URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/the-potency-of-effective-negotiations

All organizations of employment have a political structure and revolve around the subtle arts of negotiation and relationship management. How we treat our peers – particularly our subordinates – speaks a lot about a person's character, say Arbor Advisors partner Stan Christensen. Particularly when it comes to difficult conversations – discussing problems, giving negative feedback, etc. – those who can do so with tact to all members of the organization are certain to elegantly progress.

click to play

Transcript

How does negotiation serve as a career management tool? We've talked a lot in the class about the fact that this course is all about relationships, right? It's about how do you create them, how do you maintain them, how do you deal with people that are difficult.. And all organizations, be they academic, public sector, private sector, are going to have relationship issues, they're going to have politics.. You know, academics are probably the hardest politics.. And if I were going to sort of talk about where the easiest place is to negotiate and the most difficult place is I would say academics is the absolute worst.. I mean, it's the most hierarchical, the most bureaucratic, egos play the biggest role.. You know, only slightly better is government.. You know, better than that slightly is probably the non-profit sector.. Slightly better than that, you know, some NGOs and then on private sector and then corporate, I would say, you know, it's the easiest to negotiate.. It's the most fluid.. Now, again, that doesn't push me to recommending one over the other, but you're going to have to work out difficulties and differences in whatever organization you join and your skill and your ability to manage those differences is going to have a tremendous impact on how quickly you get ahead and how much fun you have..

So, negotiating up and down in organizations.. Someone gave me the advice, not long at a business school, and said, "You know, the index of someone's character is how they treat people when they're in the power position." So if I'm the boss, how I treat my subordinates, how I treat my organization, the administrative people, that's the index of my character.. And it's amazing to me to watch people as they go up in organizations often do the exact opposite.. They treat the people right below them a little bit bad and the people right below them a little bit worse and the administrative people, the worst of all.. So how you sort of manage the process of dealing with people who aren't necessarily in a power position, I think, says a lot about your skill level and your ability as a negotiator.. You're going to deal with difficult people.. And if I were going to say one truism in the whole presentation today is it's guaranteed that you're going to learn or going to have to deal with difficult people in life.. Obviously, we're in a section of the class right now where we're talking about how to have a difficult conversation.. That's one subset of it.. But people, as they progress in the sort of hierarchy of life, spend more and more time managing people and less and less time doing analysis..

So people at my age, all I talk to my friends and colleagues about is, "Oh, yeah, this, you know, this guy I work, he's such a nightmare and I spend all of my time sort of cleaning up after people's messes," and it's the people skills that end up being difficult.. And so, if you are adroit and skilled at doing the things like we've been talking about in class, how to have a difficult conversation about the way an employee is treating another employee, or how to bring up a problem that you have with your manager, or how to tell the administrative person give them feedback on their performance that's negative.. All those kind of conversations are difficult conversations.. And if you are skilled at those, you're just going to move through organizations quickly because so few people are good managers...