BUSINESS NEGOTIATION IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

Our article proposes a presentation of business negotiation from another point of view. We find it interesting to pursue the negotiation that is taking place, especially at the international level, in a cultural context. These are the manifestations of the national and organizational culture they bring to the negotiating process with the participating individuals. A feature of modern man, framed within an organizational space, is among other things, the ability to negotiate. A key component of business success, negotiation is another form of communication. Along with the ability to communicate, the culture of negotiation partners becomes one of the key factors that can stimulate, facilitate or, on the contrary, complicate the process itself and its outcomes.

Key-words: negotiation, culture, business.

01. The intent of this approach is to stress the importance that culture has in the process, sometimes so barren of negotiation in business. Assuming that the dialogue partners are the bearers of cultural values, stemming primarily from the culture of the nation to which they belong, and the concrete manifestations of the culture of the organization they represent. Together, these cultural values have the ability to shape the negotiating styles and we find it interesting to see how cultural brand of nations becomes evident in the negotiation process in business.

02. A characteristic of modern man, within an organizational space is, among others, the ability to negotiate. The key component of business success, negotiation is another form of communication act. For being organizational communication has a lot of meanings, a lot of goals and there are as many ways of expression and manifestation. It involves providing intentional data, information on the organizational structures, and negotiation is based precisely

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on the capacity of those involved in the process of creating a balance, a result that left both parties involved had something to gain and reached negotiation objectives.

"In order to understand and exploit market opportunities, entrepreneurs have to prove a great strategic ability. In order to create this lasting competitive advantage, a strategic commitment must be created and maintained to lead to the mobilization of resources and skills, and the realization of which requires time, while being uncertain" (Popescu D.M., 2012: 11).

In this context, the communication at the organizational level becomes a managerial tool that serves to substantiate the relations at the level of the groups. At the same time, based on elements that "vary in the long run, such as identity, communication also requires long-term management that fits into the company`s policies"(Popescu, 2012, 13). From this point of view, communication allows the creation of an appropriate framework for the conduct of business negotiations.

03. Along with the ability to communicate, the partners` culture of negotiation becomes one of the key factors that can stimulate, facilitate or, on the contrary, cancel the process itself and its results. We develop the idea outlined above by representing negotiation as an art or as a precise science. It can become "a decision-making process, among many others, whose purpose is to find a solution for situations that risk either to maintain or to degenerate into conflict. Negotiation has both advantages and disadvantages. Under some circumstances, it may be a privileged way in relation to other decision-making processes, but in others it may not meet the criteria of opportunity or effectiveness "(Popescu D.M., 2012: 64).

The cultural diversity of the business environment generates a multitude of situations, some even unpredictable, to which those involved need to adapt. Business culture is a landmark of success on the domestic and international market. Against this background, negotiations are transforming into a business dimension that requires deep cultural knowledge because "competitive processes are conducted in peaceful conversations by two or more parties that agree to pursue together the best and sure of objectives, set out in an explicitly agreed solution" (Maliţă, M., 1972:182).

What we want to emphasize, during our approach, is the connection that arises between the negotiation process itself and the participants' cultural models. The actor in Business negotiation can be an individual or a team. "The number

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of actors involved in the negotiation process is a primordial aspect. Thus, we distinguish bilateral and multilateral negotiations, involving several actors, and multilateral negotiations in which the actors are numerous. The negotiation process is a dynamic development of subjects in which there are many factors that can manifest independently or simultaneously "(Popescu D.M., 2012: 81).

The stages of the negotiation are varied, but in order to reach a proper understanding of this process, it seems appropriate to present these steps in a classic way. The opening or "five minutes" is the preamble of the negotiation, in which the participants are presented, and generalities are followed. There is a short sequence that highlights the reason for the meeting, a sort of identification of the problem. The first exploration translates into the time the negotiators have for studying each other and for testing. The discussion of the agenda, the selection of key points is the central stage of the negotiation, followed by argumentation, emphasis on divergences, disagreements. In order for the negotiation to be successful, appropriate solutions must be found for the parties involved, and if the agreement is reciprocal, the final solution is being followed. Of course, this is an ideal situation, but, as is well known, there are many business negotiation processes where the result translates into disagreement.

04. Among the elements that make up and infuse the act of negotiation, the cultural differences of the actors have a decisive role. Especially when it comes to international negotiations, cultural contexts impress each stage of the process. Culture translates into an influential manifestation, visible in all kinds of bargaining, whether we refer to business contacts, to establishing mutually beneficial relationships, to business conversations or to direct sales.

The negotiation style, the attitude of participants shows the sign of the culture from which the partners come from. Both verbal and non-verbal component of individual behavior or group fit into a cultural context. *The language* in which the negotiations take place will be the element that assures or not an impression of fairness among the participants. It is preferable to use an international language or, if one of the participants has a visible advantage over others, the negotiations will be conducted in the national language.

