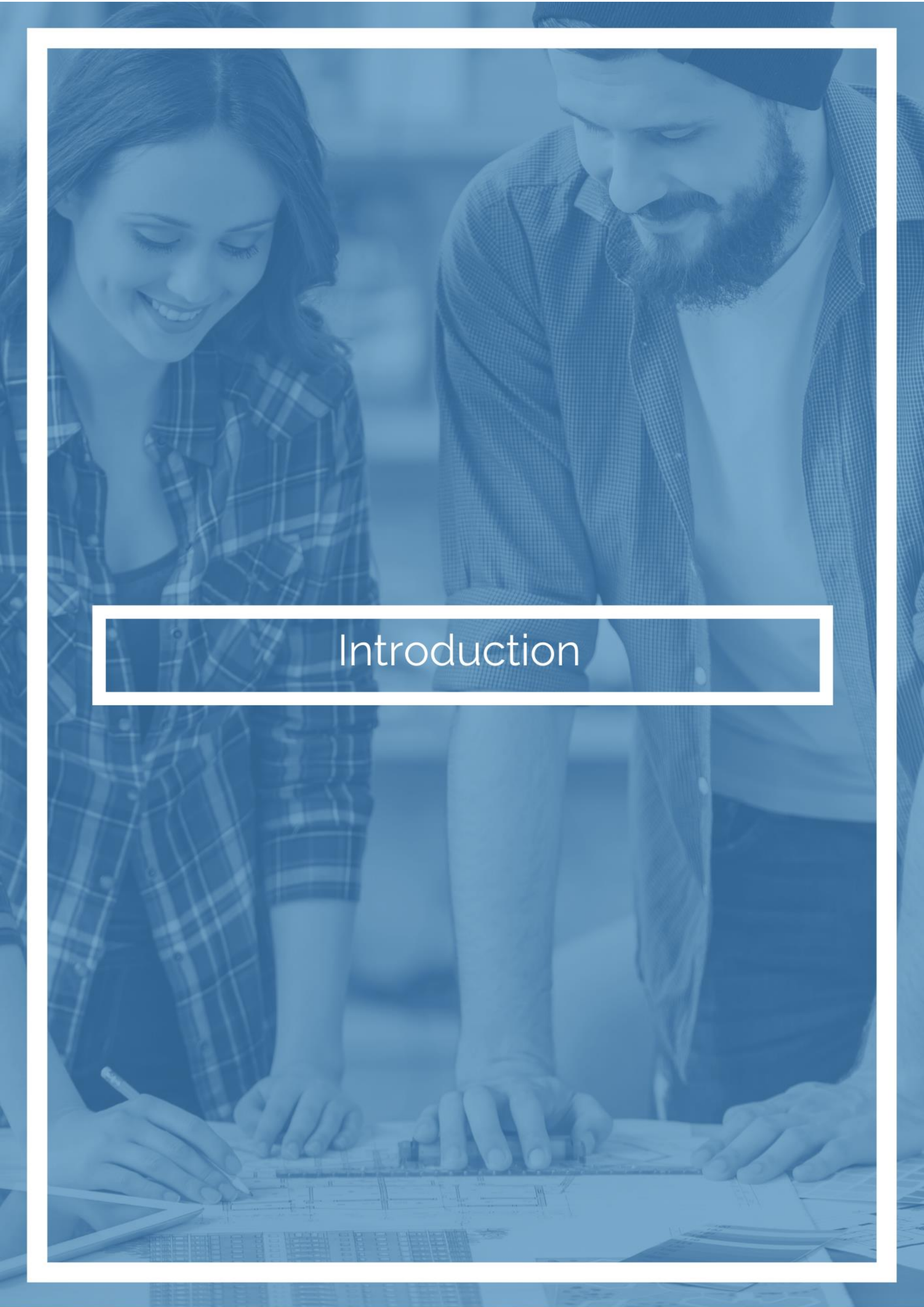
Learning Guide

PROJECT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATION

Contents



Introduction

Introduction

Course Presentation

During the Introductory Workshop, we saw that the problems that arise on projects tend to be more related to the people with whom we interact than the technical aspects. This is why we need to develop our interpersonal skills in order to be able to exercise effective leadership so as to achieve the expected project outcomes.

The first step for developing a skill into a new habit is to become aware of the need and to get out of our comfort zone. We need to leave behind what is comfortable and make the effort to do something different to what we unconsciously choose. We will undoubtedly make mistakes and get things wrong in the beginning but through reflection and practice, we can improve our habits and develop the skills we need to be better leaders.

Another fundamental aspect to bear in mind in this personal growth is the perception about where the control over our lives is based. This is known as the “internal or external locus of control”. If we believe that control is external to us, in the environment or with other people, it will be very difficult for us to direct our own lives. On the other hand, we need to realize that we are a fundamental part of a situation or problem and "take charge" of it in order to make changes. This means ceasing to be a “victim” and becoming a “leader”.

What do we mean by leadership?

We can find hundreds of different definitions of leadership in the wide range of books on this subject.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, leadership is "the action of leading a group of people or an organization, or the ability to do this”.

Hemphill & Coons defined leadership as follows: "the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal.

Another definition is as follows: “Leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals”.

In fact, there is probably a different definition of leadership for every piece of research into the topic.

In the context of our projects, we are going to consider leadership to be “the ability to mobilize others to generate changes that add value”.

If we consider this definition in the context of a development project, the people with whom we interact can be very diverse and we probably do not have formal authority over them. We therefore have to exercise influence through our communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, assertiveness and ability to work in a team.

When it comes to developing an effective team, it is important to know what style of leadership will get the best results.

In their book “Power Up”, David Bradford and Allan Cohen use the term "heroic leadership" to refer to the style in which the leader sets the direction and his/her subordinates follow these instructions without question. Heroic leadership, focused on control and following instructions imposed from above used to function when conditions were more stable, employees were less well-trained and jobs were clearly defined, so there was less interdependence.

We know that the style of leadership that is appropriate nowadays has changed and we talk of consensus, participation and empowerment. A more motivating style of leadership is needed, which promotes the creation of an environment which favors the achievement of the project's objectives through teamwork.

This style of participative leadership, based on communication skills, presents the challenge of supporting and persuading autonomous people to get involved and make a commitment to collaborating together towards achieving a shared vision that they find attractive and challenging. It promotes a greater cross-cutting interaction between peers from different disciplines and with different focuses, with an emphasis on motivating people and the ability to coordinate with others in a productive manner, forming teams that perform well.

The leader's usual decision making style goes hand-in-hand with his/her leadership style. Bradford and Cohen mention four decision modes:

Autocratic:

- The decision is made only by the leader or the person responsible, without consulting the team.

Delegative:

- The decision is made by the person designated to do so by the leader, who gave him/her the authority and defined certain parameters.

Consultative:

- The leader consults the team and makes the decision after listening to the opinions of his/her co-workers.

Participative:

- The decision is made jointly between the leader and the team of people who are affected by it.

In his book "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team", Patrick M. Lencioni says that for a group of people to become a real team that achieves the results for which it was formed, it must overcome five dysfunctions.

These five dysfunctions must be overcome for the team to be able to achieve these results.

The first is the absence of trust among the team members. The team members are not willing to open up with their colleagues, to own up to mistakes or weaknesses and this makes it impossible to build a foundation of trust.

This failure to build trust is prejudicial because it fosters the second dysfunction: fear of conflict. Teams which lack trust are incapable of entering into passionate discussions about ideas, exposing their points of view without holding back. Instead, they are careful in what they say.

This lack of conflict is a problem because it reinforces the third dysfunction: a lack of commitment. If team members will not express their opinions in a frank and passionate debate, it is unlikely that they will truly accept decisions and make a commitment to them, even if it seems as though they are in agreement when they leave meetings.

As the team members have not made a commitment, they avoid accountability, the fourth dysfunction. In the absence of commitment to a clear plan of action, team members try not to draw their co-workers' attention with regard to actions and behavior which could be counterproductive to the interests of the team. However, teams which do make a commitment have no problem in holding one another accountable for the results and standards. The greatest challenge in building a team in which the members hold one another accountable is overcoming the difficulty of providing critical feedback to others.

The inability to hold one another accountable creates an environment in which the fifth dysfunction thrives. Inattention to results occurs when team members place their individual needs (such as their ego, personal career or recognition) or even the needs of their departments ahead of the collective goals of the team.

When the members of a team trust one another, are not afraid of conflict, make a commitment and hold one another accountable, it is highly likely that they will put to one side their personal and individual interests and goals and focus on the good of the team. They won't be tempted to seek the best for their department or to follow their own career aspirations, but will put their own egos to one side and concentrate on the collective results that define the team's success.

The leader's role is fundamental for teams to overcome these five dysfunctions. He/she can do this by showing his/her own vulnerability and creating an atmosphere where nobody is ashamed to be seen to be vulnerable. The leader can also promote discussions in which the team comes up with the solution, even if this involves a heated debate, pushing the team to listen to and properly analyze everyone's point of view. In this way, they will take decisions and make a commitment to them. The leader should not place too much value on consensus if this means a lack of discussion. He/she can encourage the team to place demands on itself and set its own standards for achieving goals, showing his/her own commitment, lack of favoritism and being objective in recognizing and rewarding team members' efforts.

The leader should therefore strengthen his/her communication skills, developing empathetic listening, providing positive and assertive feedback, promoting conflict management and interest-based negotiation.

As we stated at the beginning, during this course we will be working on acquiring, practicing and reinforcing effective interpersonal skills so each participant can achieve the objectives of your development projects.

This course will focus on strengthening interpersonal skills that favor effective Project Plan (AOP/MEP) implementation.

The course is divided into 2 modules, which combine theory and practical activities promoting collaborative learning, and is geared to Project Plan (AOP/MEP) implementation.

Module 1 presents the fundamentals of **Communication and Negotiation**. The purpose of Unit 1 is to train participants to develop a communication strategy tailored to the stakeholders' needs and to the development project context. To this end, we will present some of the basic communication principles-applied in every communication situation-underpinning the other course skills.

By the end of Unit 2, participants will be able to prepare and conduct a negotiation systematically and effectively. To do this, they will need to be familiar with negotiation components and analyze them to design effective negotiation strategies. For strategy implementation, participants will be required to use the communication skills presented in Unit 1.

