



RICE

MANUAL FOR
NEGOTIATING WITH RUSSIANS

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OUTLINE

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NEGOTIATING WITH RUSSIANS

I. OBJECTIVES

To become familiar with the cultural differences that affect Russian-American negotiations and the business environment

To understand the Russian approach to negotiations and learn to overcome frequently used tactics

To acquire an approach, strategy, and tactics for negotiating with the Russians that will produce agreements that (1) serve the interests of both parties and (2) foster the long-term Russian-American relationship

To learn to prepare for negotiations and meetings with the Russians

II. REVIEW

A. The Context Spectrum

B. Monochronic and Polychronic Time

III. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS

To cultivate sound intercultural relationships that make agreements possible, our behavior, actions, and the proposals we make must accommodate the broad, underlying values, perceptions, and cultural patterns of the other side. As is often the case with cultural variables, these factors may be "unconscious," i.e., are only noticed when they are "violated"; even when they are conscious, they may be taken as self-evident or not voiced for other reasons. Make it a point to maintain awareness of and capitalize on shared values.

A. Values

1. Shared Russian and American Values

National pride and patriotism; self-sufficiency and strength (both in terms of scale and might); intellectual and scientific achievement

2. Divergent Values

Russians	Americans
Trust in people, not institutions	Trust in institutions
Spiritual and cultural wealth	Material wealth
Order and stability	Risk-taking
Fair outcome	Fair play
Duty to the group	Individual rights
Greater truths/group consensus	Individual truth
Systemic, situational, composite, historic thinking and morality	Clear-cut, "binary" thinking and morality
Long-term relationships	Immediate friendliness
Emotionalism	Emotional reserve

3. Implications for Interaction

Trust in People, Not Institutions vs. Trust in Institutions. As we have seen, *proizvol*—arbitrariness on the part of authorities and institutions—is very deeply seated in Russian tradition, long predating the Soviet period. It can come to bear when Americans are perceived as not being well "connected" (that is, having good friends in important places): this perception may undermine a person's credibility even though the person's work is outstanding and the institutional backing for his or her word is solid. It may also result in suspicion at perceived American naivete with respect to faith in our government and its institutions. This difference becomes exacerbated when the American "point" people with whom the Russians are dealing are changed—the Russians may fear that "all bets are off" and that trust and confidence must be built anew.

Spiritual and Cultural Wealth vs. Material Wealth. Misunderstandings often result from the interplay of, on one hand, the Russians' reverence for their own spiritual and cultural wealth (and, to them, an apparent lack of appreciation of this on the American side), and on the other, the greater overt value Americans place on material wealth. The common ground between Russians and Americans here might best be sought in our shared respect for scientific, intellectual, and industrial achievement, and our considerable accomplishments to date. As always, to be effective we should assume equality unless objective measurement indicates to the contrary. Rather than

downplaying or outright abandoning our own values, we should be sure to appreciate and acknowledge those of our partners: take a step back and recognize that each side can make a valid contribution to a greater whole.

Order and Stability vs. Risk-Taking. Historically, Americans have generally been rewarded for taking risks, partially because of the vast resources available to us. In addition, we have no domestic experience with totalitarian or abusive government. Because of their historical experience, Russians are more wary of taking risks (e.g., with weather and the harvest—existence has always been more "marginal" in Russia). The powerful, centralized government has externalized the deeply-rooted Russian fear of anarchy and chaos in severe, and often, utterly draconian policies.

Fair Outcome vs. Fair Play. As a high-context group, the Russians always focus on the outcome of any process and its impact on all concerned; intermediate imbalances and even injustices are acceptable if they are resolved in the end. The American approach favors fair and equal treatment at each step along the way, implicitly trusting that fair steps will result in a fair outcome. Thus the Russians tend to be reluctant to approve individual phases of a project and accept new ideas until the whole picture has emerged, and will think their agreements through entirely before signing off on them.

Duty to the Group vs. Individual Rights. Placing the needs of the group over individual rights and advantage is the underpinning for the Russian preference for fair outcome. In Russia it is customary and expected that individuals will subordinate their will and rights to the needs of the collective—what's good for the group is more important than what's good for me. In keeping with this value, Russian negotiators will tend to have less personal identification with the positions they present than their American counterparts.

Greater Truth vs. Individual Truth. Americans consider independent thinking and action to be a basic requirement of a successful personality. In their own society, Russians generally feel that individual truths and actions independent of the group are selfish, foolish, and even suspect. (Note that the Russian word for dissident, *inakomyслиashchiy*, literally means "one who thinks differently," and has no connotation of civil disobedience, protest, etc.) Still, Russians hold great admiration for the American zeal for independent initiative and "can-do" attitude. When Americans say they need to consult with a superior and "get back with you," it may be a polite rejection; when Russians say it, it generally reflects their cultural need to obtain consensus. (It is also used as a negotiating tactic to exact concessions. Before entering into negotiations, it is always incumbent upon the Americans to identify who, in fact, has decision-making authority.)

Composite vs. Clear-Cut Thinking and Morality. Because Americans are generally low context in the work environment and owing to the much higher degree of stability and reliability in our institutions, Americans tend to be more "right or wrong" in our thinking ("Is it legal or not?"). The Russian approach will always favor a multifaceted, integrated understanding of situations, problems, and solutions. This view is supported by their polychronic perception of time. In the upshot, thinking is situational—relating to this specific point in time—and arrangements must make sense from where we are now in order to have validity, regardless of what was the case in the past. Similarly, Americans will tend to focus on specific issues and terms in isolation right from the start, whereas the Russian preference will be to begin with principles and the overall situation. Morality does not transfer from one cultural system to the next: *to be successful in interactions, it is critical to accept that in terms of their historical experience and situation, the Russians are "right"—and so are we.*

Long-Term Relationships v. Immediate Friendliness. As a high-context group the Russians devote great time, effort, and attention to building and maintaining their relationships, and take a long-term view of them, while Americans place value on being friendly right from the start. (Note, incidentally, the parallel in the different approaches to trust.) In practice this means that the Russians need much more time to become familiar with new people and ideas, which can only gradually be integrated into a larger picture in order for them to attain real meaning. Americans may "read" this as taking forever to get things done, lack of trust, unfriendliness, and so on. Particularly in initial encounters, the Americans may perceive stiff formality, which will gradually relax if things go well. On the Russian side, American friendliness may at first seem out of place or even promiscuous. For Russian-American relationships to be productive, the Russians must be allowed to incorporate new people and ideas into their lives at their own tempo. This requires Americans to slow their pace and lower their short-term expectations. This time will be "recouped" later on.

