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INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION ACADEMY

Negotiation: The Genesis of Management



Negotiation Skills Training

- Managers at senior, middle and junior levels
- Labour Union Negotiators
- Conflict dispute resolution mediators
- Sales Negotiators
- Buyers
- Hostage & Crowd Control Negotiators
- Facilitators

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When Individuals become Mobs

We all find ourselves in **crowds or groups** of people at times. At sport events, work or social events. **That is normal**, but could the same group become a **mob**?

Mobs get **crazy**. They destroy property, throw stones at police, run over others (old or small) or dance naked in the street.

Don't think **you are immune!** For example:

- After a school in Virginia, USA, decided to sell their Apple laptops at a **very cheap** price of \$50 a piece (normal price would be about \$1000) more than 5000 people turned up and as humans exhibited their worst behaviour. They became a mob and violently trampled and hurt each other to get into the queue. Many had to be taken to hospital.
- Earlier this year we witnessed the same behaviour when **students became a mob** as they rushed to get admitted to a Johannesburg University, leaving a number of people killed and injured.
- A few weeks later a crowd (mob) started throwing stones at the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg, injuring several reporters.
- More recently pictures were sent through the entire world showing a 'group' (mob?) of SA Policemen opening fire on a Labour Union (mob?) at the Lonmin Mine at Marikana, killing 34!

Program: September to December 2012

1. INTENSIVE NEGOTIATION SKILLS PROGRAM (3 days)

10 - 12 September (Jhb)
12 - 14 November (Jhb)

2. DEALING WITH AN ANGRY PUBLIC

(Executives only)

19 November (Jhb)

3. CUSTOM-MADE IN-HOUSE PROGRAMS FOR:

MANAGEMENT, BUYERS, SELLERS, LABOUR STAFF

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All Programs limited to 20 Participants

- Towards the end of last year **English mobs rampaged** London streets causing destruction where they went. This was preceded by mobs getting unruly in Wall Street due to causes that are still 'vague'.
- A few years ago mobs of English **soccer fans** caused havoc in Europe, resulting in the banning of games between England and European teams for quite some time.
- Every week we hear about folks in **townships** in South Africa, barricading streets, setting tyres alight and throwing stones at police.

Is this kind of behaviour rare in civilized societies, but part of daily life in poor countries where there is overpopulation, lack of money, food, resources and limited services?

When do groups become mobs and why?

Would **human selfishness** cause some to get at a scarce resource at all costs, even if it means harm to others? Would "harm" here not only include depriving others of this resource, but even hurting them?

Is this just one indication that common decency and civilized behaviour is just a thin veneer over a more **animal-like core** of human nature that surfaces whenever it has the chance?

A mob is dangerous. A mob has no leader, has no logic or reason, no sense of right or wrong or morals. People who as individuals would not do bad things will certainly do them if they are in a mob where **responsibility is diluted** and spur of the moment actions happen. Social psychology textbooks refer to this 'shift' of responsibility as the 'risky shift phenomenon'.

Mobs are not limited to hundreds or thousands of people in the street chanting slogans because of a political or religious reason. Some mob behaviour can be exhibited in **smaller groups** (such as a sports team or a group of soldiers in war, who think there is no law, and are encouraged by the rest of the 'team').

We also see mob behaviour in situations where for instance, sports fans go on a rampage and destroy property and even kill people. People who are often described as **polite and cordial** can group together and behave like a mob because of issues such as salaries, sport, politics or social and economic change.

What would you say if the rest of your team would say; "Lets make fun of 'Blondie' over there?"

1. Say 'yes' and play along?
2. Say 'no' and go home by yourself?
3. Say 'lets rather drink more'?
4. Say 'no, are you crazy'?
5. Say 'do you want to get in trouble, because I don't'?
6. Something else?

(If you considered response no. 1 (and perhaps 3) for only a second, you could be prone for joining the mob, like many of us would be).

We often make decisions (or conform to decisions) in **company boardrooms**, during hotel stays with your sports team, while in college or when with friends. The decisions may not appear to be as extreme while you make it, but could have severe

implications. Examples are: to [refuse to negotiate](#) with the new outspoken union; to **merge** with another company or not; to **vote** for your groups' choice of leader; to go on a men/ladies night-out; to invite a person to perform a strip tease for the team; etc.

Such decisions (which you would never have taken on your own) tend to be especially destructive when they are made without proper consideration, free speech or consultation (Such decisions are sometimes called ['grouphink'](#)).

In smaller or bigger 'mobs', the individuals tend to fear that the rest of the group will **ostracise them** if they have oppose the rest.

Why do groups turn into mobs?

- When a group feel a **strong cohesiveness**;
- When they are **isolated** and someone has **strong power** over the group;
- When they experience **high stress** and a **lack of hope** to find a better solution than the one proposed by the leader/group;
- When an illusion exists of **invulnerability** and unanimity;
- When a **collective rationale** of their actions is believed to exist;
- When a stereotyping is presented of **all 'others' who do not think** the way they do;
- When **pressure** is put on those amongst them to conform.

This then leads to a **total failure to make proper and evaluated decisions**.

So, how do we prevent a group from behaving like a mob?

- **Get nervous when you are in a group of more than six or seven and 'everybody feels the same'!**
- **Get the group to talk about the issue in more depth and encourage members to air their thoughts about 'possible consequences'.**
- Ask others what **alternatives** there could be to their planned approach.
- Suggest that someone plays **'Devil's Advocate'**.

What should the police do once everything turns bad?*

- Rather than resort to weapons first, they could call their **'dialogue police unit'**, whose officers are trained to negotiate, mediate and **resolve conflict** in and amongst groups.
- Empower the policemen to 'keep the peace' while **avoiding the unnecessary use (or threat of) force** against crowds.
- Training in keeping **public order** should be updated to ensure that officers are more adequately skilled to act as neutral negotiators.
- The police could, with great benefit, start a **research unit** to look into strategies of controlling crowds and mobs.
- As a last resort they should have **proper equipment** to divide mobs into smaller groups, by the use of water, chemicals, isolation equipment, etc. so as to preserve life at all cost.

Manie Spoelstra

Bibliography:

**Scott, Dr Clifford; 2009, Crowd Psychology & Public Order Policing: An Overview of Scientific Theory and Evidence. Draft Paper, University of Liverpool, UK*