



Emotions Provide Clues for Negotiating Successfully

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Book Review: *Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate*

By Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro, Viking Penguin, 2005

The conference room is spare—austere even. You suspect that the bank will not be serving lunch from the “A” menu, if food is served at all. Seated around the table are the usual suspects: the workout lender and her attorney, your client and his attorney, and the company CFO. You glance over the agenda you have prepared. You’re ready to launch into your presentation, but you hesitate.

Emotions in the room are almost palpable. You know your client had a sleepless night, which will only exacerbate his tendency to overreact and fly off the handle. His attorney looks like a cool customer. You’ve seen him exhibit little emotion in the past, but he sounded a bit rattled when you all met in the building’s lobby before the meeting. So you’re not sure what to expect today.

The CFO is another story. Afraid for his job and fearful that he’s getting the blame for the owner’s decisions, he’s defensive and angry. He threatened to quit only minutes before the meeting, even though he clearly needs an income. You’re concerned he might just lose it during the meeting.

As for the lender, she has made it clear that she’s had quite enough of your client and his broken promises. She seems prepared to kill him—and then really go to work on him. Her attorney seems bent on posturing to show her that he’s even tougher than she is.

You’re just plain frustrated. You know that there are some worthwhile alternatives to thermonuclear war in this engagement. You’ve done the analysis. Sure there’s risk, but your turnaround plan has far better potential outcomes than a quick sale or liquidation. Yet you feel there’s a good chance that your ideas won’t get a fair hearing, that the high emotional pitch will derail the negotiations.

How can you deal with all of the various emotions in the room and optimize the outcome for your client?

For those who could use a conceptual framework for dealing with the emotions—including their own—that are an inevitable part of the negotiating process, there is *Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate* by Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro. It is a sequel to the landmark *Getting to YES: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, the 1981 bestseller that helped to create the modern study of negotiation with the concept of “interest-based negotiation.” (Co-authored by Fisher, the book was revised in 1991.) Shapiro, a clinical psychologist, joined with Fisher to take *Getting to YES* to the next logical level: how to deal with emotions in negotiations.

Shapiro, a featured speaker at TMA’s 2006 Annual Convention, said his interest in conflict resolution originated in the mid-1980s, when he traveled in Eastern Europe just as its Communist era was about to end. He obtained funding from the George Soros Foundation to help those countries develop conflict management and negotiation techniques, skills that hadn’t developed under communism.

At that time there was growing literature on negotiating skills aimed at “winning,” but Shapiro recognized that little academic work had been done on the psychology of negotiations. Yet it also was apparent to Shapiro that negotiators often were gripped by strong emotions that could stalemate the process, leading to failure. In particular, when negotiations affected people who had been through traumatic events, emotions could run high and even crowd out rational thinking.

After earning a doctorate degree at

the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Shapiro entered an internship in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. In the late 1990s, he approached Fisher, a Harvard Law School professor, about doing a popularly accessible book that would focus on the role of emotions in negotiating as a follow-up to *Getting to YES*. The result was *Beyond Emotions*, which was written over six years and was published to critical acclaim in 2005.

Shapiro holds faculty appointments in both the Harvard Law and Medical Schools and is associate director of the Harvard Negotiation Project, which was founded by Fisher in 1979. The group has been involved in helping with many of the better-known negotiations of the last 40 years, including the Camp David Accords, resolution of the Iran hostage crisis, and efforts to end apartheid in South Africa.

During negotiations at Camp David between Israel and Egypt in 1978, Fisher recommended a “one-text” approach, which was used to help bridge the polarized positions of the two countries. *Beyond Emotions* describes the breakthrough that occurred when President Carter was able to address the emotions and core concerns of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as the talks threatened to break down.

During negotiations to end the 444-day Iran hostage crisis, Fisher helped to structure the final settlement that freed 52 hostages in January 1980 and likely contributed to a breakthrough that allowed Algerian mediators to carry discussions forward to resolution. As apartheid was ending in South Africa, the Harvard Negotiation Project created a process in which more than 1,200 people participated directly in the development of a new constitution in



the early 1990s, an undertaking that was completed in just 10 months. Leaders of the South African government and the African National Congress subsequently attributed their success to the importance of their respective emotions during the negotiations and the forging of personal relationships based on those emotions.

Beyond Emotions teaches readers how to recognize and use their emotions and those of others rather than to ignore them or fight against them. Instead of being inherently bad for negotiations, emotions actually may be helpful. Assessed properly, emotions can reveal what is behind the positions taken by negotiators. Emotions also can help negotiators establish rapport and may furnish clues about solutions that might lead to successful negotiations.

The authors describe five “core concerns” that often lie behind emotions that affect negotiators: appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, status, and role. They recommend addressing the underlying core concern, not the emotion itself. They stress paying attention to each core concern in oneself and others, even

if it is not immediately apparent that a particular core concern is involved. Using specific examples, the authors provide considerable detail to explain how each core concern can be recognized as being important in a negotiation.

The authors follow up their carefully constructed conceptual framework with valuable tips on how to handle strong emotions that emerge during negotiations — those that often result in negotiators taking unnecessarily extreme positions or walking out on talks altogether. They also preach what many athletic coaches teach their players: games are won in practice, so preparation is the order of the day.

The authors reprise the seven elements of negotiation introduced in *Getting to YES*: relationship, communication, interests, options, criteria of fairness, best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), and commitments. They recommend that negotiations be reviewed at each break point or phase and that explicit assessments of the emotions that are evident and how core concerns are being addressed be formulated.

As you turn back to your client’s bank meeting—but now with the benefit of having read *Beyond Emotions*—you feel more ready to deal not only with the complex issues of the turnaround plan and restructuring, but also with the strong emotions radiating from all sides of the table. This reviewer predicts that *Beyond Emotions* will become required reading in business schools around the country, especially for corporate renewal professionals, who know only too well that emotions, if not appropriately addressed, can scuttle even the best turnaround plan.



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