Emotionalism vs. Emotional Reserve. Russians are comfortable with their emotions, and trust them as important, "systemic" information about relationships and situations—part of the bigger matrix. They often display great emotion in their dealings with others, which should generally be interpreted as a measure of sincerity, caring, and commitment. Moreover, Americans may expect to encounter the full spectrum of emotions, ranging from effusive affection and sentimentality to disappointment and anger. By American standards, this degree of emotional expression is often perceived as indicative of a weak or inconsistent personality, or even fickleness, which are not valid assumptions with respect to the Russians. Americans downplay expressions of emotion in their interpersonal relations, particularly in the work place, and often "read" them as indicating that something is wrong—when, in

the Russian case, exactly the reverse may be true. Americans should anticipate emotionalism from their Russian counterparts, and not react to it or be put off by it. It is important to bear in mind that in different cultures emotions often convey different things.

B. Perceptions

The way Russians perceive themselves is no less important than their fundamental values. The Russian self-perceptions most likely to impact the Russian-American relationship and negotiations are:

"Positive" - caring for the common good, spiritually "chosen," culturally advantaged

"Negative" - inferior, backward, poor

Americans will do well to acknowledge the Russians' "positive" perceptions of themselves, and take great care to be sensitive about the "negative" ones.

Trust. The difference in Russian and American perceptions of trust is quite significant, yet does not reflect a difference in values: trust is equally important to both. The issue here is that each group has its own *approach* to trust. Unless the situation indicates otherwise, Americans tend to accord trust early and fully in the relationship, revoking it as necessary in accordance with the conduct of their partners. Russians start from the "zero" point and build trust, bit by bit, on the basis of observed behavior over time. As we will see later, these different approaches to trust need not impact the relationship or the negotiations process, as long as we maintain awareness that they are different.

IV. THE RUSSIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

A. Getting Acquainted

Introductions follow the same pattern as in the U.S., with the shaking of hands and reciprocal introductions. The exchange of business cards is a regular and expected part of any business encounter—make sure to have plenty on hand, especially when in Russia, and provide one to each person present, including the interpreter, if there is one. If you expect to have long-term relationships with Russians, it is a good idea to have business cards printed with Russian on the reverse side of the card, with your last name in capital letters. Although English may often be the language of discourse, this is not always true, and often at least one member of the Russian team—in fact,

often the person in charge—may have a poor grasp of English (but for a variety of reasons, may be reluctant to let on that this is the case).

Because of the Russians' need to get to know you before they can conduct business, do not expect too much to "get done" in an initial meeting or meetings. Remember, for the Russians, step number one is creating a relationship and this *is* getting something done. Be patient, plan on as much contact as possible, and let things unfold at their own pace.

Begin assessing your partner(s) immediately, in terms of ethnicity, standing in his or her organization, and length of time in this business or in his or her current position. Most important here is to start trying to identify the person who gets things done. This may not be the person who is presented as the head of the delegation or organization, and the person may not even be present. It can be useful to keep notes on the individuals: the Russians will be doing this, but in their heads.

B. Russian Business Practices

1. Venues

Business tends to be conducted in meeting rooms (as opposed to offices, unless they are large), and the atmosphere is usually formal and somewhat ceremonious. There will generally be a conference table with flowers, something to drink and perhaps eat (bottled water, tea, sweets). Meetings seldom begin before 10:00 in the morning, and last a long time. There will be talk, talk, and more talk before any substantive issues are broached, and you may find yourself getting bored. To make the most of your time in this situation, use the opportunity to try to understand the psychologies and interplay of the members of the Russian team, again, always seeking to identify the "movers and shakers." Come to meetings prepared to "context" your partners, that is, discuss the background of your organization and the players with an eye to historical development, key ideas and directions of work, and the overall economic, political, and social situations. Typical of the high-context environment, there will often be numerous interruptions as subordinates enter to confer with their superiors, and you should simply be patient and wait for each interruption to run its course.

Conducting business over meals certainly does occur in Russia, but the idea of a one-hour business lunch at which things really get accomplished is somewhat alien: the focus of mealtimes in Russia is interaction. Business is not conducted over breakfast. If you have lunch with your partners in the course of a longer business encounter, business subjects may surface, but talk will tend to center on "contexting" and catching up on affairs, not resolving issues. Evening meals at which business will be discussed will take the entire evening (see sections on meals and toasting in the General Russian-American

Cross-Cultural Communication Manual), and an hour or more of "getting in tune with one another" may pass before any substantive issues are brought up.

2. Key Elements in the Russian Business Environment

a. Polychronic Time in Affairs and Scheduling

As a high-context culture, Russians focus on gaining the complete understanding and consensus of all concerned, not on precision scheduling of concrete activities. Objectives and goals are important, but are thought to come together as the natural by-product of sound relationships and as a natural confluence of numerous processes, each with its own ebb and flow. Remember, this is fundamental, and is how Russian society is organized. Because of this and other factors (bureaucracy, fear, communications, Russian society in transition), it is often impossible for a Russian to provide you with specific dates and times by which objectives will be met, and this is not a reflection of the importance of the goals or the Russian's resolve to achieve them. It is not productive to pressure the Russians excessively regarding deadlines: Americans tend to convey commitment in terms of willingness to commit to specific, concrete schedules; for Russians, *precision scheduling is not related to commitment*.