In **Module 2** we will apply communication and negotiation skills and concepts to concrete situations, where managing the project plan entails exercising **influence** to align interests and satisfy a diversity of stakeholders' needs of. To this end, we will look into the concept of informal authority and its sources. Then, we will address in depth two interpersonal skills that help strengthen informal authority: assertiveness and empathic listening. Finally, we will see how these two skills are put into play in a feedback conversation, and the contribution this type of conversation can make to the project team. To develop these skills, the concepts introduced in Module 1 will be required.

In these two modules, we have included exercises aiming at integrating and applying the course concepts and skills. Participants will have the chance to review the difficulties they face when transferring learning to daily project management. With the help of the tutor and course mates, participants will be able to identify solution and improvement alternatives collectively.

Course Methodology: In Action Review (IAR)

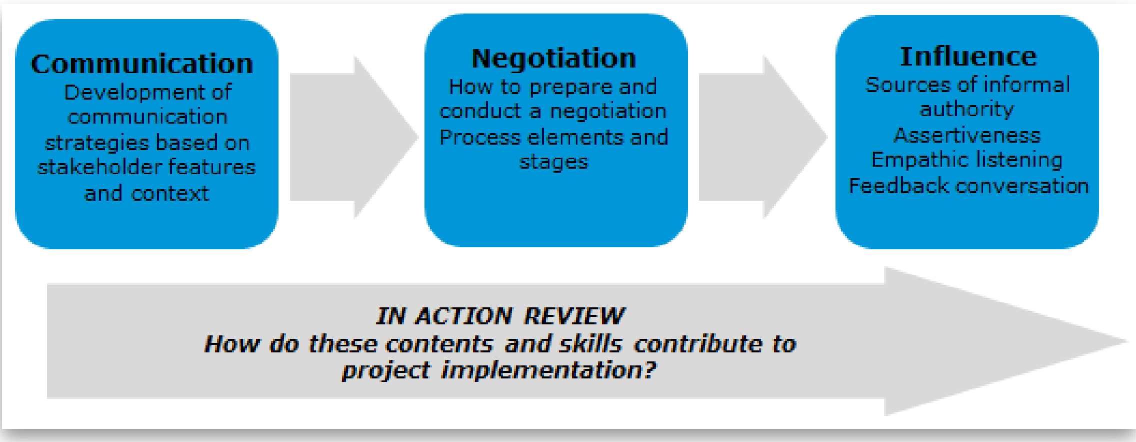
To fulfill the learning goals in each module, both individual and collaborative activities have been designed based on the collaborative learning technique “In Action Review (IAR).” IAR helps sort out effective from ineffective practices, and shares this information immediately after activities have been completed.

The IAR methodology is based on 4 questions:

1. What should have happened?
2. What did actually happen?
3. Why were there differences?
4. What can be learned from this experience that will give us room for improvement at later stages?

Taking into account each module learning goals, teams will set their project goals, and they will try to achieve them using the IAR methodology. This means participants will examine and assess team performance during project implementation by means of this methodology; they will use the lessons learned to identify and leverage improvement opportunities.

Although the IAR methodology will be presented at the face to face Opening Workshop, each team will participate regularly in a virtual tutored forum to apply the methodology. This process will be reinforced by meetings with the tutor, and with the Closing Workshop face to face activities.



Source: Compiled by author

Course Learning Goals

The team managing development project implementation is responsible for executing the project according to scope, time, and costs, and for fulfilling the needs and expectations of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Therefore, it is essential that all stakeholders, and particularly beneficiaries, participate in determining the expected outcomes.

During the project stages, the team will have to interact with stakeholders who have different interests, perspectives, and political and professional agendas, all of which will have to be considered to achieve the project goals. It is at this point that communication, negotiation and persuasion skills play a fundamental role.

Therefore, by the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- build a communication strategy based on key stakeholder features and the development project context;
- prepare and conduct a negotiation systematically and effectively; and
- communicate effectively to exert the right influence on project plan implementation.

1

Communication and Negotiation: Basic Concepts

MODULE INTRODUCTION

Communication is key for successful development project management. Which key stakeholders need to be involved at different project stages? Which forms of communication should be established with these stakeholders? Who will be in charge and which will be the communication channels in each case?

These are the questions a project team will have to plan with the right tools, for a systematic and effective approach to communication.

At the same time, communication poses a complex challenge to a development project, which goes beyond sending and receiving information. It requires effective interaction management to avoid misunderstandings, build bonds of trust, and reach sustainable agreements within the team, with other institutional players participating in the project, and with beneficiaries.

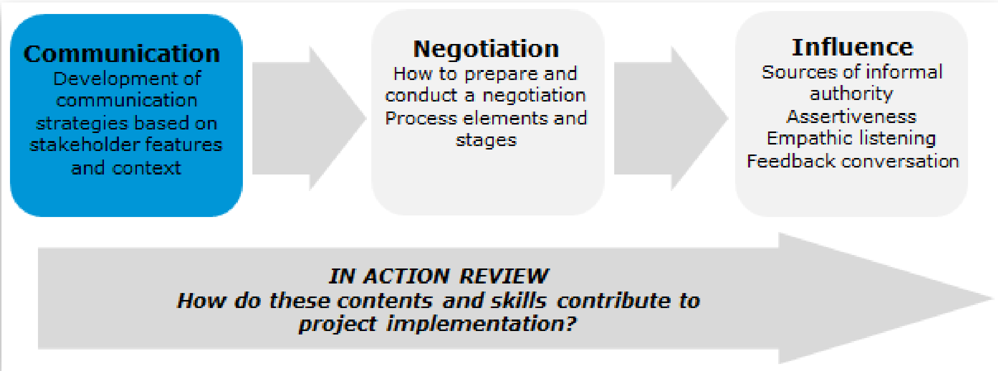
This module will focus on the critical communication and negotiation skills needed to face such challenges effectively.

OVERALL MODULE GOALS

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- develop a communication strategy considering stakeholder features and the development project context; and
- prepare and conduct a negotiation systematically and effectively.

Unit I: Communication



Learning Goals

In this unit will focus on the following learning goals:

1.I.1. To identify opportunities to improve communication management in a development project.

1.I.2. To enhance the ability to develop a communication plan, considering the context and our counterparts' mental models. In order to achieve this, we will work on the following specific learning goals:

- To learn criteria for selecting the most appropriate communication channel for every circumstance.
- To reinforce the ability and habit of tailoring the communication strategy to different mental models and interests.
- Knowing To learn how to use feedback, questions, and meta communication effectively.

1.I.1. Effective Communication

Effective communication is key for project success, because it is the way in which participants can coordinate actions effectively, both among themselves and with third parties to:

- achieve the expected outcomes;
- build trust; and
- develop a positive working environment.

1.I.2. Current Communication Challenges

Throughout human history, technological developments have changed the way people work. This is evident both in organizational design and institutional practices. On the one hand, information moves through new channels, thus facilitating the decision making process and the coordination of different tasks among physically distant participants. On the other hand, available information and communication options are multiplied. However, capturing people's attention in a world flooded with information also poses new communication challenges.

Therefore, considering this context, the following are crucial:

- Articulating brief and clear messages. It is worth wondering: Have we selected the information we wish to convey? Have we avoided presentations longer than our counterparts' attention span or writings that they will not be able to analyze properly?
- Involving our counterparts through questions and feedback requests.
- Using the appropriate channel depending on our counterparts and the circumstances, i.e. should we send an e mail, make a phone call, or arrange a personal meeting?

One of the consequences of globalization is the great number and variety of communication channels. This is not only an advantage, but also a responsibility: in each case we need to determine the most appropriate channel.

***For example**, if you need to have a project decision validated by a director working at the Economy Ministry, who is always very busy and is known for not replying to e mails promptly and for centralizing decisions, you would probably choose to communicate through a different channel from that you would use with another director working in the Education Ministry, who is known for leaving decisions in the hands of his academic expert team. In the first case, you would probably choose a ten minute meeting to put forth your ideas briefly with the support of written and graphic material. In the second case, you may choose an e mail, attaching relevant documents.*

Besides taking into account our counterparts' features, the choice of channel will also be based on the advantages and disadvantages of each channel.

Oral communication is particularly suitable when there are personal, relational, or emotional issues involved, and/or when immediate feedback is needed.

E mails do not allow for immediate feedback. On the contrary, when talking on the phone or face to face with someone, their faces or tones of voice are immediate feedback, useful to detect the reaction to our message and reinforce and/or correct our communication strategy accordingly.

In contrast, written communication is particularly suitable when:

- the choice of words is very important;
- the message to be conveyed is complex and requires careful analysis; and/or
- we need to keep a record of the message.

Finally, multiple communication entails a combination of both, written and oral: handing out a written message during an oral presentation, sending an e mail to anticipate a phone call, acknowledging receipt of an e mail through a phone call, and/or sending material to be discussed at a later meeting.

Our preferred communication channel may not be the most appropriate for the people who we wish to communicate with; or suitable for the stakeholders in the communications matrix.

Which communication channel would you like to use more/less frequently to make your project communication more effective?

1.I.3. Communication and Mental Models

Each individual participates in a communication situation with some background experience and information influencing his/her interpretation of reality in a unique and different way.

A *mental model* is the distinctive way in which someone perceives reality and makes out how it works. A mental model is based on a set of assumptions, beliefs, and interpretations through which each person sees the world in a specific way and acts accordingly.

Mental models are fundamental both in preparing and in implementing our project communication plans. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that **what is important to us may not be so for others**.

What a manager said	What he/she meant	What the team member understood
I'd like to receive this report as soon as possible.	I need the report this week.	Postpone the urgent request you are dealing with and prepare this report today.
We have an opening in the procurement department and we think you are the right person for the position.	If you like the position, it is for you; otherwise, you can stay in your current post.	If you are not interested in the new role you can stay in your current post. However, your career will be affected.

These are frequent misunderstandings among team members. Our challenge is to become aware of such misinterpretations, i.e., to bear in mind that very often what is clear to us may not be clear to our counterparts.

When we are aware of this situation we can both adjust the communication strategy to other people's mental model and ask for feedback to ensure effective communication.

There are as many mental models as people participating in a communication situation. The more informed we are about our counterparts' mental models, the more chances we have to create an effective communication. We need to consider content (what we want to communicate) as well as the communication process (how communication will unfold).