In this regard, we give examples of cultures of a default language, such as in Japan or China, complex cultural environments in which both the emitter and the receiver of the message share the responsibility of effective communication. Here, individuals show a major concern for non-verbal language, a powerful means of communication, unlike simple members of the culture, such as the Anglo-Saxon, in which many of the non-verbal messages are

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ignored. The importance and significance of non-verbal language are known as elements of negotiation direction, since, during the negotiations, this type of language has the ability to influence the conversation and its outcomes.

Another representative cultural model in the negotiation process is Germany, a country of temporal awareness. For individuals in this cultural area, punctuality becomes the sign of a rigorous organization, a form of politeness that also reflects on negotiation negotiations. On the contrary, Spain has an opposite view of temporality. Here time is at the disposal of the people, and the lack of punctuality is not a minus in business, but, moreover, a sign of prestige.

Continuing on this direction a cultural influence manifested during business negotiations, another element that we mention is the *expression of the faces* of those involved in the process. Thus, in the UK, it has been noticed that the choice of a formal office becomes a way to hide the mimic, because for the British, the face's reaction is associated with a lack of attention, interest, in other words, by failing to observe the business code. In Western European countries, avoiding looking at the partner during the negotiations means a roughness, a sign that is rather hostile, disrespectful. In Japan, above all, as is well known, lowering the look in front of the superior is a manifestation of respect. The area of intense gaze, the Mediterranean basin is characterized by a direct way of looking into the negotiating partner, which denotes defamation of the aliens and keeping the action under control.

The *language of the body* also falls within the context of the culture that includes the negotiation process. Thus, in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, the movements of the body become theatrical, but also a form of interaction with the dialogue partners. They use their hands, arms to highlight certain ideas, and handshakes at the beginning and end of the negotiation. In the countries of Europe, the word dominates the language of the body, which is used with moderation, in respect of the negotiation act.

The *Relationship* is part of the impact that the culture of the participants has on the negotiation process. Obtaining precise data about the people in the dialogue matters a lot to the French, because discussions about art, history, literature can lead to the creation of a common denominator, they can easily open the elements of the negotiation.

The impact of cultural manifestations on business negotiation can be so great that it can change the process itself and, in particular, its results. The cultural differences in the participants are translated into *cultural distance*. This must be known on both sides from the preliminary stage of the negotiation process. It is

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a kind of documentation on others that helps you to establish common rules of conduct.

05. "Any negotiation, whatever the area, puts into play certain elements that act in an interactive way. These elements can be considered as forming a field of forces in which the negotiation process will take place "(Popescu D.M., 2012: 68). Among these constituents, besides the expression of the face, *the negotiators' personality* is added.

"In most negotiations, there is either a tendency towards cooperation or a tendency towards confrontation, which will give the negotiator specific behavioral traits resulting from its individual characteristics" (Popescu D.M., 2012: 82). The latter refers to both the physical features of the individual, such as age, gender, belonging to a particular geographical area, and psychological features. Even certain profiles of the negotiators have been established, starting from their personality. Success is largely determined by the character of the participants in the negotiation, by the innate traits through which they manifest themselves. Of course, "if in the interpersonal negotiations the impact of the negotiator's personality on the negotiation process is very high, instead, in the negotiations with a pronounced technical nature, these issues will greatly reduce the impact of the negotiator's personality" (Popescu D.M., 2012: 84).

These manifestations of the personality of the negotiating participants were conceived in the determination of *the typology of the leader* who leads the team, typology translated as follows:

"- *authoritarian model* (resulting from his passionate and nervous character), he is a good organizer, he pursues the objectives, he only accepts hardly other opinions and can cause conflicts;

-*cooperative model* (based on his realistic and sometimes sentimental character) - is a good constructor of team spirit, gives good results in negotiations, but sometimes delays the decision;

- *pessimistic model* (intermediate between phlegmatic and sentimental) - weak organizer, does not use authority, accepts excuses and motivations, is loved by collaborators, but is too weak to resist negotiations;

- *creative model*, is not a good organizer, is not concerned with resolving acute problems, but, doubled well, can support, based on arguments, the point of view of the company in the field of technical competitiveness "(*Ibidem*).

The negotiating style adopted either by the group leader or by each individual is determined by a number of factors, including the characteristics of the culture. It is important for this style to follow the cultural valences of each

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negotiator, not to fit into foreign cultural contexts, otherwise the strength and negotiation capacity will decrease significantly. Then business negotiation must start from the idea of working with people who are carriers of various cultural messages that need to be understood and brought together. Cultural differences are conditional on the fundamental values of the participants in the negotiations. Each person brings to the table, whether conscious or not, the values, symbols, ideologies of the national and organizational culture to which they belong.

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