

ER refers to the employer, EE refers to the employee in the context of workplace negotiation.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): For the upcoming meeting, it could turn out into a negotiation. I still remember that when I took the win-win negotiation course, the teacher mentioned a successful negotiation usually consists of four major stages that you have to go through during a negotiation. They were: private preparation, joint exploration, bidding, and closing. She told me that during the negotiation, I should go through the four stages one by one instead of starting the bidding immediately. I think I can apply that in this meeting.

For the first stage, private preparation, the teacher said I should start to gather relevant information about the upcoming meeting and the other party. In addition, I also should figure out my own thoughts and desires. This information will help me to ...get prepared for the upcoming negotiation.

Joint exploration is the second stage where I should share information with the other party, learn more about them and what they want and more importantly why they want it and what really matters to do. The teacher stress that this was really important. This way I can look at underlying values and not simply focussing on the issues. I remember the salary example she gave. For example, the issue might be that someone wants to earn 3000 Euro a month. But the underlying value for person might be "being respected by his friends". The 3000-euro salary might for him be a way to obtain this respect. By knowing this underlying value, I can look for other ways instead of the 3000-euro salary to satisfy this value, for example changing his job title, or giving him more responsibility. This strategy will help me to open up the negotiation space, looking for alternatives that are mutual beneficial.

Let me think what the third stage was...Oh yes, when the parties have enough information, the bidding stage can start. The teacher warned me not to rust to this stage. I had to make sure that I was convinced to have enough information about the underlying values. Still, she told me I should continue sharing information about our interests and don't only insist on one proposal but try to develop multiple options.

What was the stage again...? Of course, closing! When the agreement is broadly reached, it comes to the final stage: closing. In this stage, the agreement should be formalized in a way that makes it totally clear for everyone what the agreement is. This is important it helps to create commitment and reduce the risk of either party to back out or change their commitment.

Virtual cognitions: So, if this is what negotiation is all about [XXX, you are a good negotiator].

So, what were the 4 stages, but how would it work in this case with Julia's attendance.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): Now, I should focus on the first stage. What was that again... Right, private preparation. According to the teacher, private preparation is mostly a stage of information gathering and reflection done before meeting the other party. So, for one, I should review the information I collected from Julia's attendance record and calendar. It seems she have been late for work for a week since last week Monday but before that, she was never late for work. In fact, her performance is excellent, and she is up for a bonus this year. According to her calendar, there were no special working events tagged by her during 9:00-10:00 on the morning from Monday to Friday, so she was not late because of business related issue. What did teacher also say? Oh yes, I should understand my own desire regarding Julia compliance with company policies and regulations. I want my team members to follow company policies, so they know what is expected of them. This avoids stress and confusion, making them productive. Furthermore, it avoids being criticised by the other managers about my management style.

Tap-tap (a knock at the door)

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): She is coming. Let's quickly think of stage II: joint exploration. In this stage, I will start to have a talk with Julia. I remember the teacher said that I should not place bids on the table immediately and start to bid in turns. Instead, the aim of this stage is to check the information I have gathered so far and explore more information from Julia why she has been late repeatedly. What are her underlying interests? This will give me more possibilities to negotiate. So, try to make the negotiation space as big as possible.

ER: Come in please. Have a seat!

ER: Hi, Julia, good that you could make some time for this meeting.

EE: That was no problem.

ER: Julia, you may have already known the reason I invite you for a meeting. This week time administration indicates that for the last whole week you were always one hour late in the morning, is that true?

EE: Yes, it is.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): In joint exploration stage, the teacher suggested that I could try to encourage Julia to say more about the situation, herself and what she wants by using open questions.

ER: What happened?

EE: I had to go to northern part of the city first before I came to work, but yeah, as you know, there are so many traffic jams in our city at rush hour. I got stuck in traffic several times when I drove through downtown in the morning. So that's why I was late this week.

ER: Hmm...