b. Bureaucracy and Infrastructure

Russia has always been and remains notorious for its bureaucracy, which is steeped in tradition, risk-aversion, fear, and the poor communications and transportation infrastructure. In short, simply *everything* takes longer in Russia than it does in the United States, and you should adjust your expectations and requests accordingly. Higher-ups and colleagues must be consulted for any significant decisions, and this often takes longer than in the U.S., because the Russians will invariably opt to think things through completely before coming back with a response. Electronic office technology is only now starting to penetrate in Russia. It is expensive; support staff are unskilled in its use; there are chronic shortages of supplies, such as fax paper and ribbons; the power supply is erratic; and noisy and unreliable phone lines and a lack of switchboards complete this picture.

c. Respect and Reciprocity

Respect and reciprocity are essential to fruitful business relations with the Russians. Always seek to ensure parity—in the status and positions of negotiators; the use of languages; commitments and responsibilities (including financial); concessions; seating/standing arrangements; and the order of presentation. The Russians will often ask the Americans to go first in their presentations, and this makes them feel more comfortable. If you have clarity in your ideas and objectives, doing so

will not work to your disadvantage. One of the ways Russians convey respect is through strict observation of protocol and official courtesy, and this should be "read" as an expression of respect as opposed to rigid adherence to formality.

d. Predictability and Trust

Predictability and trust are essential for the Russians to maintain a working relationship with you. Do not make promises you cannot keep. Backing off from a promise or an agreement already made or attempts to renegotiate after the fact fundamentally erode the trust that is key to effective dealings with the Russians. If you have a solid working relationship, the Russians will keep their word. Do not remind them of commitments they have already made: Russians take their obligations seriously (one of the reasons they take so long to agree), and reminding them is demeaning and insulting.

e. Patience

Russians are extremely patient, often to the American disadvantage, as the American "internal clock" runs more quickly and Americans tend to want to make concessions in order to "get it over with." Plan meetings in such a way that you will not feel pressure to agree to something before you have to leave.

f. Managing Russian Workers

Managing and motivating Russian workers is a tricky business—witness how much difficulty the Russians themselves experience with this perennial problem. Although Russian workers are often depicted as lazy, this is an inaccurate and counter-productive view. Major factors at play here are the less acute perception of the importance of time and an ingrained lack of incentive and fear of assuming responsibility, which are legacies of the Soviet period. In the past, achievements were "rewarded" with increased quotas and other demands. As always, the key to success lies in contexting: relationships must be actively cultivated; the importance and value of each person must be acknowledged; and each must understand how his or her role is significant in the overall picture. Russians are generally not "self-starters," and often need more direction than their American counterparts, particularly at the beginning, but do not neglect them once things are underway.

C. Communications

Because of the poor communications situation in Russia, it is important to make a plan for staying in touch and agree on it with your partner. Bear in mind that on one

hand, communications are often not received or are received late, and on the other, that the response time is much longer than Americans are accustomed to. Build a fail-safe into your plan. For example, ask your counterpart to confirm receipt of all communications immediately (and in the spirit of parity and reciprocity, be prepared to do this yourself as well). This is not the same as asking for an immediate answer. In addition, be aware that it is difficult for the Russians to provide concrete dates and times, especially far in advance. They want to keep their word and honor their obligations, and lack of commitment to a concrete schedule reflects their wish to promise only what they are sure they can deliver. There are almost invariably factors and constraints over which the Russians are powerless.

V. THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP*

A. Introduction

The working relationship, however short- or long-term, is in some ways more important than any specific round of negotiations. The nature of this relationship not only affects the way we problem-solve on a day to day basis, it also governs our ability to influence our partners, the agreements we achieve, and how and even if those agreements are carried out. Given the positions the United States and Russia occupy as the two nuclear superpowers in the world—a situation not likely to change any time soon—this relationship is of particular importance.

Good relations are often confused with degree of agreement and/or approval of the other side's values or conduct. The United States withheld diplomatic recognition of the young Soviet government until 1933, among other reasons, as an expression of disapproval. The lack of communication severely limited the Americans' ability to directly influence the Russians and advocate for their own interests. This experience suggests the wisdom of keeping communication channels—the working relationship—operational despite extreme differences of opinion. The ill-advised move of severing relations is often a step taken to register disapproval. Yet in essence, allowing approval of deeds or values, which is a judgment, not an interest, to reign over interests can be at cross-purposes with the very interests of the party making the judgment. Nor is approval or level of agreement a productive way to measure the value of a relationship. Thus it behooves us to define our concept of and goals for a working relationship in such a way as to ensure that they advance our own interests, or at a minimum, are not in conflict with them, regardless of the situation.

*The approach and terminology used in this section are largely based on and adapted from Roger Fisher and Scott Brown, *Getting Together: Building Relationships as We Negotiate* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

B. Defining the Working Relationship

A good relationship is an adequate practice or tradition of dialog and problem-solving that efficiently produces solutions that meet the interests of those involved. It does so despite differences in values, perceptions, and interests. It is solid enough to facilitate on-going problem-solving even when the two parties have or develop opposing views of the relationship itself. Differences may never disappear. Although generally perceived to be the problem, differences are often the very foundation that makes having a relationship desirable or even possible.

Our goals in this relationship are positive substantive results and satisfaction with our situation; to achieve these goals, we must have a sound method of dealing with differences.

C. Managing and Enhancing the Working Relationship

The health of the working relationship may be measured in terms of six distinct components that must be used in balanced combination with one another.

1. Balance of reason and emotion
2. Understanding of interests, perceptions, and notions of fairness
3. Communication
4. Reliability
5. Persuasion, not coercion
6. Mutual acceptance

Our strategy should be unconditionally constructive, operating independently of disagreement, concessions, partisan perceptions, reciprocity, and the notion of "permanent sides." Each action and communication should not only serve us, but should also be good for the relationship.

D. Principles of Diplomatic Communication

The absence of common referents and language and cultural barriers are formidable obstacles and require a change in our assumptions and communications habits. In an intercultural situation we need a coherent and explicit communications strategy to overcome them.

1. Avoid making assumptions about what is "obvious."
2. Communicate frequently, but always be aware of your purpose. Clarify your objectives before speaking.