A project communications matrix helps us identify the communication situations with stakeholders. To this end, the project team members usually prepare documents for specific deadlines.

Is unidirectional communication, i.e. the project team sends a message and stakeholders receive it, always enough? When is it useful to listen to our counterpart, and understand his/her concerns and points of view to try to build mutual understanding?

When our counterpart does not listen to us open mindedly and with interest, is it worth asking for support from a counterpart's close ally to ensure more influential communication?

What makes a message effective: its meaning for the sender or for the recipient?

When our counterpart does not understand or take seriously a message that is clear and valuable to us, we often feel frustrated. When faced with frustration, some of us tend to blame the other for communication failure.

However, these issues lead us to acknowledge that responsibility is shared in every communication process, and make us think of ways to improve project communication.

In turn, they warn us of unidirectional communication limitations, and of the importance of involving the other party in a process where his/her viewpoints, interests, and perspectives become relevant. In other words, it is not only a matter of what we say, but of what the other party makes out of it.

1.I.4. Skills for Effective Communication

Some skills are essential for effective communication:

a. Promoting feedback
b. Asking questions
c. Using meta communication
d. Adjusting the message to our counterparts' interests

a. Promoting Feedback

Feedback allows us to confirm-and frequently correct-both our own and our counterparts' assumptions on what "the other means."

The following are important skills to promote feedback:

- Watch out for the other party's non verbal feedback when we are speaking-his/her looks, gestures.
- Ask for explicit feedback. For instance: "*What do you think of what I have said?" "How would you sum up, in your own words, the main points of our conversation?" or "I'm not sure if I've been clear. To avoid misunderstandings, I'd appreciate it if you could summarize the main points of our conversation in your own words.*"

Testimonial from a Colleague:

"Indeed, this skill is crucial for those of us who participate in development projects teams. These are ad hoc teams that gather people who have never worked together before, not even in the same organization. We need to be perfectly coordinated within the team from the beginning of the project; we cannot have two people to understand a message differently. However, assuming others understand our message in the same way we do is a frequent mistake."

One of the most effective ways to give feedback is paraphrasing. Paraphrasing entails confirming, in our own words, whether we have understood the meaning expressed by our counterpart. Paraphrasing serves two key roles in communication: it prevents misunderstandings and makes the other feel understood.

In general, paraphrasing is divided into three parts:

- **Opening**: An initial phrase to confirm the intention to check on one's own understanding. For instance: *"Then, I take it that…;" "Based on what you've just said, correct me if I'm wrong...;" "To put it clearly, then..."*
- **Body**: A summary of what the other person has said. For example: "*From what you say there are two key issues we should take into account…*"
- **Closing**: After paraphrasing, a pause is made for the interlocutor to confirm we have understood or otherwise to correct us. A question can be inserted before the pause to explicitly state our own intention (e.g., "*is that so?*").

b. Asking Questions

Asking questions is also a powerful way of checking on our assumptions, preventing misunderstandings, and becoming more familiar with our counterparts' mental models.

Closed ended questions are those with predetermined response categories. For instance, the answers to the question "*Do you know this work methodology?*" are "*yes*" or "*no*." On the contrary, open ended questions trigger answers that are not predetermined, for example, "*What are your opinions and concerns about this work methodology?*"

When a person is reluctant to speak, it is usually better to make closed ended questions. However, open ended questions are better to get an insight into our counterparts' mental models and learn what they think, since they can elaborate on their answers.

c. Meta-Communication

Meta communication takes place when something is communicated about the communication process itself. Meta communication invites our counterparts to focus on any aspect which might be hindering communication.

When facing a misunderstanding, for instance, we may say "I think our viewpoints are different and that is why we are having trouble understanding each other."

d. Adjusting the Message to Our Counterparts' Interests

Using the "Communication Matrix" can be useful to plan the diverse communication situations with project stakeholders. This tool helps set out and organize key aspects favoring effective project communication: having a clear message and purpose; knowing who the recipient is, which communication channel is the most appropriate, and who will be responsible for preparing the message; sending the message and asking for feedback; and taking into account times and other relevant aspects.

Other examples might be:

"I think some feelings from yesterday's meeting are preventing us from having a smooth discussion."

"I think we don't mean the same when we refer to a quality

Communication Matrix									
What do we communicate?	Why?	Recipient	Communication methods	Responsibility		Time			Comments
				Preparation	Sending	Initial date	Frequency		
Biannual progress report	To fulfill IDB contractual requirements	IDB	E-mail	Coordinator and Planner	Project Coordinator	Jul-11	Every six months		Based on the dates set forth in the contract
Project follow-up report	Follow-up of contract by Finance Minister	Finance Minister	Official notice with approved format and presentations	Coordinator and Planner	Project Coordinator	Jul-12	Every six months		Upon request of the Ministry of Planning and Finance
Physical progress of works and projects	To report on project progress	Planning and Procurement - Situation Room	Memoranda - E-mail	Coordinator and Planner	Project Coordinator	Dic-10	Every three months		Upon request of the Ministry of Planning and Finance and MINA MB's Situation Room

Source: Compiled by the author, based on the *Project Management Associate* course

This tool reminds us that every communication situation in a development project serves a specific purpose. Again, the possibility of fulfilling this objective will be impacted by how we adjust our communication strategy to our counterparts' features. Additionally, it is worth pointing out that our counterparts' mental models will be strongly conditioned by their interests and project related concerns and values. Therefore, adjusting our communication strategy based on these factors is another essential skill.

Preparing a message for a Minister whose short term priority is supervising a Program differs from preparing a message for a Mayor we wish to have as an ally, but who perceives the project progress may be controversial because he/she wants to convey austerity to the public opinion.

Unit Summary

What to communicate to whom, when, and how are some of the challenges that, consciously or unconsciously, the development project team members face daily, largely affecting the project success or failure.

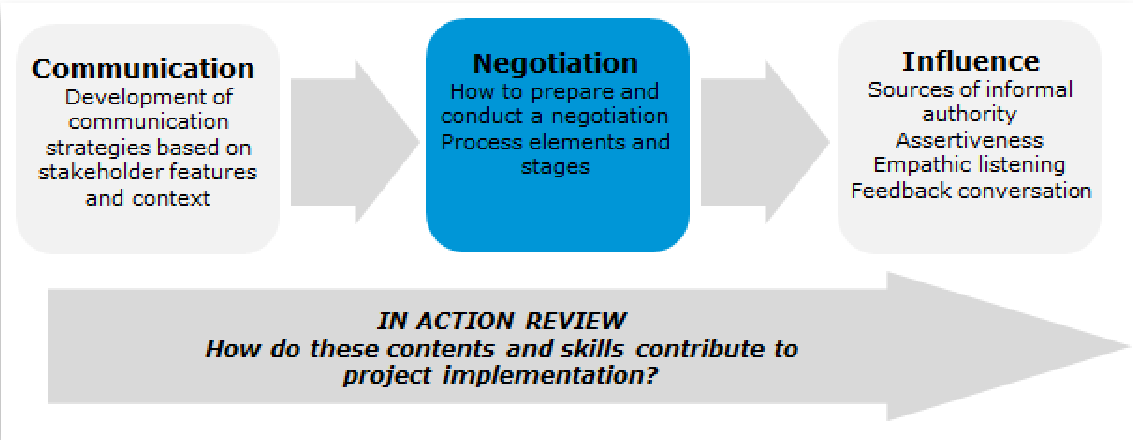
In this unit you have reflected on communication skills and improvement opportunities for effective and efficient communication management. In particular, we have identified the following key skills:

- Selecting the best communication channel for every situation.
- Adjusting the communication style to counterparts' mental models and interests.
- Using feedback, questions, and meta communication to promote effective communication.
- Adjusting the message to counterparts' interests.

We will continue stressing the importance of these skills within the framework of different communication and leadership challenges.

In the second unit of this module, we will examine how to prepare and conduct negotiations in a development project.

Unit 2: Negotiation



Learning Goals

This unit will focus on negotiation. By the end of the module, participants should be able to prepare and conduct negotiations systematically and effectively.

To this end, we will specifically address the following learning goals.

1.II.1. To understand the stages of negotiation processes that facilitate sustainable agreements.

1.II.2. To identify actions suitable for each stage.

1.II.3. To acquire and/or reinforce practices that help prepare and conduct negotiations systematically and effectively.

Unit Introduction

To carry out a development project, team members will have to negotiate with several stakeholders: other team members, project sponsors, external providers, officers from governmental agencies and multilateral agencies, representatives of project beneficiaries, among others. Goal achievement and timely and appropriate project completion will depend on the success of these negotiations.

1.II.1. Key Negotiation Components

What does a negotiation involve? On the one hand, it is a communication process that takes time and dedication; it is unlikely that you will sit at a negotiation table if no important interest is involved. On the other hand, in order to serve that interest or achieve that goal, you are only going to negotiate if you need the other party's consent.

***For example**, someone responsible for procurement will sit to negotiate with a project supplier when delivery dates for certain crucial project supplies need to be rescheduled after being missed due to unexpected circumstances.*

In all negotiations, negotiators tend to perceive some tension between achieving their goals and preserving their relationship with the other party. This happens because parties believe they pursue conflicting goals.

In this course we will see, however, that good negotiators manage to stick to their goals while preserving their relationship with their counterparts.

1.II.2. Preparing Productive Negotiations

In this section we intend to sharpen up one of the vital skills for effective negotiation: systematic preparation.

Take the case of a Minister –the project sponsor– who asks the project coordinator to reach certain goals six months ahead of schedule. The coordinator could tell the Minister that this is not possible, and prove with the schedule why these works cannot be finished or the goals achieved.

The conversation could unfold with each one stating their position and trying to support it with arguments. Often, when this happens, conflict and discomfort escalate between the parties.

When faced with opposing arguments, it is possible for the parties to make certain concessions and agree on an intermediate position; for example, the Minister and the coordinator could agree to complete half the works six months early, and the other half in the term agreed.

In the case of opposing arguments, another typical reaction is to try to impose our position based on our rank or by involving third parties through threats or persuasive arguments.

In our example, the Minister could tell the coordinator: “It is imperative that the deadline be met in six months. Otherwise, we will terminate the agreement and seek financing elsewhere."

Negotiations aimed at obtaining concessions from the other party turn into a zero sum game, i.e. the greater the gain for one of the parties, the greater the loss for the other. Zero sum negotiations generally result in antagonism, which wears out relationships and “wastes value,” thus producing suboptimal agreements.

