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WHEN IT COMES to clinching that deal with an information provider, librarians and information professionals are on their own. It's against competition law (and confidentiality agreements) to share with other libraries the details of the terms agreed with a particular publisher. So good negotiating skills are vital, if you want to get the best deal for your own service.

In fact, an ability to negotiate effectively is fundamental to working life. That is true whether you are a manager, a front-line member of staff, an intermediary or the client. (Multi-tasking information professionals are often, at different times, all of them). You need these skills to manage all your relationships, not just talking to a vendor. Negotiation skills play an important part in managing expectations, say, or in setting up a Service Level Agreement.

The ability to negotiate effectively is just one of a number of crucially important business and life skills that global information solutions provider Thomson Scientific offers as part of its Quantum² Leadership Development series. The programme is offered free of charge to all information and knowledge professionals worldwide. It is so versatile, it can even be used, with some modification, for internal staff training. You can check it out yourself on the enormously useful website at www.thomsonscientific.com/quantum2/

At the recent Internet Librarian International 2007 in London, Liz Blankson-Hemans, Director of Information Professional Development for Thomson Scientific in Europe and Asia Pacific, delivered a masterclass presentation on 'Communicating, Influencing and Negotiating for Results'. Her audience included a mixture of librarians and information publishers. At least some of the former thought the session would be tailored to help them squeeze the last bit of benefit out of any deal with a vendor.

Personality talks...

Luckily, we got much more than that. In recent years, it's been taken as read in education that learning styles differ. But you probably haven't stopped to think that so do communication styles. And so do personality types – yours, and those of the people you are trying to influence.

Before you even think of opening negotiations, it's usually important to communicate what your position is. That will influence the way people think about you, perhaps persuading them to do something in a particular way.

In fact, communication – about your position, and in order to get something you want – is an important precursor of any negotiations. But it is your personality type that will influence your communication styles and how you (and the other party) approach any discussion.

In a series of fun exercises with no right or wrong answers, we looked at some tools to help identify personality types: Myers-Briggs (16 personality styles from four pairs of preferences) and the Disc core styles (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Conscientiousness). That helped us identify our own personality types, and increase our awareness of others. There was too little time to try out Personality Explorer, another tool, which identifies another set of personality types in social interaction: focusers, relaters, integrators and operators.

Understanding differences in personality styles is important. It helps you become a better communicator, to appreciate the differences in others and to resolve or prevent conflicts. In fact, the



The Quantum² leadership circle: The Quantum² programme is built around 10 interwoven strategic and business competencies. By clicking on each one (on the website) you'll find workshops, case studies, white papers, and links to additional resources to help you.

Skills for life, not just work

The ability to negotiate effectively is fundamental to a successful working life. **Elsbeth Hyams** reports on Liz Blankson-Hemans' masterclass in Communication and negotiation skills.

Quantum² presentation even offered tips on Social Style Guidelines for Performance Measurement – modes of behaviour to use in talks or collaboration with each of the Disc personality types. You need to identify the right style to influence your target most effectively. That is easy (or easier) within a collaborative working environment – your immediate office, say – where you are likely to know the person(s) you seek to influence.

But if you don't know much about the people you will be negotiating with, you need to do your homework. Find out as much about them (and their organisation) as you can. Then tailor your approach accordingly.

You need to choose the tactics most appropriate to your objectives – and the



'Negotiation is not really about winning or losing.'

Liz Blankson-Hemans

people you wish to influence. That will depend on how far you are prepared to compromise, how much you know about your opposite number and which is more important – long-term good relations, or driving a hard bargain in the short term. It is desirable in many circumstances to be assertive rather than passive. But being tough may also be seen as aggressive, and will damage long-term good will. Only you will know if that is a risk you can afford to take.

In certain circumstances, it is appropriate to say 'No' – if a proposal transgresses a limit you have identified earlier. How you say it depends on the situation.

In most complex scenarios, getting the desired outcome requires a plan of cam-

paign. Liz suggested it should have four steps. First and foremost, it is essential to define your objectives, both the general ones and the bottom line. You must be sure of your priorities, and have alternatives in case you cannot get what you want. Where can you afford to be flexible? What are the weaknesses of your position? What supporting responses can you create?

Step Two is similar, but involves the other party. What are they likely to want to achieve? What are likely to be their priorities? The third step, which we covered only briefly, involves identifying common, complementary and conflicting elements in your and the other party's positions. This enables you to select your negotiating tactics. But although you will choose your initial approach, your style and tactics may have to change during the negotiations. Not everything goes according to plan.

Key messages from this training were that negotiation is not about winning or losing, but about relationships, satisfaction and confidence in your ability to do a good job. Your effectiveness, whether in building relationships or delivering a service that satisfies users and stakeholders, depends on your communication strategy. To be a successful negotiator, you must learn to choose the right tactic for each situation.

The applications are endless. This approach would be just as useful for diplomats or trade union officials as for information professionals. And not only when negotiating with stakeholders, but with each other – for instance, over pay and conditions.

■ If you want additional insights specific to negotiating with vendors, try Fiona Durrant's *Negotiating Licences for Digital Resources* (Published by Facet, 2006. 978 1 85604 586 5; £39.95).

Embrace 2.0 – or you may as well retire

Tim Buckley Owen's Internet Librarian International diary offers a flavour of two days of radical ideas – and some timely warnings.

Day One

Lighthouses don't stop ships going on to rocks, they just warn them – and the opening keynote of this year's Internet Librarian International conference, from Special Libraries Association President-elect Stephen Abram of Sirsi Dynix, illuminates plenty of rocks for the baby-boomers to founder on.

You won't 'get' social networking unless you're in it, he suggests; you need to try instant messaging, Second Life, you need an avatar. Eye-tracking studies show that the millennial generation reads differently from its parents, and only 20 per cent are text-based learners anyway – in other words, text-based libraries don't align with the majority of learning styles.

Scary stuff. Perhaps a session on web design will be more reassuring. It isn't.



Tom Hogan Sr., President of Information Today, welcomes the Internet Librarian International audience

We still can't even do the basics of search, suggests Martin White of Intranet Focus. Too many web designers seem to think that sticking a search engine on to a site is sufficient, without paying any attention to document retrievability. If you doubt this, do a search on 'confidential' on your intranet and see how many things come up that shouldn't be public at all. Cokie Anderson of Oklahoma State University follows with a report of a website usability testing study. Traditional testing is complex, the testers get bored with it and you get middle-of-the-road results, she maintains. But grab three or four 'reasonably patient' web users, offer

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