EE: Yeah, it's because I had to take my kid to the school first on the morning before I came here. The school is located in the northern part of the city. It is really annoying as we live in south part of the city. I have to drive through the city centre twice; first to get to School and then back to here. This takes me awful lot of time each morning just to get here. These traffic jams are something.

ER: OK, I see. Taking your child to the school. But according to your attendance record, before last week, you were always on time. So, what happened?

EE: Because Jenny became four. So, she goes to this new school and no longer to kindergarten.

ER: Does she like it?

EE: Yes, she was really eager to go to school. But she is also a bit nervous. First time school is always a bit scary for everyone.

ER: Yes, that is true. Was there any specific reason that you selected this school? There also schools where you live or here nearby.

EE: Yes, considering the distance and location, it would be more convenient. Still it would not be ideal.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): It's joint exploration stage, I should explore more about her current situation and thoughts...Still, it should not be a like interrogation. Let's just give Julia some time to explain it without pushing too hard.

ER: Oo....?

EE: At first, we considered the schools nearby. It would save us a lot of time and energy. However, after the classes at these school are also large. There are over 30 kids in each class! While in Jenny's class there are only 12 children. Jenny really needs this. She feels very stressed in a large class. She needs a quite environment.

ER: Ok, I see that this school is important for her. Now let's think...Do you have any specific arrangement with your husband about bring and picking up Jenny from school.

EE: Problem is that my husband leaves the house one hour earlier to get on time his work. And dropping Jenny of at school one hour earlier is no option. Like other people, asking my parents is also not an option. They live 3 hours away. And they are also too old to do this.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): Ok, still in joint exploration stage. Let's explore further. Are any underlying reasons that she wants to bring the Jenny personally to school?

ER: Ok. I understand, and...euh....

EE: Of course, we also considered paying someone to bring Jenny to school, but this idea we dropped.

ER: Why? Is it about the fee? If you want, maybe the company could cover the fee.

EE: No, it's not about the money. Jenny is quite introvert. It is not so easy for her to trust and get along with strangers. I don't want her to feel nervous and uncomfortable.

ER: I know there is a very famous childcare centre that could provide the service. How about asking them to help you? They are quite professional and maybe also can help Jenny a little bit.

EE: Yeah, maybe a few years later but not now. Jenny is still very young.

EE: I want to be a good mother and spend time with her and witness her growth. Of course, I also like my work.

ER: Yes, it is often a balancing act.

EE: Yes, you are right. Still, family life has become much more important for me.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): Ok, I was able to get an idea of Julia's underlying values.

Virtual cognitions: [XXX, you know how to do a great job in the negotiation.]

Virtual cognitions (knowledge): The joint exploration stage is completed; let's move to bidding stage. I need to be creative and develop multiple options for her to choose from.

ER: ok, I understand. According to your contract with the company, your weekly working hour should be 38 hours. Let's work together to find a way to reschedule your working hours.

EE: Yes, that sounds ok.

ER: How about you work for one more hour after you would normally go home. So, you can come in at 10:00. One hour later than normal but still can meet the required 38 hours.

EE: Hmmm. No that wouldn't work. I also have to pick up Jenny after school. I would be too late.

ER: Eeee....

EE: I have no idea how to reschedule my working time. Still, what are we really talking about? One hour, or less, that I am bit late to start with working. If I just skip lunch and work hard, would that not be an easier solution?

ER: Well, I understand your point and the company has the rules that would not allow such a solution. Everyone needs to make the hours as specified in his or her contract.

EE: Ok, I see. no solution.

ER: Hmmm, let me see. If it's not possible to reschedule your working hours, maybe we should talk about changing the working hours in your contract? What do you think?

EE: What do you mean? I want to keep working here!

ER: that is good to hear. How about changing your contract to a 34 hour-working week? So, you can come to work 45 minutes later than before. Do you think that you could be in at 9.45 each morning? Even if there is heavy traffic?

Virtual cognitions (knowledge): I think I will be able to spread Julia's 4 hours work across the team.

EE: Hmmm, I think there's still not enough time for me to drop off Jenny first, drive back and be in before 9.45. How about 32 hour working week?