Parties engage in these kinds of negotiations because of poor or insufficient preparation.

In the section below, we will learn how investing time in adequate preparation facilitates reaching satisfactory and sustainable agreements. Preparation makes it possible to differentiate between positions and interests, as suggested in the well-known book on negotiation by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton.[1]

What are “positions” in negotiations?

Positions are the parties’ claims, which are usually in conflict with each other.

In the example above, the Minister’s position entails achieving objectives six months earlier, while the coordinator wants to follow the agreed schedule.

One of the first steps toward collaborative negotiation is becoming aware that our position is not the only option to reach an agreement.

[1] Fisher, R., Ury, W. and Patton, B. (1985). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin.

Once we realize this, the challenge is trying to make the other party understand it as well. How can we do it? No matter how attractive we consider the idea, trying to convince the other party to abandon their position rarely succeeds. Positions, and the arguments supporting them, are part of a narrative that participants build around a situation; they reflect their values, their world view, the way they see themselves, and the way they wish to be perceived by others.

In this course, we conceive of arguments as the reasons the parties use to defend their position and/or to question their counterparts' positions and arguments. In the same example, the argument the Minister could put forward for demanding that the works be finished six months ahead of schedule is that circumstances have changed and that he/she needs some flexibility from the coordinator. In turn, the coordinator could argue that he/she cannot meet the deadline with the resources available.

But, how do we go beyond this competition between positions and arguments? Focusing both on our own and on our counterparts' interests is the answer.

What Are "Interests"?

Interests are the main worries, needs, and concerns that the parties to a negotiation try to satisfy.

The book by Fisher, Ury, and Patton provides the example of two sisters who fight over an orange; to solve the conflict the mother cuts the orange in half and gives them each a half, ignoring that one of the girls wanted the juice and the other the peel. Although she reached a satisfactory agreement, this shows that if she had inquired about the girls' positions she may have been able to identify their underlying interests, thus facilitating a higher-value agreement.

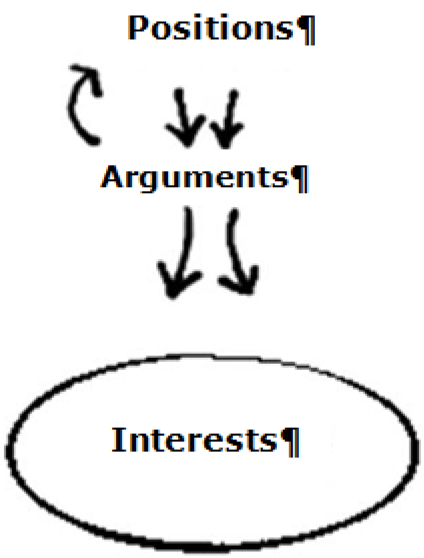
Back to our previous example, by asking the Minister about his needs and listening attentively to his/her answers the project coordinator may discover that the Minister needs to show the citizenship some results before elections, and that is why he/she wants the works finished six months earlier. By trying to identify what specific results are expected ahead of schedule, the project coordinator may find that the Minister does not need all the works finished (as initially requested) but only those with the greatest impact on the population.

On considering and respecting both parties' interests, the positions in a negotiation become increasingly weaker in the negotiators' minds.

Therefore, when preparing a negotiation it is vital to analyze our own interests: What do we really need?

The coordinator may wonder what the team really wants to achieve when insisting that the schedule should be followed. Maybe there is an interest in honoring existing commitments with suppliers and with the financing agency, and/or in protecting the productive work environment created by the project team.

When we are able to express our real needs and take interest in our counterparts' needs, the negotiation environment changes. We do not cling to our position as the only way of reaching an agreement or as the only solution; we merely express what we want to achieve or preserve.



In this process, it is important to consider both communication and relationships. If there is no trust between the parties -or if trust is not built- the parties will not communicate their real interests. Therefore, when preparing a negotiation, it is important to design communication strategies to reinforce the work relationship with our counterparts, and inspire enough trust to make them voice their interests.

Therefore, the project coordinator might think of and write down the questions to ask the Minister in order to understand his/her interests and/or confirm his/her assumptions. Making assumptions or having prejudices is inevitable, but we must put these to the test during our conversation to be sure we are not guided by misconceptions.

Frequently, the greatest obstacle in adopting these collaborative attitudes is our own idea of what a negotiation is. If we think of a negotiation as a competition in which there is a winner and a loser, we are going to try to resist any attempts made by the other party in any direction except the one we want to move in. Spontaneously, our responses will be confrontational. We should try to prevent spontaneous reactions from driving us to competitive negotiations with winner loser or loser loser results, when we can rationally identify the possibility of a win win strategy.

Once the path to collaboration has been chosen, we need to practice the phrases to take the relationship to a collaborative style that creates value. It is not usually easy to come up with these phrases in the midst of a serious conversation if we have not practiced them before.

For example, the coordinator may prepare a phrase to explicitly encourage the Minister to work together to find a solution satisfying both their interests: "We would like to work with you to find the best option to meet your needs, and we would also like to honor our existing commitments with several stakeholders in this project."

Once the parties to a negotiation have identified their interests within the framework of a collaborative relationship, they face the challenge of defining how to fulfill such interests in a feasible and acceptable way. We will discuss this issue below.

Offering Options

As we have seen, if the parties to a negotiation hold opposing views, they seldom expect solutions creating value. Therefore, one of the most beneficial effects of moving from positions to interests is working on a new perspective on the negotiation different from our initial point of view.

In this context, the term “options” may be defined as “possible agreements satisfying the vital interests of all the parties involved.”

Back to our example, in so far as the coordinator identifies the interests underlying the Minister’s position and his/her own, the coordinator and the Minister can start working together to build up options that satisfy both their interests.

This helps turn a negotiation initially hindered by irreconcilable positions (bringing forward the delivery date or not) into a negotiation based on interests: How can we lessen the project impact on the citizenship before elections while fulfilling the obligations and caring for the relationships with everybody involved?

For example, the project team might consider completing certain works of higher impact in a shorter time frame postponing others; they could also plan to engage the community in the development of works by scheduling visits, or try to make certain government officials participate in the negotiations with the financing entity, etc. This is useful brainstorming during the preparation stage. However, the most valuable ideas will most probably arise from the interaction with our counterparts.

Assessing Options Based on Objective and Subjective Standards

Once we have a variety of possible options to solve the problem, it is time to examine, screen, and select only those that can become a reasonable and realistic proposal for an agreement.

Two fundamental criteria need to be considered: objective and subjective standards. Objective standards will provide a realistic appraisal of our options since they are measurement and assessment criteria external to the parties’ will (e.g., technical and scientific principles and/or rules).

Coming back to our example, one of the options the coordinator and the Minister may consider in order to speed up the works schedule is carrying out higher impact works in a shorter term, such as the construction of the project health care centers.

However, based on objective standards this change may be well beyond the suppliers' response capacity, i.e., this option may be technically unfeasible; it will have to be ruled out or modified to be realistic and to become an effective proposal.

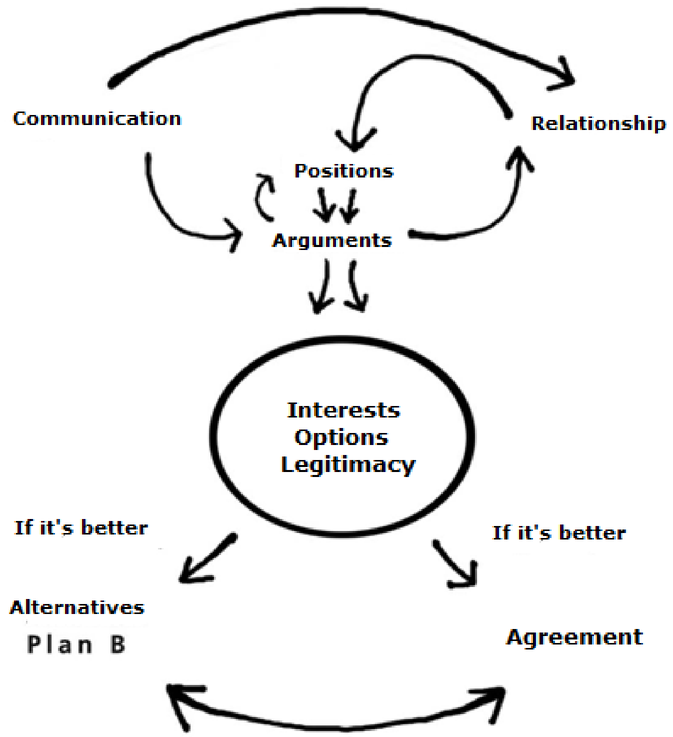
The second element to "screen" the options is the subjective criterion. The Harvard Negotiation School's model defines this as alternatives.

Alternatives are the possibility the parties have to look after their own interests without taking into account the other party' intentions, i.e. beyond any agreement with the other party. For this reason, they are alternatives to a potential agreement. In our example, perhaps the alternatives considered by the Minister include promoting a media campaign to put pressure on the project team, imposing his/her will on the coordinator through formal authority, or terminating the contract and developing the project with another financer that agrees to a tighter schedule.

As long as the parties have better or worse alternatives to an agreement, they will know how much they depend on the other party to satisfy their interests. That is the reason why the parties' power in a negotiation relies on their best alternative, a concept known as BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement).

If we "need" the other party to serve our priority interests we do not negotiate in the same way as if we are not dependent on the other party's will. Having an alternative prevents the negotiation to be perceived as a "dead end street" or the person to feel "he/she in is somebody else's hands." Alternatives are vital in the negotiation process; however, many of us frequently face negotiations without having pondered our alternatives, and let ourselves be carried away by emotions or a tougher/weaker personal style.

Once we have come up with available options, it is important that the final agreement is clear, feasible, and regarded as fair. This means that the parties should conclude a negotiation knowing what is expected from them, and feeling they are not being treated unfairly and that the agreement can be implemented.



Source: *Negotiation and Conflict Management Program, INDES, IDB*. Graph based on Fisher, R., Ury, W. and Patton, B. (1985). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin.