3. Use "we-messages." Our communications should be specific, not general; should be pitched from the perspective of our own needs, feelings, and interests; and should avoid judgments and blame.

"We didn't get the specifications until last week, so we can't finish the interface protocols until a month from now."

vs.

"You didn't give us the specifications on time so the whole schedule is screwed up."

4. Verify that your communication was understood. In intercultural situations we may safely assume that what our counterparts heard is something different from what we meant. Keep your statements short, pausing between them, and ask your partner to repeat what you said in his or her own words.
5. Ensure two-way communication. Statements often create resistance; questions generate options and answers. Be active in soliciting information on needs, feelings, interests, and reactions from your counterparts, and repeat what you understood them to say for verification.
6. Minimize sending mixed messages. The higher the number of "interests" represented (superiors, subordinates, third organizations), the greater the tendency to "edit" statements, reducing the information component to the lowest common denominator. Try to restrict the number of various "audiences" to a minimum by communicating in the smallest reasonable groups. Talk *to* your partners, not *at* them, resisting urges to debate or "grandstand." This requires special attentiveness and vigilance when speaking through interpreters, particularly in the formal negotiations environment.
7. Separate emotions from substance in your communications.
8. Convey acceptance and respect in your communications.
9. Always consult your partners before making decisions that affect them. If your partners are not consulted, they may feel coerced.
10. When working with interpreters, whether the setting is formal or casual, avoid "asides" to your compatriots that are not translated.
11. Social interactions are an excellent barometer of the state of the business relationship. Use time spent socializing and "contexting" to assess how this relationship is progressing.

VI. NEGOTIATION*

A. Introduction

The history of negotiations between the United States and Russia suggests there is significant room for improvement. The goal of more fruitful cooperation between the two countries is well served by reexamining our approach and understanding of what we mean by negotiations and agreement. A significant obstacle in this process is overcoming many decades of animosity and suspicion and recasting a fundamentally adversarial relationship as one of partners working side by side.

B. Negotiation Defined

A process entered into by two or more parties with the objective of obtaining results that are better than either would have achieved alone. This process consists of two distinct areas: *substance* (what the parties are negotiating about) and *process* (the rules or manner in which the negotiations are conducted and the actions each party takes). Negotiation is logical and viable only when each party stands to benefit from the process. Before commencing any negotiations, the parties should have an explicit understanding of their alternatives to negotiation: the "power" of each party in the negotiation process is directly proportional to their "BATNA"—Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. For the purposes of this training, we take it as axiomatic that both Russians and Americans stand to benefit from negotiations and cooperation.

C. Agreement Defined

Worthwhile agreements must be wise and durable, should resolve conflicts fairly and legitimately from the point of view of all participants, and must meet the interests of those involved. Ultimately the quality of an agreement can be measured in terms of the nature and quality of the working relationship within which it is achieved and implemented. It is most constructive to view an agreement as a process or a milestone, rather than as a result, because the implementation, or performance of the agreement may be of equal or greater importance than the fact it has been executed.

*The approach and terminology used in this section are based on and adapted from Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, second edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

D. Principled Negotiation vs. Positional Bargaining

"Us vs. them." In positional bargaining, each side establishes a finite spectrum of possibility by assuming set positions and then trying to "meet the other half way." This approach is inefficient, uncreative, and does not meet interests well. Egos become involved as the players come to identify with their positions. Positional bargaining relies on excessive use of will and power-play, and fosters adversity and an atmosphere of "us vs. them." Finally, as a process, the damage it may cause to the working relationship may far outstrip the importance of any specific agreement or round of negotiations. *Positional bargaining assumes the solution and works backwards through a series of sequential positions and/or concessions.*

"All of us together vs. the problem." Principled negotiation has none of these drawbacks. It places the participants side by side facing a common problem and generates creative options by exploring mutual interests and "expanding the pie." Throughout the negotiation process it provides the opportunity to enhance the working relationship by using the substance of the negotiations to fortify understanding and cooperation between the participants. *Principled negotiation explores the problem with the purpose of finding creative, mutually advantageous solutions.*

E. Stages of Principled Negotiation

1. Separate the people from the problem
2. Focus on interests, not positions
3. Generate a variety of options before deciding what to do
4. Make agreements based on objective standards

All of these steps should be taken in order, returning to them as necessary. Following these steps, one is always aware of one's "location" in the process, which makes it easier to keep one's bearings and "navigate" even in the midst of heated, complex negotiations.

VII. THE RUSSIAN APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS

A. Background

Russia has no schools where negotiators are trained, yet as we have seen, Russians have had to negotiate for virtually everything in their lives, and this continues to be true. Every interaction or transaction in Russian society involves a complicated yet

implicit and identifiable process of negotiation. The formal Russian negotiation process is equally complex, but is generally predictable.

With the scant exception of the new Russian capitalist class, the origins of Russian negotiating behavior are to be sought in deep cultural and historical preferences for collective decision-making (*soglasovanie*), which are duly reflected in Russia's institutional and bureaucratic culture. Russian institutions are strongly hierarchical, yet inter-institutional relations are conducted on the basis of complicated consensus between horizontal, parallel structures. Consensus-building was further reinforced by the administrative parallelism and deliberate duplication of bureaucratic structures and jurisdictions of the Soviet-period "command-administrative" system. The existence of sometimes dozens of agencies and departments that had responsibility for the same decision or policy area necessitated prolonged back and forth consultation, negotiation, and consensus-building.

B. The Russian Model of Negotiations

The positions the Russians bring to the negotiating table—frequently, the Americans' first exposure to them—are thus the culmination of the long and complex process of consensus-building. As a result, the Russians usually arrive with a seemingly fully elaborated set of proposals which they are, understandably, reluctant to change. Americans often encounter a Russian team that exhibits what by American standards is very little flexibility or creative thinking. The negotiation process feels scripted and overly formal.

