



# Straight talk

Negotiations play a key role in getting promotions, executing projects and even striking a work-life balance. Know how to do it right

BY ARATHI MENON

**N**egotiations are inevitable in life. From seizing a better opportunity at work to finding work-life balance, we engage in negotiations at every step of the way. So, being skilled at the art of negotiation can take us a long way in achieving what we want from life. *Smart Life* caught up with Anand David, coach to many CEOs in the country and founder-director of Manford (Management Foundation

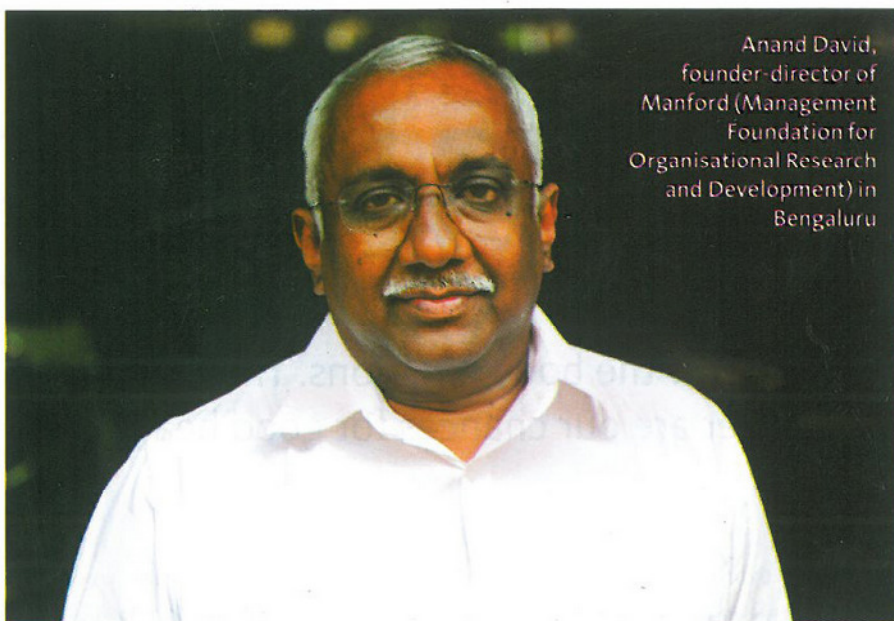
for Organisational Research and Development) in Bengaluru to elaborate on the importance of negotiations at work and the skills required to succeed in it.

***What are the situations where negotiations are sought?***

Promotions and portfolios are the most frequent ones. Surprisingly, salary is not often negotiated. These days, it is one of the least concerns of the employees as they are looking

for growth in their career. In terms of portfolio, if you are 10 years old in the company and doing the same function, you would want to explore other areas for better experience and growth.

Coming from the world of behavioural science, I believe every issue begins with a thought, which is later analysed and the action takes place ultimately. If we can get to the problem at the thought level, we are in a much better position to solve the problem.



Anand David,  
founder-director of  
Manford (Management  
Foundation for  
Organisational Research  
and Development) in  
Bengaluru

BHANU PRAKASH CHANDRA

## Role of body language

The right body language is important in swinging a deal your way.

- ★ You need to maintain eye contact with the other person while negotiating. It should not be aggressive or passive.
- ★ You should be aware of not encroaching the personal space nor should you be far off.
- ★ Your voice should be firm, not rude. A good example is how Amitabh Bachchan talks in *Kaun Banega Crorepati*.
- ★ Do not keep your hands folded. It simply implies lack of room for negotiation.

Often in unresolved issues, someone is upset with the other person and is not ready to let go. Negotiations are bound to fail if we start from the "I am right, you are wrong" position. Look at any negotiation in the world that has failed, you will realise it was because both parties were rigid. When we come with the preconceived notion of what is right or wrong, we will not resolve the argument. One of my favourite sayings in the company is "wars are not fought by right and wrong people or two wrong people. Wars are fought by two right people right about their rightness."

### **What are the various steps to resolving an issue?**

To solve an issue, we look at needs, interests and concerns. For the negotiation to begin, the needs have to be identified first. For example, if an employee is unsatisfied, we first look at why he needs to continue in the company and why the company needs to retain him. But to get to the actual needs, we will have to rummage through the many wants. Once that is sorted, the gap is easily identified. That is half the work done.

The next step is to avoid a debate and facilitate amiable negotiation. Debate is often about "I win, you lose". Smart negotiations, on the other hand, lead to win-win situations. Once

the issue is negotiated successfully, it is important to document it well. Otherwise, you could be fooled later.

### **What is the right timeline for a promotion?**

Now that most companies follow the right route of assessments and appraisals, I would say, "Why not every year?" The general practice in companies is that if an employee gets about four or five rating in the appraisal, he is bound to be promoted and given a new role to play in that year. But the next year, it is likely that he will be given three as the score considering he is on a new role and will take time to get used to it. So my advice would be to have a dialogue with the boss as soon as the promotion is given and ask him what kind of performance would fetch him the same rating next year. This sets the baseline in the beginning itself for another promotion in the following year.

### **What are the right negotiation skills? How is it different from manipulation?**

The success of negotiations rests on right communication. First, do not ever talk if you have not understood the issue. Understand both the content and the feeling involved. You also need to make sure the other person has understood it. You can even get equipped with assertiveness training that can help you get what you deserve

while being engaged in the company.

There are three situations where manipulation can take place—ignorance, guilt and conformism. Guilt is when one or both the parties try to solve an issue borne out of a wrong doing or a goof-up. For example, if a manager had recommended his subordinate for a promotion and the subordinate leaves the company after six months of getting it, the incident could put the manager in a tough spot in the future when he wants to recommend someone else. This could push him to use manipulation as a means to get what he wants. The best way to avoid it is to own up to your mistake as soon as it happens and offer compensation.

Ignorance is when there is a lack of clear knowledge about a situation. If someone uses an information that you are not aware of during a negotiation, there is a clear chance of you getting manipulated. Conformism is when you are expected to conform to certain standards set by the company. Your boss could say, "International staff has decided on no promotions this year because of the dull economic status." You could bust this attempt at manipulation by saying, "But figures show we have done exceedingly well in India and so why should we get affected?" □