Based on the above, we can conclude that a negotiation is successful if:

- The parties are able to build a collaborative work relationship, and at the end of the negotiation the relationship between the parties remains the same or has improved.
- The parties are able to make their interests clear.
- The parties are able to explore different options to reach an agreement.
- The final agreement is better than the alternative presented by each of the parties.
- The agreement is clear, feasible, and perceived as fair.

Therefore, it is suggested that the following elements be identified when preparing a negotiation:

- The parties’ positions.

- The parties' interests.
- Communication: key questions and messages.
- Relationship: strategies to build up trust, whenever necessary.
- Options: hypotheses for possible scenarios taking into account both parties' interests.
- Objective legitimacy criteria: to assess options beyond subjective bias.
- Alternatives: identification of one's own and the other party's best alternative, in case an agreement is not reached.

Testimonial from a Colleague:

"Listening to a 'no' without reacting or giving in but considering it as the beginning of a negotiation is of great importance to us. Indeed, when working in development project teams I have often found it difficult to negotiate effectively with those with a political profile, having a technical background myself. While we tend to favor project quality and compliance with predetermined rules, those involved in politics favor election times and political agendas. When disputes arise, rather than working on the same side trying to find creative solutions, acceptable to both parties, very often we tend to become upset with our counterparts and fuel a power struggle, where we –the experts– tend to give in and become resentful, embittered and unmotivated with the project."

1.II.3. Negotiation Stages

Every negotiation entails a process of dialogue, which does not necessarily follow predetermined rules or stages. However, in line with our collaborative approach, we can identify four basic stages.

First Stage: Establishing Collaborative Frameworks and Relationships

Negotiation frameworks and relationships are established at the beginning of the interaction between the parties, often in conversations about low risk topics –unrelated to the negotiation itself– to build up a friendly atmosphere. This is a highly valuable stage, since the relationship established at the beginning –or previously developed– will contribute to settle any differences emerging during the negotiation. Additionally, this first period can help confirm or challenge assumptions about the other party, its intentions and objectives, and provide the framework to reach an agreement.

Second Stage: Identifying Interests

Once a work relationship and a framework have been established to reach an agreement, it is important to share our interests to be able to come up with options. The best strategy is to gradually reveal interests; disclosing everything we need without the counterpart doing the same is not advisable, since asymmetry can become a disadvantage.

Third Stage: Coming up with Options

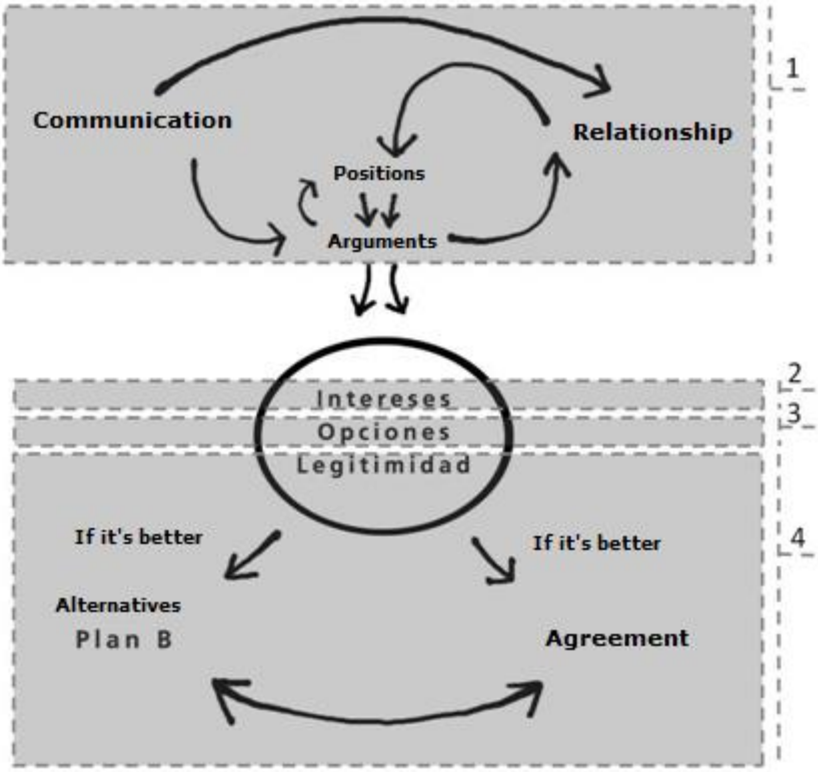
Once interests have been identified, we can think of options to satisfy such interests. Brainstorming within the team and with the counterpart is an important and recommended process to generate a good number of ideas, regardless of how well they might fit reality (quality can derive from quantity, while demanding quality may hinder the creative process). These ideas can be analyzed at a later stage. Brainstorming entails suggesting ideas first and analyzing them later. If these two periods overlap, innovative and creative solutions are less likely to emerge.

Fourth Stage: Reaching an Agreement

The best options to satisfy the parties' interests are selected. For "zero-sum" variables, where one party obtains what the other one loses, it may be useful to resort to independent legitimacy criteria: look for a method to define the value that appears fair to both parties.

Finally, each party compares the negotiated agreement to its best alternative and, if better, both parties sign it. The relationship between the parties tends to change after signing the agreement, since the maximum tension experienced prior to settling the agreement is over. Receptiveness and satisfaction resulting from having reached an agreement sometimes pave the way for new opportunities to share more information and think of new options, which may give rise to additional clauses that improve the agreement for both parties.

These are the four basic stages in a negotiation process. They can be implemented in this order or differently, depending on the number of issues to negotiate and the parties' interests.



Source: *Negotiation and Conflict Management Program, INDES, IDB*. Graph based on Fisher, R., Ury, W. and Patton, B. (1985). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin.

Unit Summary

There are three basic recommendations for every negotiator: "Be prepared, be prepared, and be prepared."

In this unit, we have dealt with negotiation as a process for which project team members can become prepared systematically based on the nine element model presented above –communication, relationship, positions, arguments, interests, options, legitimacy, alternatives, and agreement. This model helps think about one's own and the other parties' interests. It is key to go beyond positions to identify underlying interests, to move from value distribution to a model where both parties cooperate to create value before distributing it.

We have presented four negotiation stages that we and our counterparts can identify and implement to achieve satisfactory agreements: establishing communication and relationships, identifying interests, coming up with options, and reaching an agreement.

In the following module, we will examine a series of skills that help the other party share its interests with us and approach negotiation collaboratively.

Before that, we will review, integrate, and reinforce the concepts and skills examined in this first module by means of a series of activities.

The first activity consists in examining a case using the course concepts. The second is a group activity intended to apply the conceptual framework dealt with above to an actual negotiation process experienced by team members. Then participants will have to take the first module test. Finally, we will hold the first meeting with the tutor to look into some aspects of project plan implementation using the In Action Review methodology.

Bibliography

- Bazerman, M. and Malhotra, D. (2007). *Negotiation Genius*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Bohm, D. (1997). *Sobre el diálogo*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Kairos.
- Fisher, R., Ury, W. and Patton, B. (1985). *Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Fisher, R. and Shapiro, D. (2005). *Beyond Reason*. New York: Viking.
- Ingouville, F. (2004). *Relaciones Creativas*. Buenos Aires: Gran Aldea editores.
- Kofman, F. (2001). *Metamanangement*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Granica.
- Kohlrieser, G. (2006). *Hostage at the table*. New Jersey: Jossey Bass.
- Lax, D. and Sebenius, J. (1986). *The Manager as Negotiator*. Boston: Free Press.
- Lax, D. and Sebenius, J. (2006). *3D Negotiation*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Rosenberg, M. (2006). *Comunicación No Violenta*. Buenos Aires: Gran Aldea Editores.
- Senge, P. (2004). *La quinta disciplina en la práctica*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Granica.
- Smith, D. (2008). *Divide or Conquer: How Great Teams Turn Conflict into Strength*. New York: Portfolio.
- Stone, D., Patton, B. and Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Ury, W., Brett, J. & Goldberg, S. (1988). *Getting Disputes Resolved: Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict*. Cambridge: Jossey-Bass.
- Ury, W. (1998) *Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreements Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Watzlawick, P., Helmick Beavick, J. and Jackson,D (1981). *Teoría de la comunicación humana*. Barcelona: Editorial Herder.

2

Influence and Informal Authority, Key Skills

MODULE INTRODUCTION

For a development project to move forward, team members need to negotiate with multiple stakeholders to have them align their interests to the project objectives.

In the previous module we presented and applied basic principles of communication and negotiation, and we discussed their significance for the development project success.

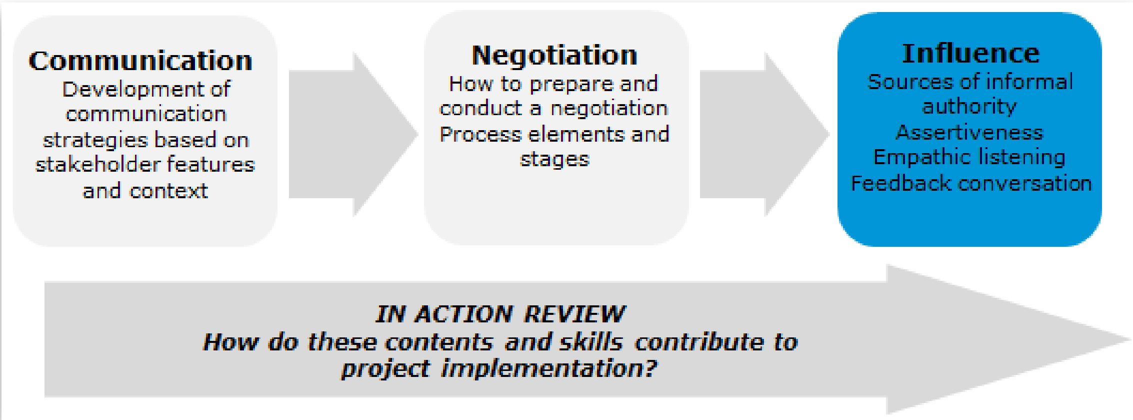
In this module, we will present and practice the interpersonal skills that are crucial for effectively exercising influence.

In any project, it is almost impossible to achieve results without influencing others, whether we have formal authority over them or not.

OVERALL MODULE GOALS

By the end of this module, participants will be able to communicate effectively in order to exercise their influence on the project plan implementation.

Unit I: Informal Authority



Learning Goals

2.I.1. To raise awareness among team members of the importance of informal authority for project success.

