

Improving Negotiation Skills Based Learning Online: A Roundtable Session

Abstract

This roundtable session was created as an opportunity for instructors of negotiation who are either currently teaching negotiations online, or have been tasked with converting their courses to an online format, to engage in discussions and share best practices regarding teaching negotiations in either a fully online or hybrid format. Participants will leave the session with new ideas and resources (syllabi, exercises, assignments, etc.) regarding how to improve negotiations skills-based learning in an online setting. Perhaps most importantly, we hope to create a community of educators with interest in this topic an ongoing means to share best practices.

Keywords: Teaching Online, Negotiations, Skills-Based Learning, Blended Format

Introduction

Instructors of negotiation are increasingly being asked to teach skills-based negotiation courses online as graduate and undergraduate programs evolve to online and blended formats. This can be a challenging and seemingly daunting task, especially when these courses are skills-based and historically founded on face-to-face interaction. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that limited information and resources exist about how to best teach negotiations online. This roundtable discussion is designed for management professors who are either currently teaching or have been tasked with teaching negotiation skills-based outcomes in an online teaching environment. Four session facilitators with experience creating online negotiation exercises and in teaching negotiation in both fully online and blended formats, for diverse audiences (executive, MBA, and undergraduates), will share their experiences and we will ask participants to do the same. We'll discuss ideas, best practices, struggles, and work together to develop a framework to improve negotiation skills-based learning outcomes and processes.

Roundtable Outcomes

Participants will leave the session with new ideas regarding how to improve negotiations skills-based learning in an online format. As a result of this session, we hope to create a community of educators with interest in this topic an ongoing means to share best practices.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

With the explosive increase of online and blended format classes in recent years (Arbaugh, Desai, Rau, & Sridar, 2010), many studies have compared face-to-face versus online student learning outcomes favorably, even suggesting that online students may have an edge on

learning outcomes (Arbaugh, 2010; Arbaugh, Bangert, & Cleveland-Innes, 2010; Ivancevich, Gilbert, & Konopaske, 2009; Mullen & Talent-Runnels, 2006; Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Drago, 2007; Weber & Lennon, 2007), especially in the management discipline (Wright, 2014).

However, while many studies have compared content knowledge outcomes, the research on skill-based learning outcomes is scarce (Arbaugh, DeArmon, & Rau, 2013).

Parlami and Mitchell (2014) found that while students scored similarly in a negotiation across learning platforms, students in the online class reported lower levels of learning, as well as a less collaborative learning environment. Callister and Love (2016) compared learning outcomes in face-to-face versus online negotiation classrooms and found that while knowledge of content scores (as measured by final exams) showed no differences across learning platforms, students in face-to-face classes score higher on negotiation outcomes. In addition, even when online and face-to-face students negotiated via chat, the face-to-face students still scored higher outcomes than the online students.

Research in the field also suggests that there is a skill difference between face-to-face and online negotiations in that negotiators perform better in face-to-face rather than virtual negotiations (Drolet & Morris, 2000; Stuhlmacher & Citera, 2005; Valley, Moag, & Bazerman, 1998). Stuhlmacher and Citera (2005), in their meta-analysis, also found that face-to-face negotiations generated higher profits and were less hostile than virtual negotiations. With both the business and learning environments moving toward ever increasing virtual interactions, it is incumbent upon management educators to find ways to improve skill-based learning outcomes in online settings. The question is, how?

Pelz (2004) suggests that online learning success depends on three types of presence, social, cognitive, and teaching, with the social presence being less likely to develop in an online setting. Thompson and Nadler (2002) likewise suggest that more lean negotiation settings may suffer from a double whammy in that virtual environments not only result in less relationship-building but that the lack of relationship also lessens rapport, which contributes to reduced trust and positive emotions. Despite research suggesting that teaching negotiations in an online format has its challenges, many educators have been tasked with the responsibility to convert their courses to an online format, nonetheless. In this session, the presenters will facilitate discussions on how to best teach a skills-based negotiations course online despite the potential challenges and share resources that participants can use immediately in their classes. Our goal is for everyone to leave this roundtable with some new avenues to pursue and resources to try and the ability to join a burgeoning, but vibrant community of educators learning to adapt to these changing times!

Session Description

This 60-minute roundtable discussion will be hosted by educators who have taught online, hybrid, and face-to-face negotiations at all levels. Two of the round table developers have published texts in the negotiations field and another has published research comparing online and face to face skills-based outcomes. All have extensive negotiation teaching experience. We will begin the discussion by quickly introducing the topic. Then, depending on the number of participants in the roundtable, we will break into table discussions around three topics of interest. Participants will be provided with resources (syllabi, exercises, assignments, case suggestions,

etc.) that they can immediately use for their online negotiation course development efforts. The three breakout topics are:

1. Experiences (negotiation simulations) that facilitate improved skill acquisition in an online setting.
2. Application exercises that address specific skill areas, e.g., communication, persuasion, resolving conflict that employ a variety of mechanisms (e.g., role play, observation of films/videos, case studies)
3. Reflection exercises that facilitate critical analysis of strengths and weakness, skills acquisition, planning for future development.

Participants will have the opportunity to rotate to the two tables which are focusing on the topic of greatest interest to them. The hosts will facilitate the table discussions, asking participants to share their experiences, concerns, and ideas related to the topic. Thus, the table discussion will fully engage participants.

After rotating through two table topics, we will bring the full group back together to share insights, suggestions, and next steps as a community. Finally, we summarize and conclude the session by discussing ways to create a community of individuals with interest in this topic to continue to engage and share best practices.

Introduction	5 minutes
First Table Discussion	15 minutes
Second Table Discussion	15 minutes
Full Group Discussion/Materials & Best Practice Sharing	15 minutes
Community Creation/Conclusion	10 minutes

In summary, we believe this roundtable session will provide educators who have responsibility for teaching negotiations online with new ideas and resources to support their endeavors. We hope this session will be the start of creating a community of negotiation educators who will continue to create and share more online negotiation teaching resources, to address the dearth of teaching resources in this area.

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