As a result of the Russian consensus-building process, the primary and perhaps most important characteristic of Russian negotiating style is hard positional bargaining—in fact, the unattractiveness of changing positions already laboriously achieved leaves them little other alternative. The Russians' reluctance to begin the lengthy and convoluted consensus-building process anew has earned them the reputation of being "tough" negotiators, and has often given a distinctly "adversarial" cast to the negotiation process.

Quite naturally, the Russians expect their negotiation partners to arrive at the bargaining table with a similarly clear and explicit set of proposals. From a cultural point of view, the single most common friction-point between Americans and Russians is the American habit of presenting or creating new proposals at the bargaining table. The American propensity for "thinking on one's feet" frightens the Russians and generally leads to distrust, misunderstanding, and significant deterioration in the negotiating environment (and, of course, damages the working relationship overall).

The hierarchical component of Russian institutional culture is captured in the Russian saying "*Ia nachal'nik—ty durak*," literally, "I'm the boss and you're an idiot."

In the case of the Russian negotiating team, irrespective of the number of members on the team, there is usually one person who is indisputably the team leader. This person's role is similar to the persona of a military commander, and the other team members are used by the leader as sources of information and as personal assistants. If anyone on the team is actually empowered to make decisions, it will be the leader.

Frequently the Russian team comprises several different Russian agencies or organizations. There is usually a hierarchy among them as well, although this is sometimes less explicit. Occasionally, when there are two or more Russian organizations involved, each organization will have its own team leader, which further complicates the situation. It may generally be assumed that one of the leaders ranks above the rest. In most cases, who is leading the team overall rapidly becomes obvious from the Russians' behavior.

C. Deviations from the Model

"Exceptions" to this approach to negotiations usually arise when negotiations, usually preliminary or preparatory, are conducted at the deputy or assistant level. The point of contact for American negotiators is seldom at the ministerial or executive level; typically, American negotiators deal from day to day with deputy directors or heads of departments or personal presidential assistants. What may sometimes happen in this case is that the overall interests of the Russian side (or even just the personal agenda of the actual Russian decision-maker) are "hijacked" by the hidden agenda of the deputy with whom the Americans are dealing. Remember, the individual's needs and desires are not automatically accommodated: culturally, Russians are taught to rank the interests of the collective (during the Soviet era, their organization, the Party, or the Soviet state) higher than their own, and Russians seldom personally identify with these interests. Moreover, traditionally, the success of the actual decision-maker seldom affected his or her subordinates unless there was a clear client-patron relationship between them, in effect severely limiting the individual's personal interest in achieving the superior's goals.* Participation in negotiations provides an opportunity for maneuvering on the part of the individual "out of the sight" of the superior.

As a result, it may happen during negotiations with subordinates that due to the inattentiveness of the decision-maker or the crush of the work, subordinates begin to impose their own agendas on the other side. It is extremely difficult to tell when this is happening until one gets to the next higher or decision-maker level of negotiations. At this point, the lack of consensus may become painfully obvious as the

*Historically, however, Russian junior negotiators did derive personal reward from *participating* in negotiations with foreigners because: (1) it gave them the chance to meet foreigners and possibly, travel abroad; (2) if successful, it provided the possibility of moving up the career ladder; and less often (3) there was occasionally the possibility of direct personal monetary remuneration, or graft.

subordinate's proposals or tentative agreements as echoed back from the Americans are rejected out of hand by his or her superior, or sometimes, are not even discussed. Similarly, what the Americans may have perceived as a "done deal" is summarily tossed out the window. Avoiding this phenomenon is extremely tricky, since it is dangerous for the American side to snub or in any way undermine the credibility or image of their point of contact. It is important to bear in mind that negotiations simultaneously take place on institutional and personal levels. In high-context Russian culture, the two tend to integrate more than in the American case. This may lead the American side to see each Russian negotiator as interchangeable with every other, a problem exacerbated by the distance resulting from language and cultural differences. Nonetheless, this is a precarious approach, as a spurned point of contact who feels his or her agenda is not being addressed can become a serious obstacle to the success of negotiations. At the same time, the American side must insure that the negotiations do not become distorted or the final agreement undermined by the personal interests of the Russian negotiator(s).

Another "exception" is when Russian negotiators suddenly appear atypically flexible. The Russian side may begin raising the stakes or put forth a flurry of seemingly unreasonable or disproportionate proposals. This is the sign that the negotiations themselves or the American participants are not being taken seriously. Russians tend to divide the negotiation world into "*serioznyy*" or "*nyeserioznyy*," or "serious" and "non-serious." American negotiators run the risk of being deemed "non-serious" if they fail to keep a commitment or promise or change their mind or position. From the Russian point of view, once a promise or commitment is made, it is to be kept barring extreme mitigating circumstances, and the penalty for failure to keep a commitment—to the negotiation process and the relationship overall—is quite high. Russian negotiators assume their American counterparts are negotiating on the basis of concrete and presumably important interests and thus what may appear as flexibility on the American side looks like fickleness to the Russian. Any change in the American bargaining position should be carefully explained to the Russians in order to maintain credibility.

D. Russian Perceptions of the American Negotiating Style

Although Russians are hard positional bargainers, they nevertheless understand and expect the other side to present and defend its interests, and have difficulty comprehending the other side if its interests are not apparent. This characteristic of Russian negotiating behavior can be clearly seen within the context of the American bilateral assistance program to the Newly Independent States. To the Russian side, in contrast to commercial entities or national security agencies, it is not clear what the interests of humanitarian or technical assistance organizations are. When conflicts arise during the course of planning or implementing such programs, they may become intractable as neither side clearly understands the needs and interests

of the other. Russians tend to mistrust purely charitable motives and see them as a cover for other, perhaps perfidious ones.*

Russians tend to think in zero-sum terms. The concept of "*urvat*," or "to snatch" something, is very popular and indicative of the Russian expectation that one is negotiating to get something, and in the mode of hard positional bargaining, "to win." The concept of "win-win" negotiation for mutual benefit is quite new and has not yet found acceptance in Russia. This sort of approach, which has become very popular among American labor and corporate negotiators, is confusing to the Russians if pursued unilaterally without adequate explanation. When using this approach, one should begin interweaving it very early on in the process of forming relationships and "contexting."