2.I.2. To identify different resources to strengthen our own informal authority.

2.I.1. Informal Authority

Development projects involve stakeholders who are not subject to the formal authority of team members (officials from governments and multilateral agencies, local authorities, and beneficiaries, among others). Team members need to reach agreements with them and must, therefore, take into consideration their expectations, motivation, and interests.

Moreover, for those reporting to the project coordinator and other people responsible for team management, the ability to influence is vital. Project success requires not only the completion of certain tasks, but also genuine commitment to the project and its goals, as well as the willingness to work as a team with other stakeholders.

In other words, people leading the project need to exercise their informal authority over different stakeholders, whether they are vested with formal authority over them or not.

Informal authority is exercised whenever there is influence of one individual over another. For this authority to be legitimate, the person exercising influence must able to assert, through attitudes and actions, his/her own trustworthiness and credibility; therefore, its existence is dynamic and changes with every relationship.

In sum, the ability of team members to influence those who collaborate with the project lies not only in their reporting structure but also –*and mainly*– in their informal authority.

2.I.2. Sources of Informal Authority

What makes you have more or less influence over people who you need to coordinate project actions with?

Informal authority depends on several factors:

- **Technical Expertise**: When someone has expert knowledge of a relevant project area, they become a source of reference and their opinion tends to be respected and valued.
- **Collaborative Attitudes**: Taking the example in Module 1, Román Alberti and his team are more likely to influence people at the Public Works Ministry if they understand their worries and show genuine interest in addressing them, instead of just trying to impose their position; i.e. if they conduct the negotiation collaboratively as we described above.
- **Consistency, Coherence, and Commitment**: When people are consistently true to their word, they become trustworthy and reliable.
- **Consideration of Other People's Expectations**: When we feel that our expectations (of expressing our views and be heard, of being taken into account, of having our identities and status recognized, etc.) are considered, we are more likely to commit to a project and/or initiative.

Testimonial from a Colleague:

"At the beginning of a project, motivations are diverse and varied. The key to success is the coordinator's ability to create a bond with his/her colleagues, honoring each person's interests and expectations, as well as the project integrity and goals. This task requires a strong will, patience, and tolerance of frustration."

- **Social Capital**: Informal trust relations represent a major source of influence for project success. A project team made up of "highly connected" individuals will have a clear advantage in terms of their power of influence.

***For example**, when trying to influence a stakeholder that is opposed to some key aspect of the project, team members are more likely to succeed if someone in the team has a close personal relationship with the stakeholder and/or someone close to him/her. In fact, such informal relation may be crucial for the team to gather information about the underlying motivation and interests that make the stakeholder take a stand against the project, and about how to create conditions to gain his/her support and consent.*

Furthermore, there are always team members who know what goes on inside groups because they are linked to other team members, even if they have no decision power. In an influence process it is useful to be in contact with someone who fits that profile, because they can frequently offer information about other groups and how decisions are being processed. To what extend are you and your colleagues trying to optimize and strengthen your informal influence networks?

- **Empathic Listening**: Feeling understood by someone who is genuinely interested in our opinion and point of view is highly gratifying. Even if that person does not agree with us, we tend to consider him/her a more legitimate listener than someone who judges us or does not understand what our words mean to us. When Román and his team contact the technical experts at the Public Works Ministry, will they be able to listen to their concerns empathically?
- **Communicate Assertively:** Assertiveness is the ability to be clear and firm in our communications while showing respect and consideration. It is different from passiveness or aggressiveness. As we will see further in this module, people with a passive communication style express themselves with little emphasis and fail to achieve their goals, frequently for fear of damaging the relationship. Those with an aggressive communication style express themselves in ways that trigger defensive reactions in their audience. An assertive communication style helps us state the truth clearly and emphatically, without making our listener feel criticized or mistreated.

What source of informal authority would you like to reinforce with respect to other team members, other people working in your project, or with project beneficiaries?

Unit Summary

In this unit, we have highlighted the significance of informal authority to contribute to project results effectively. We have learned that this authority results from many factors, and we have asked you to identify which of these factors you would like to reinforce in your key project relations: More social capital or better use of the existing one? Enhanced collaboration skills? More care to meet your commitments? A more empathic attitude? More assertiveness? What do you need to improve to become a more influential and effective stakeholder?

Unit II: Empathic Listening

This module aims at enabling participants to communicate effectively in order to exercise influence on the project plan implementation. To this end, this second unit will deal with empathic listening skills.

Learning Goals

2.II.1. To become aware of the impact of empathic links on an influence process.

2.II.2. To learn how to use empathic listening to identify the stakeholders' underlying interests and needs.

2.II.1. Empathic Listening

When we listen to another person our responses are usually based on our own mental model. In other words, we express our opinions and suggestions:

"I think that what is actually happening here is …"

"I think in this case you should…"

There are certain situations when these responses satisfy our audience's needs and expectations, for example:

- when we are asked for advice;
- when certain information is needed from us;
- when the other person is interested in learning our opinion or exchanging ideas about a certain topic.

Empathic listening is a different way of responding. When we listen empathically, we:

- express our opinions and beliefs after listening to the other person;
- set out to understand the meaning and significance of the ideas and experiences expressed by the other person; and
- make a conscious effort to answer in a way that will make our audience feel understood.

Empathy is easy to understand in theory. However, practicing it is harder, because we have acquired non empathic habits. What are these habits? What non empathic answers do you usually give? To answer these questions, let us consider the following hypothetical example.

The Execution Agency manager, Ana María, talks to a collaborator in her team. He is 29 and his name is Antonio, and he is reluctant to implement a decision Ana María has made.

Let's imagine that Alberto, Antonio's boss, has been absent for two weeks. Alberto is in charge of assessing and monitoring the project, of tracking indicators, and managing the results matrix. Alberto and Antonio have been working together in this project for two and a half years. After undergoing unexpected heart surgery, Alberto needs to rest for three or four months. According to Ana María, the only person in the team with the knowledge and skills required to fill this position is Antonio. Ana María is willing to provide him with operative support through an assistant. However, Antonio is reluctant to accept this responsibility. Ana María is furious, because she thinks Antonio is more than qualified for the position. According to what she has heard from other team members, Antonio doesn't seem to be as committed to the project as he used to be, and he has been arriving late to the office.

In her conversation with Antonio, Ana María asks him about his reasons for refusing to take on the responsibilities of the job. Antonio answers that these responsibilities are not his, and that he'd rather say no than take risks and make mistakes that would cause the project trouble.

Ana María notices that what she is hearing from Antonio are positions and arguments. Taking into account the concepts presented in this first module, what can she do to identify his interests? In other words, how can Ana María move the conversation forward to learn the real worries and reasons that make Antonio refuse her proposal? How will she establish a relationship where Antonio will be more willing to support her initiative?

Part of the answer to these questions lies in Ana María's ability to listen to Antonio empathically. Empathic listening is a powerful skill that helps identify our counterparts' interests and build relationships with more influence and collaboration.

During this course we will focus on empathic listening implementation. Before that, we would like you to reflect on your daily non empathic behaviors when faced with a situation in which someone puts up resistance, like in the case of Antonio and Ana María.

To help you solve this exercise, we describe eight non empathic answers that Ana María could express in her conversation with Antonio. Then, we will contrast them with empathic answers.

Frequent Non-Empathic Responses

1. Giving Orders or Commands

"I won't accept that you turn me down, Antonio. As from this Monday you will assume the responsibilities I told you about, and that's it. Is that clear?"

2. Threatening or Warning

"I'd expect a different answer from a person with your expertise and intelligence, Antonio. If I ever hear again that you make such a negative comment, we'll have to seriously reconsider your participation in the project."

3. "Preaching" and/or Telling One's Own Experience

"In life, it is very important to take the opportunities we are offered, Antonio. This is what successful people do. When I was your age, I went through a similar situation. It turns out that…"

4. Calming People Down

"Antonio, I don't think you should worry about this so much. Your performance is very positive. Both the Secretary and I think highly of your work and value your management. You have all our support."

5. Judging, Criticizing, Blaming

"Antonio, your reaction is childish and unjustifiable."

6. Agreeing

"You're right, Antonio. We'd better wait until your boss is back. After all, we can't risk the project for an unexpected health problem."

7. Understating the Issue and/or Changing the Subject

"This is it, Antonio. Like it or not, you are in charge of this area now until your boss is back. Now, turning to something important, when will you have the weekly report ready?"

8. Defending Oneself

"I have ample experience in making this type of decisions, and I'm offended that you should question the validity of my judgment."

Antonio reports to Ana María; therefore, she may have Antonio do what she is asking by using some of these strategies. In such case, Antonio would not be acting out of conviction, but out of respect for his superior and/or fear of retaliation. Now, it is worth considering how important Antonio's commitment to his new role is for Ana María, and what the cost would be if she imposed her position through the use of formal authority. Later, we will illustrate a possible empathic response by Ana María, and the impact it would have on her informal authority and on her interests.

So far, we have analyzed a series of non-empathic responses. Which would be Ana María's empathic responses to Antonio? We have already dealt with some empathic attitudes, such as:

- expressing our opinions and beliefs only after listening to the other person;
- setting out to understand the meaning and significance of the ideas and the experience expressed by the other person; and
- answering in such a way that makes the person feel understood.

What behaviors and actions fit these attitudes? On the one hand, messages promoting openness and questions. For instance, Ana María says, "*Tell me a bit more about what is troubling you so much. Why is this so important to you? What is worrying you, Antonio?*"

On the other hand, there is paraphrasing. By summarizing Antonio's main ideas, Ana María makes him feel understood. "*Correct me if I'm wrong, Antonio. You are concerned about two things: on the one hand, …, etc.*"

Finally, there is silence, which leaves space for people to express themselves and voice their deep concerns.

In this way, people are more likely to share their underlying interests, and we can build a relationship in which our counterparts feel secure, understood, and not threatened.

2.II.2. Empathic Listening in Practice

We will now illustrate empathic listening through a hypothetical dialogue between Ana María and Antonio.

Ana María: Antonio, I'd like to talk to you about how we can take care of the responsibilities in your area during the three months Alberto will be on leave. As you know, my proposal is clear. You have been working with Alberto assessing and monitoring the project for over two years. You know all the project details and stakeholders and Alberto trusts you. It wouldn't make any sense to appoint somebody else to replace Alberto during his unexpected absence

Antonio: Ana María, I thank you for your offer. In fact, I'm honored that you have thought of me. However, I wouldn't want to accept a responsibility and then regret it. So far, I've been in charge of merely operative tasks, implementing decisions adopted by Alberto. I don't feel I can take his place.

