight into their unspoken support or opposition to what your delegation is communicating.

**Self-Expression: Aligning Intent And Impact**

Self-expression, the combination of language and demeanor, is another persuasion technique that can be effective in persuading the other party. This can be relevant, whether the delegation intends to express outrage, disappointment, frustration, or cooperation, or if the delegation intends to diffuse a hostile environment. The way the delegation expresses itself during the negotiations should be carefully designed to ensure that it has the intended effect. Examples of strategic use of self-expression include:

- The delegation may choose to use calm or reasoned language and demeanor to diffuse a hostile situation.

- Using expressive body language and more aggressive tones can express outrage; but simply saying the delegation is “outraged” is not an effective tool.

- Eye contact and facial expressions can convey significant messages.

**Storytelling And Painting Pictures**

Another technique for persuasion is the use of storytelling. This includes not only the spoken word, but also the use of visuals. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to place the other parties in your delegation’s circumstances.

- Use vivid language to convey your delegation’s message. Present your delegation’s message in the context of a story that explains your delegation’s perceived problem and demonstrates how your delegation’s proposed action will solve the problem.
  
  - For example, tell the story from the standpoint of an individual, family or community that has been or will be affected by the conflict at issue. Factual details are critical in the delegation’s descriptions in order to achieve maximum effect.
• Consider presenting the delegation’s problem visually by using words to paint a dramatic picture that incorporates the other parties’ own experiences, this may help them begin to empathize with your delegation’s position.
  – For example, if unification is your delegation’s goal, describe a peaceful and unified country.

• These techniques can be particularly effective when using the media to communicate your message.

Organizing For Persuasion

In addition to the substance of an argument, the organization of an argument can have a significant persuasive effect. Therefore, your delegation will benefit from giving extensive consideration to organizing your delegation’s points effectively. Typically, it is most effective to present your delegation’s stronger argument first, and reserve arguments to use throughout the negotiations. For each argument, the following general rules apply:

• Build your delegation’s argument up from a strong factual foundation.

• Draw the overall conclusion of your delegation’s argument from the facts.

• It may be important to begin with broad statements to define the scope of your delegation’s arguments before proceeding with the specific items of your delegation’s argument. Present specific subparts of the overall conclusions based on examples.

• It is often the case that the first and last arguments made are those that are best remembered by the other parties.

Using Questions To Gain An Advantage

There are several ways to use questions to gain an advantage in a negotiation. Ask open-ended questions to find out more about the other parties’ positions.

• Open-ended questions can engage the other parties and make them feel more comfortable.
  – Asking questions that begin with “Who, What, When, Where, How, Why, Explain and Describe” rather than immediately challenging the other party’s position. This can allow the delegation to discover what is motivating the other party during the negotiation.
— More probing questions can gain the delegation more important information such as, “What are the delegation’s main concerns” and/or “Why are those concerns important to you.”

• Consider asking a series of non-confrontational questions to establish certain facts and to better define where the disagreement really is. This is effective in establishing an environment of cooperation.

• The delegation can use questions to challenge assumptions, such as “has the delegation thought about . . . .”

Deciding On The Emotion To Convey: Sharing Concerns v. Making Accusations

There is always more than one way to respond to the other parties’ position or actions. Emotion, just like the spoken word, body language, facial expression and tone should be used thoughtfully and in accordance with your delegation’s overall strategic goal. The decision to use emotion and how should be one that is carefully considered and should be reached by relying on principled analysis. The delegation should never show an emotion unintentionally.

• Your delegation can act aggressively by accusing the other delegation of wrongful conduct or your delegation can tell the other delegation why their actions concern your delegation. Either may be the appropriate way to begin the negotiation, depending on the factual circumstances.

— Be aware that accusing the other delegation of wrongful conduct may put the other delegation on the defensive and make it more difficult to persuade the other delegation.

• Your delegation can react emotionally as the victim of the other delegation’s actions, and share why they concern your delegation.

• By responding unemotionally in particularly difficult times of a negotiation your delegation can convey that only the “success” of the negotiation matters to your delegation.
**Courtesy**

The decision to either extend or not extend courtesy may be an effective persuasion technique.

- Generally, maintaining the proper courtesies will be the most effective way to open communications.

- The extension of appropriate courtesies not only encourages cooperative negotiations, but also typically results in a more sustainable long-term relationship between the parties.

- Extending courtesies does not mean that your delegation has to accede to the other parties’ demands.

- Regardless of whether your delegation intends to be courteous, it is necessary to understand the cultural expectations of the other parties to ensure that your delegation’s actions will bring about their intended results.

**Using Themes In Communications**

It is often helpful in a negotiation to present your delegation’s position with a common theme throughout. It is more difficult for the other parties to disagree with a theme that has universal appeal. For example, one theme might be: “We need to do this for the next generation of citizens.”

- A theme or slogan will make it easy for the other parties to remember your delegation’s priorities and convey them to their constituencies.

- A theme may demonstrate a strong commitment and passion for your delegation’s cause and to an outcome that serves the delegation’s interests.

- A theme may show that your delegation has thoroughly considered and prepared for the negotiation session.

**Establishing “Common Ground”**

Establishing agreements on certain points, even minor points, can serve as an effective starting point in persuading the other parties. Even small areas of common ground build trust between and among disagreeable parties.
• Be careful not to narrow the arguments to such a degree that it will be hard to have the necessary exchanges and compromises that are imperative for a successful negotiation.

• That said, recognize that identifying agreed points can help your delegation be more efficient at the negotiating table by focusing on points of true and significant contention.

Changing A Conflict Into A Mutual Problem-Solving Process

Nearly every conflict can be characterized as a common problem that needs to be solved by two or more parties who differ on the solution. Reframing a conflict in these terms can set a positive tone for negotiation - a tool that may allow agreement to be discovered where it might not otherwise be found.

• Sometimes during the course of negotiations, merely “reframing” the disagreement as a mutual problem can make the other parties feel that they are part of a team that shares the common goal of solving the problem.

• If presented as a conflict, other parties may be more likely to become defensive.
  – For example, phrase the issue as, “We both have a problem that needs to be resolved,” rather than “The delegation caused the problem.” This may be more persuasive and result in shaping the conflict in a manner that is less adversarial.

Recognize And Reward Compromises By The Other Party

Recognizing or choosing not to recognize a compromise by the other party depends on the circumstances and can be an effective technique in persuading the other party.

• In any negotiation it is critical to recognize when the other party has made a concession or compromise.

• When a party makes a compromise, it rightly may expect something in return. Whether the delegation chooses to reward the compromise is dependent, in part, on the value the delegation places upon the concession.

• The delegation may choose to recognize the compromise openly or recognize it only within the delegation’s team.

• It is typically a mistake to over-emphasize the other side’s concession as it may cause them to demand additional or more significant demands.