Russians also perceive their American counterparts as being friendly and open, perhaps too open. Russians assume that one is expected to be a little tricky, if not outright devious, when negotiating, something required by the facts of survival during the Soviet period. Russians frequently suspect intrigue or ulterior motives on the part of their American counterparts if the latter appear too frank and open.

E. American Perceptions of Russian Negotiating Style

At the negotiating table, the Russians' behavior toward their colleagues may seem rude, aggressive, brusque, and grim. Russians generally have a "double standard" of verbal behavior: bosses are often and are even expected to be rude and aggressive toward their employees; staff members are expected to be invariably polite toward management. This becomes particularly important in the negotiating environment. Americans become uncomfortable if everyone present doesn't appear to be "getting along." Americans are less status and rank conscious than Russians, and American managers or negotiating team leaders are expected to be civil towards their colleagues. American negotiators should not accord too much importance to aggressive behavior between members of the Russian team: it is not necessarily, and actually, unlikely, to be a sign of discord.

Toward their American counterparts, particularly in "parity" relationships, Russians will generally adopt a congenial attitude. Where rank or status parity does not exist between negotiating team leaders and/or members, which is actually improbable, as Russians would resist agreeing to negotiate on that basis, aggressive behavior on the part of the Russian team towards its more junior American counterparts is not uncommon. One may expect a bit of theatrics in the behavior of the Russian

*Historically and culturally, the origins of this tendency might be sought in the Russian assumption that all within the collective will be amply provided for by the collective. More recently, during the Soviet period, people were compelled to perform "voluntary" work, such as working Saturdays—as a result, even the Russian word for "volunteer" has a distinctly negative connotation.

negotiators. Despite several decades of arms control negotiations, in general Russians have had little negotiating experience with Americans, and may overcompensate for feeling nervous and ill at ease.

F. Negotiating Tactics*

An important note on the word "tactics": In current American usage this word often has connotations of manipulation and deception, and is sometimes used to suggest or convey ill-intentioned and/or ulterior motives. Thus, its use involves *judgment of the motives* of the party using the "tactic." In any negotiation situation, particularly an intercultural one, it is dangerous and potentially quite damaging to make a judgment of motive based on perceived use of a "tactic" by the other side. For example, the "fixed budget tactic" may in fact be a deliberate untruth used to exact concessions; it may also be nothing more than a simple statement of fact as perceived by the other party—particularly someone accustomed to positional bargaining. For this reason, unless there is evidence to the contrary, one should never assume deliberate ill-intention when encountering the use of a "tactic" by the other side.

Because it is based on will power and skillful manipulation of the "rules" of the game, positional bargaining often entails the use of tactics. What all tactics have in common is the fact that they are not based on principles or the merits of the situation, and therein lies their weakness. Rather than quietly (and resentfully) accepting the use of a tactic or responding in kind, *side-step* tactics and *change the process* by: (1) identifying tactics when they are used; (2) discussing the situation diplomatically with the person perceived to be using them; (3) question the legitimacy and desirability of using the tactic; and (4) return the process to negotiation using principles and objective standards. In this process it is imperative to distinguish the person from the conduct: refrain from attacking the person perceived to be using tactics, focusing on overcoming the tactic instead.

1. Most Frequently Encountered Russian Negotiating Tactics

Stonewalling or refusing to budge; not responding

Negotiating to agreement, then having to turn to superiors or colleagues who are not present for approval, coming back later with new demands

Last-minute additions presented in the final moments of agreement

*The summary of tactics presented in this section was compiled from Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, second edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1991); and Gary Karass, *Negotiate to Close* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1985).

Lack of parity in concessions: giving a little and expecting a lot in return

Returning to imprecisely worded or ambiguous conditions after agreement has been reached, even during implementation of the agreement, and re-opening the negotiation process

Including "straw dog" provisions to exchange for concessions on important issues

Fixed budget

Psychologically or "physically" coercive modes of negotiation, such as uncomfortable conditions, threats, personal attacks, or deadline pressure

Deliberate deception

Advancing extreme demands or escalating terms already agreed upon

"Take it or leave it"

Playing off the competition

"Good guy/bad guy" or hard-headed partner or superior, present or absent

G. The Paperwork: Agreements and Contracts

In general, business relations with the Russians entail two fundamentally different types of written agreements, and one may anticipate that each relationship will involve both. These documents are typically prepared in duplicate, Russian and English versions.

1. Documents of Principle

This type of document is known by various names, such as "letter of intent" or "memorandum of understanding." It names the parties involved, and usually includes the general background on the situation, reasons for cooperation, directions and goals of mutual action, and perhaps even the general timeframe and financial scope of the agreement. Such documents of principle, even in their final forms, may seem thoroughly vague by American standards. Nonetheless, the Russians take them very seriously and may be expected to "negotiate" them with the same fervor and commitment they exhibit in any negotiation process. It may be useful to view these documents as codifications of the existence of a relationship, as opposed to specific action plans and promises. Furthermore, they have a dimension of almost "ritual"

significance, and their creation and execution may be attended by considerable pomp and formality.

2. Contracts

In Russian practice, contracts serve the same role as they do in the United States. There are some important differences, however. First, owing to the utter lack of mechanisms and principles for litigating and resolving contract disputes like those used in the U.S., Russian contracts often contain extreme detail and should include sections on verifying compliance during implementation and on dispute resolution. Because there is essentially no "external" system for recourse in the event of dispute, all obligations and financial terms should be spelled out with the maximum possible degree of detail. Particular attention must be devoted to reconciling the Russian and English versions of contracts *before they are executed* to minimize the possibility of snags and the need for subsequent re-negotiation along the way, both extremely inefficient and potentially very damaging to the working relationship.