Ana María: What do you mean, Antonio? Can you explain yourself further?

Antonio: When he was in the office, Antonio y I had a successful work strategy. We reached a balance in which he made the decisions and I implemented them. Also, he conducted the face to face meetings; whereas I analyzed documents and wrote the e mails he validated before sending them.

Ana María: I see. So you feel comfortable with your current tasks, which consist mainly in accompanying Alberto in his decisions and responsibilities. Is that correct?

Antonio: That's right. It wasn't easy. We had several conflicts with Alberto over the first months, because we could not agree on several decisions. For the time being, I'd prefer to keep my

Ana María: This means that now that you have become familiar with your tasks and are valued, the prospect of changing and facing new challenges seems far from attractive, is that so?

Antonio: Yes, that's right. Besides, these new responsibilities would bring me into the spotlight, and they will demand a lot of time.

Ana María: What is it that worries you the most about that?

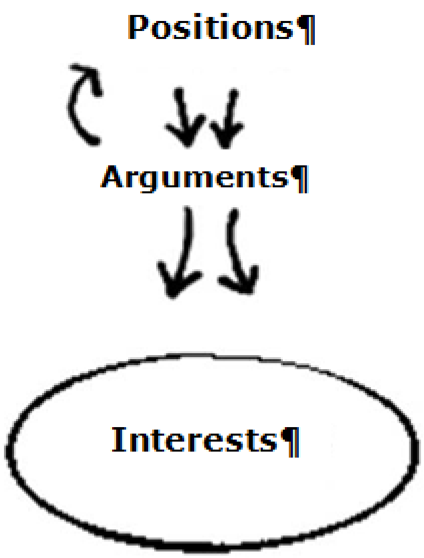
Antonio: Well, I also have to take care of other important things apart from work". (Ana María looks at Antonio in silence; there is a pause in the conversation and the Antonio proceeds). I have returned to my studies and exams are coming on soon. I've promised myself this time I would graduate. I have resumed my studies and quit several times, and that has hindered my professional development. Besides, I wouldn't like to make mistakes that might affect my reputation.

Ana María: So what you are saying is that it's very important for you to avoid situations that may expose or harm your reputation, and make you neglect your studies. You foresee the effort and time replacing Alberto would entail and you don't think it can be compatible with your priorities right now, don't you?

Antonio: That's right. However, I must admit I'm interested in this opportunity. Before resuming my studies, I was often upset about implementing Alberto's decisions without being able to introduce my own initiatives and participate in meetings.

Ana María: This means that, although this might not be the

As shown in this dialogue, the empathic attitude adopted by Ana María, expressed through questions, silences, and paraphrasing, creates a bond with Antonio that makes him feel understood, rather than judged or under pressure. In turn, Ana María has more information than she had at the beginning of the conversation about Antonio's concerns. In other words, she has learnt about the interests underlying his positions and arguments.



It is only then that Ana María will answer Antonio and involve him in finding a solution.

So far in the conversation between Ana María and Antonio he feels understood, and she has managed to identify Antonio's main interests.

It is only then that Ana María will answer Antonio and involve him in finding a solution.

Ana María: Antonio, I think it is fair that, in case you decide to assume new responsibilities, we create the conditions for you to feel comfortable, without exposing you to stressful or upsetting situations, and take care of your studies and the project needs. Do you agree?

Antonio: Yes, I think so.

Ana María: This year I have set out to improve the reputation of our sector. That's why I've agreed with the Vice Minister to improve schedule compliance. We are one month behind schedule and I think that is, in part, because I and other unit heads have become the bottleneck for many decisions. Don't you think so?

Antonio: Yes.

Ana María: I see you are organized and responsible, and have enough learning capacity and motivation to grow professionally. You also find it important to avoid mistakes that may expose you to criticism and other stressful situations, don't you?

Antonio: Yes, of course.

Ana María: How can we help you take this opportunity so that you can address the project needs without neglecting your studies or exposing you to situations that may play against you in the future?

Ana María: Given the circumstances, it sounds realistic. Can you think of any other way of advancing the project schedule?

Antonio: I'm not sure. I'd have to think about it.

Ana María: I'm going to see if I can think of anything myself and you do the same. We can talk it over again this Wednesday. What do you think?

Antonio: That's fine.

Ana María: Now, I'd like you to meet Marcos, who will be your assistant in the next months, so that you can delegate some of your operative tasks. Do you need help with that?

Antonio: I'm worried Alberto might disagree with my decisions when he's back.

Ana María: What would make you feel more comfortable?

Antonio: I don't know. Perhaps if you could talk to him before he is back in the office.

Ana María: I'd be glad to do that. You can count on it.

Antonio: And delegating tasks to Marcos won't be easy.

Ana María: Sure it won't be easy, but I'm asking you to try. This is very important to me as well, and I'm ready to help you with anything you need.

Antonio: Alright. I'll speak to Marcos today, and we'll meet on Wednesday to keep on working.

Ana María: Would Wednesday at 4 p.m., here in the office work out for you?

We can summarize the advantages of empathic listening as follows:

- It avoids misunderstandings.
- It helps speakers feel respected and valued.
- It helps speakers express their feelings and thoughts, and organize and clarify them.
- It helps speakers come up with their own solutions.
- It shows trust. It is a powerful way to help team members become more responsible and independent, and differs from advice and directives, which take responsibility off our counterparts.
- It helps our counterparts be open and willing to listen to us after we have listened to them.
- It helps us identify our counterparts' true concerns and needs.

Unit Summary

Empathic listening is a communication skill that helps influence other stakeholders in a development project. In communication, it shows the desire to hear and understand the concerns and needs of others, and to create a bond where they will feel understood.

Empathic listening requires:

- accepting that others are different from us, with their own world views;
- proposing solutions and drawing conclusions only after listening to the other person;
- being confident that people will be able to find their own answers to a problem, once they feel understood and involved;
- being truly interested when inquiring (e.g. Ana María: *Are you worried about any other aspect of the change?*)
- paraphrasing (e.g. Ana María: *Now that you are familiar with your tasks and you have achieved recognition for them, the prospect of changing and facing new challenges is far from attractive to you, isn't it?*);
- remaining silent to encourage people to continue speaking and to make them feel respected instead of judged;
- creating ideal conditions to use another skill: involving our counterparts, by means of questions, in generating options that will satisfy both interests (e.g. Ana María: "*How can we ensure that you address the project needs without neglecting your studies or being exposed to situations that may play against you in the future?*").

Unit III: Assertiveness

Since this module is intended to teach participants to communicate efficiently in order to effectively influence others during project plan implementation, in this unit we will work on assertiveness.

Learning Goals

2.III.1. To become aware of the significance of developing an assertive communication style to exercise influence.

2.III.2. To strengthen our own ability to communicate clearly and firmly, without damaging our relationships.

2.III. 1. Assertiveness

"Assertiveness" is the ability to speak clearly and firmly, without making our audience feel criticized or interpret our words as impositions.

As a strategy and a communication style, assertiveness is different from two extreme behaviors: aggressiveness and passiveness –or submissiveness.

Being passive entails using vague expressions, easily ignored by our audience when they compete with other interests or concerns (e.g. "If possible, I would like you to mind our commitments a little more next time"). **In contrast**, when being aggressive we use expressions that our audience will easily interpret as criticisms (e.g. "You always find some excuse not to keep to our agreement") or expressions that our audience will interpret as impositions (e.g. "This can't happen again").

Assertiveness is a way of conveying our opinions without attacking or offending others, or making them do something against their will. It is a conscious, consistent, clear, direct, and balanced way of expression.

Through effort and practice, individuals can become assertive. Under what circumstances would you like to be more assertive? How can you develop a more assertive communication style?

Below we include some of the most typical assertive behaviors.

- Speaking in the first person, stating how the other person's behavior has affected you.

"Because of your delay I cannot meet my commitments to the program supplier, which is very important to me."

- Explaining what you want for the future briefly and clearly.

"Let's talk about this now to solve the problem as soon as possible, and then agree on what to do to prevent these situations from happening again."

- Asking for feedback and involving your audience.

"What do you think?"

- Speaking with self-confidence, instead of anxiety, guilt, or anger.
- Structuring and organizing ideas in writing beforehand when messages are complex or situations are likely to heighten our feelings.

2.III.2. Saying "No"

Assertive communication is particularly very useful when saying "no" to another person's request.

Saying "no" may be uncomfortable and hard, because our audience is prone to feel challenged and upset; they may react with irritation and anger, and all of this may damage our relationship. If the conflict escalates, other stakeholders might become involved making the team and the project come under the spotlight for the wrong reasons.

To avoid these situations and their consequences, we often opt for three pointless actions. One unproductive option is accommodating the request by saying “yes” when we really mean “no.” In this case we protect our relationships by putting our interests and needs aside. This often leads to resentment and ends up affecting relationships.

Another unproductive option is saying “no” without taking into account the relationship with our counterparts. We often support our negative answers with the project terms, but we fail to consider our counterparts’ needs and, again, this impacts our relationships negatively.

The third unproductive option is avoiding conflict altogether, saying nothing and waiting for the problem to somehow disappear, which sometimes happens when the issue is of little importance for both parties. However, if this is not the case, the problem may be exacerbated if not managed timely. Therefore, indifference does not work.

In view of this, how can we say “no” while protecting our relationships? That is, how can we meet our needs and protect our relationships by saying “no”?

Maybe the biggest mistake when giving a “no” for an answer is stating what we do not want instead of starting off with what we want. This tends to move the conversation toward disagreement, instead of toward a joint solution to a problem.

A useful tool is the “Positive No” method, developed by William Ury[2]. The “Positive No” is a conversational method integrating the power of two essential words in our language: “yes”, as a form of acceptance, and “no”, as an expression of individuality, consolidating the limits and satisfaction of personal needs.

Positive No as a YES-NO-YES Sequence:

1) The first “YES” entails understanding the feelings and needs of others, thus creating a bond.

[2] Ury, W. (2007). *The Power of a Positive No*. New York: Random House.

2) “NO” is the way we express our own feelings and/or needs assertively in relation to the request or situation.

