

Weekly EMP Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 23, 2022



CLAUDE AND BETTY LOU LAVAL
ENTREPRENEUR
MENTOR
PROGRAM

The Significance of Persuasive Communication by Ricky Rachmat–Presiding Mentee

Luncheon Hosts **Zeferino Oshiro**, and **Mukesh Chinreddy** provided the EMP Cohort with pizza from the family owned and operated local restaurant, *Curry Pizza Company*. Lunch consisted of four different spice-infused, delicious pizzas: tandoori chicken pizza, butter chicken pizza, and tofu pizza. There was also pepperoni for those that prefer a pizza less spicy!



After lunch, **Dr. Koenig** started our session by discussing a CSPAN Historian Presidential Survey published in 2021, ranking all US Presidents on leadership characteristics. Of the characteristics identified in the survey, the top 5 included persuasion (#1) and integrity (#3). Both of these two characteristics are also on the list that EMP is creating this semester



We gathered to sing Happy Birthday to mentee Briseyda Dominguez who unfortunately could not be with us in person but was on zoom!

During the last two sessions, we have discussed the importance of personal persuasion--how to attract people to get to know you as someone with value and how to use persuasion within an organization to solve a specific problem. Today's session focused on the use of persuasion for organizational change. This type of persuasion aims to ultimately get to a shared solution-driven outcome.

Organizations often change to continue to grow and ensure success. However, people within organizations have different reactions to change. It can often be seen as positive or negative, exciting or frightening, critical or a waste of time. The use of persuasion in major organizational change requires convincing others to have "buy-in" to a specific vision or goal. If the people within the organization have "buy-in" and believe that the direction is right, they will be more willing to embrace the change.

To illustrate and practice this form of persuasion, **Dr. Koenig** set up a scenario that involved a fictitious company deciding whether or not to make a significant change in the organization that would impact how the company's products are produced, the employees that produce the products, and potentially the overall culture of the organization. In this scenario, the Vice Presidents of Operations, Engineering, and IT asked for a small group of executives, managers, and company employees to meet to learn about the research that had gone into reaching the Vice-President's conclusion. They asked that the research and conclusion be shared with their colleagues for consideration.

After four small group discussions, a "decision summit" would be scheduled with the final outcome being sent to the CEO and Board of Directors for approval!



The entire EMP session was devoted to practicing persuasion on both sides of the organizational change issue. The mentees were divided into two groups. Each side was assigned its position and was challenged to focus on persuading the other side about its position. After significant discussion, each team selected three mentees to act as spokespersons to represent them at the "decision summit". The "decision summit" lasted 40 minutes. All other mentees were tasked with listening carefully to how each side used persuasion to make their points.



"Decision Summit"

Key Take Aways

- One of the worst things you can do when a big change is on the horizon is to make employees feel like the change is being done **to** them. It's far better to allow the employees to feel like they are part of the solution.
- Leadership must be willing to allow authentic engagement with all employees to feel informed. Uninformed employees can often lead to angry opposition to any change initiative. Offer an opportunity for employees to come up with new ideas and solutions and air their concerns.
- Both sides of an issue must have a clear and compelling case for their position: for or against the change initiative. The two groups were asked to prioritize the most important points as they created their positions.
- Both sides of the issue must "listen to understand, and speak to be understood." Practice summarizing key points to ensure understanding.
- It is critical to be open-minded; find value in what the other side is saying.



"It's better to do things *with* people than *to* them"--Dr. Neil Koenig

- For a debate to be genuinely productive, all parties need to be willing to respect every person's viewpoint and also be able to change his/her mind if necessary. This needs to be persuasion, not argumentation.
- At the beginning of the summit, each side presents its position for five minutes, without interruption. The "Pro" side for change goes first, followed by the opposing position. Open persuasive discussion follows.
- Some of the most effective decision-making processes include building consensus. Consensus means reaching an acceptable agreement that all team members can support. It should not be a win/lose situation. Be respectful when disagreeing with an opinion.
- Make sure you respond to every critical point in the discussion. If it's not acknowledged or understood, it will continually be brought up repeatedly, ultimately reducing the overall communication.

Other Take Aways

- Sitting in a circle is better than a "face-off," with each position facing the other, making the atmosphere more hostile and not conducive for collaboration.
- Listen carefully during the discussion for the other team to offer a compromise. In our scenario, a compromise was offered three times but was not recognized by the other team.
- A handshake at the beginning and a handshake at the end are good etiquette for these discussions.
- Small groups help maximize communication vs. large groups that do not give everyone a voice.