H. Summation

Cultural patterns and preferences change extremely slowly, and the Russian tradition of and need for consensus-building is not likely to change significantly in the immediate future. As we have seen, positional bargaining is an inefficient and uncreative manner of negotiating, and is often harmful to the equally important working relationship. The most realistic and promising approaches of the American side are thus *to become part of this consensus-building process or to change the rules of the negotiation process they use with their Russian partners—if not both.*

VIII. PLANNING NEGOTIATIONS

A. Introduction

The importance of planning in conducting successful negotiations with the Russians cannot be overstated. Purposeful and effective planning can help to overcome two key advantages the Russians have. First, as a high-context culture, the Russians have an "edge" in assimilating and managing information on interpersonal and organizational relations, and are adept at long-range thinking and taking many factors into account simultaneously. Furthermore, as we have seen, in positional bargaining—the standard Russian approach—the Russian cultural preference for consensus-building brings them better prepared to the negotiating table, because so many interests, long-term perspectives, and options have been thought through in

advance. Second, because the Russians do not change jobs with anywhere near the frequency of their American counterparts, they tend to have amassed extremely detailed knowledge of their organizations' interests; great skill at negotiating these interests; and possess a vast store of "institutional memory."

B. The Preparation Cycle

1. Appoint a communications advocate and an alternate
2. Assess the entire working relationship thus far and invent a strategy for improving it, formulating explicit long-term goals and converting them to immediate steps.
3. Assess the current situation and matters at hand and elaborate a specific negotiations strategy and tactics.
4. Reconcile substance, process, and the goals for the relationship.
5. Practice negotiating using a "dry run" with the communications advocate. Modify your strategy and tactics in light of this experience. Repeat if necessary.
6. Negotiate

After negotiations have concluded or at logical points during the negotiation process, review what has happened and return to step 2.

Be sure to continue actively monitoring the *process* of the negotiations and the working relationship on an on-going basis.

C. The Communications Advocate

Given the complex difficulties of intercultural negotiations, actively ensuring effective communications and fostering a sound communications environment are the most important goals we can pursue if we are to work well together. To achieve these ends and overcome the high/low context disparity, a "communications advocate" is selected for each "node" (group that deals directly with the Russians). The advocate's role is to get "above" the node's needs and "outside" our cultural framework. Also, an alternate or co-advocate should be appointed in case the advocate cannot be present or in case he or she cannot continue in the position. Although it may be neither possible nor practical, ideally the communications advocate should understand Russian and should have no other responsibilities during negotiations proper.

The person fulfilling this role may be alternated or replaced entirely to increase the number of people thinking in these terms, so long as an eye is always kept to

maintaining continuity with the Russians. Detailed responsibilities of the communications advocate and a checklist for monitoring communications may be found in the Appendixes.

APPENDIXES

GENERAL TIPS FOR NEGOTIATING WITH RUSSIANS*

- Make it a point to enhance your knowledge of negotiating skills and techniques.
- Develop and maintain personal relationships with your partners. These relationships are the cornerstone of effective agreements and things actually getting done. They are also your first line of recourse in overcoming an impasse or getting things going again after a setback or stall.
- If you are using positional bargaining, clarify your own objectives; think the results and consequences of each action through very carefully; make sure your team presents a unified position, and remember that unilateral brainstorming may "tip your hand" as to your decision-making process and the dynamics between the players on the American side.
- Prepare and deliver background materials on paper early on so your partners can form a "relationship" to the history, players, and ideas.
- If you are using a "text" approach to negotiation, draft a text of your agreement that includes all your objectives, including a few "dummy," throw-away provisions that can be used for bargaining. Submit it to the Russians in advance, requesting one from them at the same time or in return. Allow plenty of time for the Russians to think the agreement through.
- Avoid surprising the Russians. Think twice about advancing new ideas on the spot, especially if they are important, and if you do, do not expect an answer until later. If you anticipate that an objective may be difficult for your partners to accept, catch them off-guard, or require permission from higher-ups, you will do well to present the objective (even informally) in advance.
- Expect surprises. These can result from poor communications, inefficient Russian bureaucracy, the rapidly changing political and social situation, and inflation.
- Getting answers and dealing with "no": The Russians' first response is often "no." This is not the end of the line as it is in this country—it is

*Much of the material presented here is adapted from Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians* (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1992), pp. 139-154.

usually only the beginning. In general, particularly at first, "no" should be interpreted along the lines of "we're not comfortable agreeing to this right now" or "we can't give you a yes/no answer at the moment." This is often the result of the importance placed on presenting a united front and the high-context need to check with everyone involved first, including, of course, any higher-ups. Don't panic when you hear "no." In the same way, you may often have meetings where you cannot get straight answers to your questions. This can mean that the Russians simply cannot give you an answer at the time, and is not necessarily a sign of evasiveness. Your concerns are being heard, and the Russians will bring the matters up again when they are ready.

Perceptions of weakness. Be prepared to firmly defend matters that are important to you, be they principles or concrete objectives. In negotiations, the Russians are constantly on the lookout for weakness, and where they meet strong resistance, they will usually back off. This type of probing is one of the ways Russians try to identify "hidden" interests.

Threats. Cultural patterns regarding threats and follow-through on threats vary considerably. As a rule, high-context people are more likely to threaten and less likely to act on the threat, following through more slowly, if at all. This means that initially, at least, it is best to regard a threat as signifying the importance of the issue; that the Russians do not feel like they are being heard; or that they feel their trust has been violated. This does not mean that threats are not to be taken seriously: it means that they should be interpreted differently. Perhaps you can recall a time when you threatened to end a relationship, without actually ever seriously intending to end it, but to register how serious, hurt, etc., you were. Low-context people tend to threaten less, but when they do, they mean it, and are much less given to issuing threats without being prepared to follow through on them, quickly and resolutely. Be aware of this difference when issuing threats, i.e., that the *meaning* of the threat is very likely to be read differently by the Russians than you intend it, and following through rapidly may catch them off guard.

Compromise. This word carries a negative connotation in Russian (it implies sacrifice and unmet needs). Avoid using it. "Aggressive" also has a strongly negative "charge."

Avoid switching the point person with whom the Russians are dealing. Russians change positions much less frequently than Americans do and each shift in personnel will involve re-establishing the relationship(s), essentially from scratch.

