



Stanford eCorner

What is Effective Negotiation?

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Stan Christensen throws light on the art of effective negotiation. He defines it as any attempt to persuade or influence a party to do something. He adds a note of humor by illustrating it with a story of one his students.



Transcript

So what is effective negotiation? First of all, let me define negotiation as any attempt to persuade or influence a party to do something. So if you define it that broadly, it's a lot of what you do everyday. I often ask students, "What have you negotiated today?" And they come up with all kinds of answers. I recently asked a group of students, "Do you remember the first time you negotiated?" And one, sort of plucky young student raises his hand, and he said, "I think the first time I negotiated was when I cried for milk." Now, at the end of the quarter, I realized he hadn't made progress from the time that he was born to what he was currently doing. And some people just do the same thing over and over again in life, rather than thinking systematically about negotiation. But I think negotiation is really effective relationship management. Now, if the talk had been framed today as a talk on relationship management, not that many of you would have come. And not that many of you would have signed up for my class. It would be mostly women, or some of their boyfriends that the women persuaded to go and get a course on relationship management. So I teach this course on negotiation, and it sounds really cool and people want to do it, but we do a lot of soft things, a lot of communication, a lot of process things, and I think that fundamentally that is what negotiation is about.

It's how to have relationships and manage them effectively. I'm super biased, but I think it's an important life skill that everybody needs, whether you're in the public sector, the public sector, and academics.