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INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION ACADEMY

Negotiation: The Genesis of Management



Negotiation Skills Training

- Managers at senior, middle and junior levels
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- Sales Negotiators
- Buyers
- Hostage & Crowd Control Negotiators
- Facilitators

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From India to a Debate about Toilets

Returning from a three-week business/training assignment in India to find the main focus of headlines in all newspaper in your home country dealing with toilets as the major election issue, raised by almost all political parties, was somewhat of a **mental shock** to me.

Is there nothing else to fuss about?

I could not help wondering whether Indian toilet practices could ever become an **election issue** over there.

Apart from the fact that, in India, you are not supposed to speak in public about these issues, there seems to be an acceptance amongst many poor in India that they will share whatever hole in the ground is available within walking distance!

If you pay for your toilets yourself, you are prepared to do with less. Especially the 100 million or so, who even today cannot afford a roof, still sleep on the sidewalk or under a bridge.

On my way back from the airport, there was an interview on the radio with a group in SA

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demanding **flushing toilets!**

In India I have not experienced any group protesting and toyi-toyi-ing, **demanding** 'luxuries', free homes and jobs!

From Calcutta to Mumbai there are many sidewalk dwellers who, I am sure, will be delighted to get access to the kind of **squatter homes** you see in South Africa.

"Imagine a house, with a **roof and space** around the house, dad!"

Well, maybe I am too critical about South Africa's unemployed. Any opinion about the plight of the jobless and their reaction to their situation can only be naïve.

Why then, would Indians **react differently to their plight** than South-Africans? Why do they all **work to earn something** instead of demanding, marching and burning tires? Could it be that by **receiving, without reciprocity**, people lose all motivation to work?

India or China?

India is growing at an astounding rate of 8% per year and many economists think that the 1,2 billion people in India is outperforming the Chinese at this point in time.

Well, I do know that the famous economist, Adam Smith (1776: "The Wealth of Nations") would surely have been impressed with India. One important opinion of Smith was that the wealth of a nation is determined by **the ability of all to work hard (in mind and body)**. (Adam Smith would perhaps have nodded his approval on seeing me presenting training every day of the week from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m., Saturdays included!)

Yes, in India work starts at 9h00 or earlier in the morning and stops somewhere after 9 p.m. **six days a week**. Well, that is for those who work for a big company. The majority (who work for themselves), probably work longer hours. This includes individuals, male and female of any age; from the time they can carry stuff to the time that they cannot do anything anymore.

Work is anything that brings in cash. Cash buys rice or bread. From women carrying buckets of concrete on their heads up high-rise buildings, to old men pulling wagons laden with bales of goods through the crowded streets. **Work makes money makes food!**

There are **no handouts** and grants for children or for anything else, it seems! Everyone simply has to find his or her own way to make a living. And they do. Some of the most unbelievable **inventions** are nowadays created in India. They

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are taking the lead in many areas where previously they were never known to be active in!

They even showed the cricket world how lots of people and players can earn big sums of money whereas previously the same individuals could hardly make ends meet!

I was therefore very quiet, while in India, about the fact that it becomes more and more difficult over here to find anyone in any office on **Friday afternoons** (after only four and a half days of work), in my beautiful jobless country.

Intelligence and Hard work

Where do the Indians find the **time to study** within these long working hours?

I presented negotiation skills training for one of the biggest and smartest companies in India. Almost every participant (retail buyers) had an MBA or was a qualified engineer. Two were qualified veterinary surgeons!

Yes, an MBA could help you getting a job as a retail buyer, and I think that it was really sharp of the management to be arranging this training. You need lots of intelligence and skills for retail buying.

Retail buying is one of the **most intricate and difficult forms of negotiation** on the planet. It outweighs many other forms of conflict, labor, management or political negotiation by far. You have to be a mathematician to balance the 20 variables (margin, payment terms, shelf space, levies, promotional discounts, ullage, turnover discounts, etc. etc) into some sort of 'deal'. Then you have to be a consumer behavior expert, a product expert, a statistician, a computer wizard, a psychologist, an administration fanatic, a team player and **astute negotiator!**

Economic Growth and Freedom

There seems to be a 'freedom' from being **over-regulated** in India, yet it may only be my perception; and yes, there are also a lot of corruption and bad things happening; for example when it involves key officials. (They claim that a number of high-rise buildings in Mumbai have been erected without any approval documentation!)

As a foreigner it also takes some nifty footwork to get used to the food and to figure out what you can drink and what you should avoid! On the other hand I love surfing the Internet and after having bought **uncapped fast speed Internet** in India at about 15 Rands per month, I had to drag myself from my computer with all the mental force to my avail.

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The **Internet and almost free access** to it is, I think, one of the major drivers of a modern economy.

Most of Mumbai is notorious for its' contrast of crowded dirty alleys lined by three to four-storied dilapidated shops and homes, only to be followed by ultra-modern apartment buildings, office blocks or private residences. The rich and the poor do indeed meet. The poor make things cheap! **They seem to love the rich** (the rich spend Rupees!) And the rich spend money on the poor (anything they want done can be done for a few cents!)

I wanted to change the electrical plug on my computer to an "Indian" one and the advice was unanimous: "Why do it yourself while you can pay someone 20 Rupees (about R3) to do it? With 20 Rupees the man can eat for a day anyway.

The small businesses are the driving force that supplies every small thinkable service to big business. It seems that **small business is possibly the key** to employment and low taxes. And you don't have to sponsor them. Just set them free!

They will **create their own wealth by innovation!** Just allow them to do it!

By freedom I mean almost **no preconditions on how I should be making a living**. No BEE requirements, no minimum wage, no levies or a plethora of labor restrictions, no tax clearance, no point system, no department telling me I may not buy a company, no prerequisites for tendering, no forms and more forms!

Of course there are procedures in India too, but they are such that they do not inhibit anyone to be busy anywhere and the result is that that huge country **creates jobs at a staggering 8% per year** (population grows by about 2% p.a.)

I am not sure that I buy the excuses about the **past, the colonials and the oppressors in SA**. India can write more books on colonial rule (since 2000 BC) than most other nations. They have more differences in class, religion, wealth and race than most!

Government should set the economy, the people, free! Like a father would set his naughty teenager free to fend for himself, **after years of spoiling him and entitlement**. In fact, we are all like kids. We **want to leave** the protection of home and see for ourselves what life is all about (without dad deciding for us)!

South African Governmental decision makers should be concerned about the **extent of their intervention**. Perhaps they are, like parents, making it worse for everyone (including themselves).

Manie Spoelstra