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A proposed practical negotiation approach to integrative agreements: Transitioning from competition to cooperation

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This study focuses on integrative negotiations, which are intended to maximize profit by clarifying the difference between opposing negotiators' priorities. In this context, we discuss a practical negotiations approach to lead to integrative agreement. Previous research on negotiation has discussed the importance of shifting from a competitive viewpoint to a cooperative viewpoint in order to reach integrative agreements. However, shifting to a cooperative viewpoint can be difficult. One reason for this is the fixed-pie perception held by most negotiators, in which one's loss is perceived as another's gain. The fixed-pie perception can influence a negotiator to favor a competitive viewpoint over a cooperative viewpoint. Thus, we must discourage this perception in order to shift to a cooperative viewpoint. According to previous studies (Fisher & Ury 1991), information disclosure between negotiators is necessary to dispel the fixed-pie perception; however, such disclosure can also risk disadvantaging the discloser. Because of this dilemma, many negotiators tend to adhere to a competitive viewpoint. To address this dilemma, we examine how negotiators could shift from a competitive viewpoint to a cooperative one by counteracting the fixed-pie perception in a negotiations experiment.

In this study, we consider the transition from a competitive to a cooperative viewpoint at two stages. In the first stage, one participant notices the other participant has a different negotiating priority, and only one holds a cooperative viewpoint. In this stage, an integrative negotiation

cannot be made. In the second stage, both notice the difference in each other's priorities, and both hold a cooperative viewpoint. In this stage, an integrative negotiation becomes possible. Although practical methods of eliminating the fixed-pie perception have been studied (Lax & Sebenius 1987), these relate to the first stage only; no practical methods of shifting to the second stage have been confirmed. If information about preference of both is disclosed, it is thought that both partners can hold a cooperative viewpoint. However, implementing this in practice is not easy, because the person who discloses information to a partner may become disadvantaged in the negotiation. The objective of this study, therefore, is to experimentally evaluate an effective method to dispel the fixed-pie perception at the second stage of a negotiation.

In our experiment, participant pairs were first required to read a negotiation scenario that they decide condition of rental about a store for rent. The negotiation items in this scenario are the monthly rent, the plan of payment, and the frequency of promotion. In this scenario, an integrative negotiation is possible, since there is a difference between priority in the plan of payment and that in the frequency of promotion. Before and during the negotiations, participants were required to answer a questionnaire regarding the factors related to negotiation behavior, on a scale of one to five or one to ten. This is for analyzing the relations between these factors and negotiation behavior. Additionally, after the experiment, we conducted a follow-up interview about the details of the negotiation. This is for considering negotiation behavior in detail by resolving intention of their conversation. Eventually, we analyzed and discussed the negotiation processes and results in terms of two points: whether quantitative information had been disclosed, and whether concessions had been made.

In the experiment, effective methods to overcoming the fixed-pie perception and reaching an integrative agreement were observed. One involved making appropriate concessions and obtaining feedback: that is, demanding less regarding a negotiation item that is a low priority for oneself but valuable for the partner, and obtaining favorable feedback from the partner as a result. The person who made the concession can infer from the favorable feedback that the low-priority item may be valuable to the partner. On the other hand, the person to whom the concession was made

may infer that the item was of high priority to their partner. By this reasoning, both sides can break away from the fixed-pie perception. This method can therefore be used to recognize differences in negotiators' priorities without disclosing concrete quantitative information about negotiation item.

The other effective method observed in this experiment is the demand and disclosure of quantitative information. If negotiators can obtain quantitative information from each other, they can compare it with their own to evaluate differences in priority. The recognition of difference increases the possibility of reaching integrative agreements by facilitating discussion in an integrative direction.

Another difficulty preventing integrative agreements is anchoring: this refers to a scenario in which, when a condition for goal is given, judgment during negotiations is influenced by that condition. This is no problem if the condition is compatible with maximizing profit; however, when this is not the case, different conditions should be examined. We think that a combination of the two methods observed in this experiment ("making appropriate concessions and obtaining feedback" and "demanding and disclosing quantitative information") discourage anchoring, since exchanging quantitative information provides an opportunity to consider other conditions that may facilitate a better agreement. However, the disclosure of quantitative information can be difficult due to the risk of disadvantaging oneself. In such a scenario, both sides can take a cooperative viewpoint by making appropriate concessions and obtaining feedback, thereby facilitating the mutual exchange of quantitative information.

In summary, by integrating the above methods, the results of this study suggest, a practical approach to lead to integrative agreements. In order to shift from a competitive viewpoint to a cooperative viewpoint and thereby reach an integrated agreement, we recommend the following process. First, the negotiator should check whether there are any differences in priority by offering the partner with the choices of equal value for oneself (Lax & Sebenius 1987). If any differences in priority are detected, an integrative negotiation is possible. Second, both parties should attempt to make appropriate concessions and retrieve feedback. This can reduce the risk of

getting a disadvantageous result, and facilitate transition to the stage in which both sides notice the difference between their priorities. Finally, to demand quantitative information is effective once the cooperative viewpoint has been achieved. The disclosure of quantitative information provides us a standard to decide the optimal condition of negotiation item, and enables us to go toward the agreement that can maximize the profit within that frame.