Virtual cognitions (knowledge): That would be too much for the team.

ER: I would have to find someone to replace you for these 6 hours across the week. That will be very difficult. So, I don't think it is a good idea.

EE: Well, I understand.

ER: Hmmm, now your job is a full-time job, but considering your situation, how about changing the contract to be a part time one? In that case you just work on the afternoon for 20 hours per week and we find another people to do your job in the morning.

EE: Hmmm.....that would be a radical change. Changing from a 40-hour contract to a 20-hour contract. I would have to think about that.

ER: Of course, I understand. Would it help you with picking up and dropping off Jenny?

EE: Yes, at least would help for dropping of. Still, picking up would be a problem. Still, the school has facilities for after school care. So, Jenny would be familiar with the people.

ER: And your husband ...?

EE: I think he would be ok with this solution for Jenny. Still, working 20-hours is also less salary. And after Jenny settles into school, I might want to work 38-hours again.

ER: Have you thought about parental leave, for example for a year?

EE: No but work 20-hours for one year might be good solution. After that I could come back working again fulltime.

ER: And financially...that one year...

EE: Hmm, yes that is true. Still it would help Jenny and give me more time to spend with my family.

Virtual cognitions (knowledge): She has the right to take parental leave anyway. But if she takes it all at once instead of over the years, it is easier to find someone to replace her.

ER: Regarding the money, do you have enough saving to compensate for this year?

EE: We have some saving, but not that much...still it should be possible....

Virtual cognitions (knowledge) whew...we are almost there...I think, I can make it more interesting for Julia.

ER: What if I tell you that you will get a bonus this year of a month salary. If you save this for next year, you would have a buffer for next year.

EE: A bonus great...thanks very much.... and saving this yes, that would solve it. Yes, I like this idea.

Virtual cognitions (Knowledge): Hurrah, time to move to the last negotiation state: closing. For this stage, I remember what's the teacher said that I should formalize and confirm the outcome of the bidding stage. I should ask Julia to clearly repeat the agreement we have worked out now.

ER: Ok, that is good to hear. To make sure that we understand each other, could you please run over the main points again?

EE: I get a bonus, for one year I will work for 24-hours a week. I would work in afternoon, being able to drop off Jenny, and in the afternoon, Jenny will go to after school care.

ER: Nope, it should be 20 working hours per week.

EE: Yes, you are right. Working for 4 hours on the afternoon every day.

ER: Is it clear?

EE: Yes, it's totally clear.

ER: I am happy that we solved the issue and thank you Julia working with me to find a solution. I will talk with Bob from human resources and ask him to arrange what we have agreed. Bye, Julia.

EE: Bye.

Virtual cognitions: I went through all four major steps: private preparation, joint exploration, bidding, and closing. Yeah, I remember all of them. I didn't fall in the trap of immediate going to the bidding state. That would have been a disaster...Insisting simply that Julia be here on time. I wouldn't have known the family values of being a good parent for Jenny involved. I might have even pushed her to quit her job. I would have lost a good a worker and be faced with the work of finding someone new. All the paperwork...bah

Virtual cognitions: Looking back on this I could say: [XXX, you are a reliable negotiator]

My teacher was right about these negotiation steps... The private preparation stage made me realise that Julia was only late recently and before that always on time. I also realise that for myself that getting the team follow company's rules, avoid stress in the team, and voice trouble with the other managers. I also realise that Julia would get a bonus this year.

The second stage, joint exploration stage, was extreme useful. By exploring I learn Julia's underlying values, taking care of Jenny.

And then of course the third stage, bidding. I didn't limit myself to one option. Instead we discussed shifting work to one hour later, having 36-hours working week, and finally 20-hour working week for a year.

And I also follow the teacher in the final stage, closing. I asked Julia to clearly repeat the agreement we had achieved to make a clear closure of the negotiation.

Virtual cognitions: Again, all in all I could say: XXX, you did a great job in the negotiation.