

SIMULATION GAME FOR CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

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ABSTRACT: Negotiations are an important activity for engineering managers, but they have received little research or educational attention. An educational simulation game of negotiations in a typical civil engineering context is described in this paper. Experience with the game demonstrates that negotiating skills can be improved. Agreements reached by participants in the game are often inferior in the sense that changes could make both parties better off; identifying mutually advantageous agreements and changes should be an important component of successful negotiations. The game can be used by educators or professional groups.

INTRODUCTION

Engineering managers often find themselves as participants in negotiations, either as principal negotiators or as expert advisors. These negotiations can be complex and often present important opportunities and risks for the various parties involved. For example, negotiation on work contracts can involve issues such as completion date, arbitration procedures, special work item compensation, contingency allowances as well as the overall price. The skill of a negotiator can greatly affect the possibility of reaching an agreement, the profitability of the project, the scope of any eventual disputes, and the possibility for additional work among the participants. Thus, negotiations are an important task for many engineering managers.

In this paper, some basic negotiating principles are reviewed and an educational simulation game of negotiation is described. The game involves a structured contract negotiation for the construction of a new gas pipeline. Each participant plays the role of either the owner utility or a contractor. While many negotiating games exist, this game is designed to incorporate the specific issues encountered by civil engineering managers. More generally, this one is intended to aid in the education of civil engineering managers and to provide a laboratory setting to test different negotiating strategies.

Numerous normative and empirical studies of bidding competitions have appeared in the literature (Carr 1987; Park 1966). Studies of negotiations have appeared for other contexts such as labor contract or international treaty negotiations (Raiffa 1982). Despite their importance, however, negotiations have been rarely studied in the civil engineering domain. As an exception, a recent paper describes nonverbal communication among

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