Have your own interpreters and translators whenever possible; have translations compared and verified independently.

Have someone present—ideally, a communications advocate who understands Russian—to take notes and track what was discussed, and especially, what was left unresolved, and meet with this person after each meeting to review what happened and assess dynamics that have emerged. This is particularly important if there is only one interpreter provided by the Russians.

If you reach an impasse, try to identify stumbling blocks and handle the matter informally and privately, out of the "official," public environment.

Be aware of how geographic location and costs can influence the pace of negotiations. Americans in Russia have limited time and need to leave quickly, whereas Russians visiting the U.S.—particularly as guests of another organization—may want to prolong their trip.

Include provisions for regular review of implementation in your agreements.

Take the communications situation in Russia into account.

Bear in mind that deadlines are likely to be missed; this does not necessarily indicate a lack of resolve to achieve the goal.

Make sure all the details get ironed out unequivocally, particularly with regard to who is paying for what. Each side will interpret ambiguities in its own favor, which can cause significant problems later on.

PRE-NEGOTIATION CHECKLIST

Is the schedule realistic in terms of goals; expectations; cultural differences in pacing; and time to be spent "contexting"?

Have the node members taken all the appropriate steps in the preparation cycle? Have they reviewed the "tips for negotiation"? Have "trip-wire" and break or postponement signals been pre-arranged?

Does our negotiation plan begin with the issues that are easiest to agree upon so as to generate momentum by accumulating "yeses"?

Have we determined who on the Russian side has the authority to make decisions? Will that person be present?

Is there "parity" in the positions of the participants on both sides?

Have matters of protocol and official courtesy received thorough attention?

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS ADVOCATE

On-Going

- Responsible for assessing and trouble-shooting the working relationship and tracking the impact of all communications and actions with respect to it
- Formulates explicit long-term objectives for the working relationship and invents a concrete strategy for achieving them
- Tracks to see if we are behaving predictably and reliably from the Russians' point of view, that is to say, congruent with the messages sent by our words and actions
- Keeps node members apprised of his/her work and new developments
- Verifies that the messages we want to send are being received—checks to see if we have been heard
- Verifies that the messages the Russians are sending are being received—checks to see if we are listening, hearing, and acknowledging
- Keeps the alternate or co-advocate fully informed of the situation and all developments
- Creates and maintains a tangible "institutional history" of the relationship for on-going relations and possible successors
- Actively gathers information on stated and "hidden" constraints on the Russians' situation and on the dynamics of the players on the Russian side

Prior to Negotiations and Communications

- Prepares the node "culturally" for meetings, negotiations, and communications. Meets with the node members before meetings and negotiations and verifies consonance of planned actions with respect to matters at hand and the working relationship. Makes sure that both sets of goals are explicit. Ensures that each node member knows the goals and what his/her role in fostering these goals is.
- Identifies objective standards (law, tradition, precedent, etc.) that are likely to be acceptable to the Russians

- Establishes a picture of what we have been saying to date in our words, documents, and actions. Summarizes for all node members.
- Establishes a picture of what the Russians have been saying to date in their words, documents, and actions. Summarizes for all node members.
- Checks that all proposals and suggestions take Russian cultural values, perceptions, and patterns into account; takes the Russians' role in order to "pre-filter" ideas and proposals
- Converts long-term goals for the relationship into immediate actions
- Helps keep the node's proposals targeted towards the actual decision-maker
- Drafts a chart of the interests of the Russian node and the individual players involved
- Drafts a chart of the decision(s) the Russians are now facing and the pros and cons of making one choice or another, from their point of view. Determines how the choice(s) we are asking them to make could be justified to the Russians' superiors, colleagues, subordinates, and constituents.
- Plays the role of the Russians in practice negotiations

During Meetings and Negotiations

- Monitors for diplomatic communication and verifies that both Russian and American perceptions and emotions are made explicit and acknowledged
- Tracks issues: values, timing, continuity, interests, that people are being kept separate from the problem, and if emotions getting out of hand. Listens actively to see if Russians reveal hidden interests. Watches for ambiguity in the statements of the Russians, monitors to see if the discussion is moving toward any pre-arranged "trip wire," has a pre-arranged method for calling breaks or postponement
- Takes detailed notes on the course of the negotiations, paying specific attention to what is agreed upon and *what is left unresolved*; new interests and options that may surface; any constraints on and interpersonal dynamics among the members of the Russian team that may be revealed

After Meetings and Negotiations

- Reviews results of each meeting and negotiation session with respect to formulated immediate and working relationship goals and provides assessment to node members

CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Before they are initiated, all communications and actions should be checked with respect to how they will be perceived by the Russians. The most important criteria for evaluating communications and actions in the Russian-American intercultural environment are:

1. Values
2. Perceptions
3. Interests
4. Congruence and continuity with respect to past communications and actions
5. Long-term relationship status and objectives
6. Commitments we may be making
7. Audience
8. Respect, parity, and reciprocity
9. Protocol and courtesy
10. Diplomacy and two-way communication

SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Fisher, Roger, and Scott Brown. *Getting Together: Building Relationships as We Negotiate*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988. The sequel to *Getting to Yes*, this book emphasizes how negotiation interacts with the long-term relationship.
- Fisher, Roger, Elizabeth Kopelman, and Andrea Kupfer Schneider. *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Fisher, Roger, William Ury, and Bruce Patton. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, second edition. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. This excellent book presents the concept of principled negotiation (contrasted with positional bartering) both as a strategy and in terms of specific tactics.
- Karass, Gary. *Negotiate to Close*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1985. The approach to negotiations presented in this book is not particularly productive for interacting with Russians because the work is pitched toward the "buyer-seller" relationship and is unilateral, not taking mutual interests into account. The strength of this work lies in its treatment of perception, power, and various negotiation tactics. Good secondary reading to augment the principled negotiation approach.
- Newhouse, John. *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973.
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- _____. *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973*, second edition. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974.

Ury, William. *Getting Past No: Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991. This book is strong on tactics within the framework of the principled negotiation strategy.