3) The last “YES” entails making a proposal, expressed as a request or an offer, contemplating the counterparts’ interests, thus creating an opportunity to strengthen the relationship without affecting personal satisfaction.

***1 YES**: “I understand that a personal problem has prevented you from arriving on time, and that you have some unfinished work from yesterday”*

***2 NO**: “but I also need to finish the conclusions of today’s report before 5 pm to meet my commitment to a program beneficiary, and I cannot postpone delivery until tomorrow”*

***3 YES**: “so I'd like you to prioritize this task. We can meet briefly after lunch to discuss what pending tasks can be postponed. What do you think?*

Coming back to our “Urbanization of Irregular Settlements” project, Román Alberti and his team are faced with an important challenge involving the Mayor. He has promised a neighbor that he would “solve” his housing problem, but his promise goes beyond the project scope. Therefore, Román and his team will have to tell the Mayor that they cannot comply with his request.

Let us see how they can say “no” implementing the method above.

First, they have to show interest and consideration for the request. At this stage, they should ask about his promise/request and check on their understanding of the matter. The goal here is to make the other feel understood.

> *“Mr. Mayor, we know you spoke to a neighbor about his housing problem and that you promised a solution. We understand that this issue is crucial to you and your administration, and that it would be very important for you to keep your word. Is this right?”*

Once their counterpart feels understood, they should state they own interests and needs, and make it clear that agreeing to the request would be detrimental to them. In sum, they should communicate their interests before saying "no."

> *"However, project implementation is extremely important to us as well. There are 220 families who depend on us completing the project to have their homes delivered before Christmas. Neighbors have been involved in several project decisions, and we have agreed on applying equitable criteria for house allocation. This commitment is in black and white and has had media coverage. Any exception would give rise to protests, both by beneficiary neighbors and by those outside the scope of the project. It would also jeopardize the project schedule and our image in the community. Therefore, we hope you understand that we cannot give houses to neighbors not living on the main street."*

Finally, they will offer help to satisfy their counterpart's needs, as long as these do not compromise their own interests.

> *"Our team wants to support you and your administration, so if there is any way in which we can help this neighbor and others, while safeguarding the objectives and scope of our project, we would like to talk about it. What do you think?"*

Under what circumstance would you like to apply the "YES NO YES" method during the next week? Would it be useful to rehearse it with some colleagues to feel comfortable with it?

Unit Summary

The communication challenge does not always involve listening to our counterparts. Sometimes we need to express ourselves to clarify our perspectives, our needs, and even our negative responses. In this unit we have seen that we communicate a message clearly and firmly, while protecting our relationships by:

- Speaking in the first person and stating how the other person’s behavior has affected us.
- Explaining what we want for the future briefly and straightforwardly.
- Asking for feedback and involving the other party.
- Expressing ourselves with self confidence.
- Structuring our ideas before the conversation.
- Using the YES-NO-YES sequence if we have to say “no.”

We will review, integrate, and reinforce the contents and skills learned in this second module through a series of activities.

The first of them is a forum to discuss concrete experiences with your colleagues. The second one will be an individual case analysis activity. Then, you will take a content acquisition test. Finally, you will have a synchronized meeting with your tutor. During this meeting you and your team will role play a situation where you will put empathic listening and assertiveness into practice through a videoconference. You will also have another session to reflect on your project plan using the In Action Review methodology.

Bibliography

Bohm, D. (1997). *Sobre el diálogo*. Bs.As: Kairos Publishing House.

Bradford D. L. and Cohen A. R. (1998). *Power Up: Transforming Organizations through Shared Leadership*. San Francisco: Martín Wiley & Sons, Inc..

Echeverría, R. (2000). *La Empresa Emergente*. Buenos Aires: Granica Publishing House.

Gordon, T. (2001). *Leader Effectiveness Training L.E.T.: The Proven People Skills for Today's Leaders*. New York: Perigee Trade-Penguin.

Kofman, F. (2001). *Metamanagement*. Buenos Aires: Granica Publishing House.

Kohlrieser, G. (2006). *Hostage at the table*. Nueva Jersey: Jossey Bass.

Heifetz, R. (1998). *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Kotter, J.P. (1990). *A Force for Change*. New York: The Free Press –.

Kouzes J.M. and Posner B.Z. (1997). *The Leadership Challenge (4th Edition)*. San Francisco: Juan Martín Wiley & Sons, Inc..

Rosenberg, M. (2006). *Comunicación No Violenta*. Buenos Aires: Gran Aldea Publishing House.

Stone, Douglas., Patton, B. and Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. Nueva York: Viking Penguin.

Ury, W. (1998). *Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreements Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin Books.

Ury, W. (2007). *The Power of a Positive No*. New York: Random House.

Unit IV: Feedback Conversation

This module is intended to teach participants to communicate efficiently in order to effectively influence others during project plan implementation.

Learning Goal

2.IV.1. To learn to hold feedback conversations that foster trust, alignment, and learning in work relationships.

2.IV.1. Feedback Conversation

Feedback is a key practice that facilitates productive work relationships. How familiar are you with this practice?

Any person taking part in a project knows him-/herself. On the other hand, those who are acquainted with that person have certain understanding of his/her personality. Therefore, through a feedback conversation we can learn to recognize aspects of our behavior and the impact they may have on others.

It is, therefore, essential to give feedback empathically, respectfully, and constructively, so as to gather information on aspects needing improvement.

Apart from helping us recognize the impact of our actions on other people and on the project, feedback conversations can challenge or confirm our assumptions about other people, and other people's assumptions about us, and therefore enhance trust and align expectations. Feedback is also useful to give and receive recognition, and to identify mistakes and opportunities for improvement.

Feedback conversations are sometimes associated with formal conversations between bosses and team members. However, in this course we present and implement feedback conversations as a face to face exchange with another colleague –regardless of our position in the organizational chart– with a focus on sharing mutual perceptions of each other and of the work experience, so as to achieve increased satisfaction and better results.

Some good practices to prepare and hold a feedback conversation include:

- **Relying on facts and observations that are not biased by judgments or interpretations**. If our observations are biased by judgments and interpretation, people are more likely to react defensively and try to prove us wrong. However, if our words are neutral, people will be willing to recognize them without being defensive and will be ready to learn.

Rather than saying, "*the report was poor,*" we can say, "*I'd like to go over some differences between the last report you presented and the model report I sent you.*"

- **Avoiding reference to people's intentions as perceived by us**. It is more productive to communicate how other people's behavior has impacted on us. Nobody knows better than ourselves what we like and what we do not like. However, speculating about other people's intentions is just a guessing game, since only the other party knows their motivations.

Rather than saying, "*You shouldn't have been disrespectful to the beneficiary,*" we can say, "*You were raising your voice when speaking to the beneficiary. I'm worried about how that might affect our relationship with him and the possibility to have his support for the next stages.*"

- **Using the first person**. Using the first person will result in a more collaborative conversation and build a closer bond, as opposed to speaking on behalf of the project or "by the book."

Rather than saying, "*The project requires a more proactive attitude form us,*" we can say, "*I'm interested in developing a more proactive attitude for the next stage of the project.*"

- **Focusing on a desired future action**. When the feedback conversation focuses on the past, it is more likely to give rise to self justifying and defensive messages, and to place emphasis on what happened or did not happen, and on what should have happened. Instead, when we look to the past to learn a lesson for the future, we are more likely to engage in a more productive conversation.

Rather than saying, "*I think you shouldn't have acted like that,*" we can say, "*How would you like to handle your next communication with this beneficiary?*"

- **Responding to defensive justifications in a non defensive way**. Even if we implement the course skills, people tend to defend and justify themselves. In these cases, it is important not to imitate that behavior, i.e. we should not respond to a defensive answer in a defensive way and we should not justify ourselves in case of a justification. If we did so, we would be increasing tension rather than having a conversation that provides a learning opportunity. When people defend or justify themselves, it is best to listen to them and then focus on the future and the possibility to learn from that dialogue.

Rather than saying "*but*", we can say "*at the same time*." *When we say something positive about a person and then continue with "but" followed by something negative, the first aspects completely loses importance.*

*By way of example, look at this sentence. "Lorenzo, your work is really good **but** you delivered late." The importance of the good work is completely lost.*

*By contrast look at the following statement. "Lorenzo, your work is really good. **At the same time** you delivered late." The perception of good work is not invalidated, so it is likely to be better received.*

- **Focusing on others and on ourselves**. It is difficult to influence others if we are not consistent with our proposals. If we engage in a conversation to foster change and learning in others, and we are not willing to change or learn ourselves from the conversation, we are less likely to have an influence on that person. Therefore, we have to prepare ourselves for a feedback conversation taking into account it will probably be a conversation that helps us learn and/or change behaviors and perceptions.

Unit Summary

A feedback conversation is a powerful communication tool to enhance trust, align expectations, correct mistakes, and express recognition among colleagues. Not holding productive feedback conversations may take a heavy toll on a team. At the same time, for the conversation to actually add value, it is important to approach the situation with good communication skills. The skills dealt with in this course are geared to achieve such a goal. In addition, the following practical recommendations can be useful to approach a feedback conversation effectively:

- Refer to facts and observations that are not biased by judgments or interpretations.
- Avoid speculating about other people's intentions.
- Use the first person.
- Focus on desired future actions.
- Do not respond defensively to defensive justifications.
- Focus on others and on ourselves.

To strengthen these concepts and integrate them with the other contents and skills from this module of the program, we will carry out a series of activities through the course's virtual classroom. Then you should complete the contents evaluation.

Finally, a second synchronized meeting with the mentor will take place. During this, an activity will take place in which you and your fellow team members will be able to put into practice the skills of communication, negotiation, empathetic listening and assertiveness through a role play during a videoconference. We will also reflect on the results of applying these concepts to the real circumstances of your project with the help of the *In Action Review methodology*.

Bibliography

Bradford D. L. and Cohen A. R. (1998). *Power Up: Transforming Organizations through Shared Leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Gordon, T. (2001). *Leader Effectiveness Training L.E.T.: The Proven People Skills for Today's Leaders*. New York: Perigee Trade-Penguin

Kouzes J.M. and Posner B.Z. (1997). *The Leadership Challenge (4th Edition)* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Stone, D., Patton, B. and Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Viking Penguin.


BID
Mejorando vidas
PM4R
cc
BY SA