

THE ART OF NEGOTIATION

How to Improvise Agreement in a Chaotic World

MICHAEL WHEELER

MICHAEL WHEELER has been a professor at the Harvard Business School since 1993. Over the past twenty years, he has taught negotiation to thousands of MBA students, business executives, managers and public officials. He is also the editor of *Negotiation Journal* which is published by the Harvard Law School. Dr. Wheeler co-chairs the Consensus Building Institute, a nonprofit organization. He was a visiting professor and senior lecturer at MIT for 12 years before joining the faculty of Harvard Business School. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School, Boston University and Amherst College.

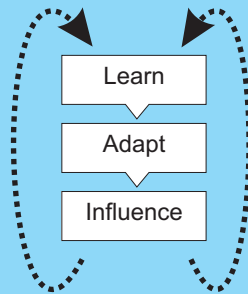
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ISBN 978-1-77544-785-6

MAIN IDEA

Negotiations rarely (if ever) go as planned. Most of the time, issues crop up which take things in unexpected directions and you can't really understand the other person's interests until you get down to the nitty-gritty details.

With that in mind, the cornerstone of good negotiation strategy is to find ways to manage uncertainty. You do that by going into a negotiation prepared to do three things:



The faster you can go through the learn, adapt and influence cycle, the better you will be as a negotiator. Doing this will be far more useful than trying to apply the usual cookie-cutter strategies like "think win-win" or "know your walk-away position and do precisely that if you can't get what you want."

"Negotiation is a two-way street. We can't script the process. Whoever sits across the table from us may be just as smart, determined, and fallible as we are. All negotiations, large and small, are chaotic, since they take place in fluid and often unpredictable environments. Adaptability is imperative in negotiation from start to finish."

– Michael Wheeler

"Another way of saying it is keep an open mind and be ready to change and adapt to the situation. Don't ask reality to conform to your blueprint, but transform your blueprint to adapt to reality. You need, I think, to be at the same time arrogant, because you want to solve problems that look insoluble, but you also need to be very humble."

– U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi

Learn Pages 2 - 3

Do all you can to learn about the other party before you negotiate and prepare well but keep in mind your most valuable learning will always happen during the negotiation itself. Keep your wits about you and maintain a clear top-down perspective and you will be best situated to learn how to bring your negotiation to a successful conclusion.

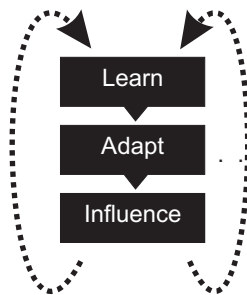
Adapt Pages 4 - 5

Negotiations are always dynamic rather than static. To adapt well, you've got to be emotionally prepared to be simultaneously calm and alert, patient yet proactive, practical and creative. Put another way, you have to observe, orient, decide and then act again and again until you reach an agreement that works.

Influence Pages 5 - 7

Every negotiation has tipping points – junctures where you have to make decisions which will be hard to unwind moving forward. Be careful about how you open, close and deal with these critical moments. Having a feel for when to accept a proposal and when to press for more is the mark of a master negotiator.

Learn
Adapt
Influence Pages 7 - 8



Great negotiators not only master the dynamics of every negotiation but have a knack for finding agreement, for learning the right lessons from their experiences and for making the tough calls when value and obligations collide. They have the right mix of confidence, humility and realism to excel. You should aim for the same.

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