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Teaching Technical Sales Negotiations at UAS Duesseldorf

A BNCOW - Progress Report written by
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Introduction

The Business Negotiation Competencies in Online World (BNCOW) project is a collaborative initiative aimed at addressing the evolving demands of modern international business negotiations, particularly in the context of online interactions. Developed in response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project recognizes the increasing significance of equipping students with the necessary competencies to navigate digital business landscapes effectively.

The BNCOW-Project has the objectives to enhance student competencies, creating a community of practice, and facilitating talent recruitment.

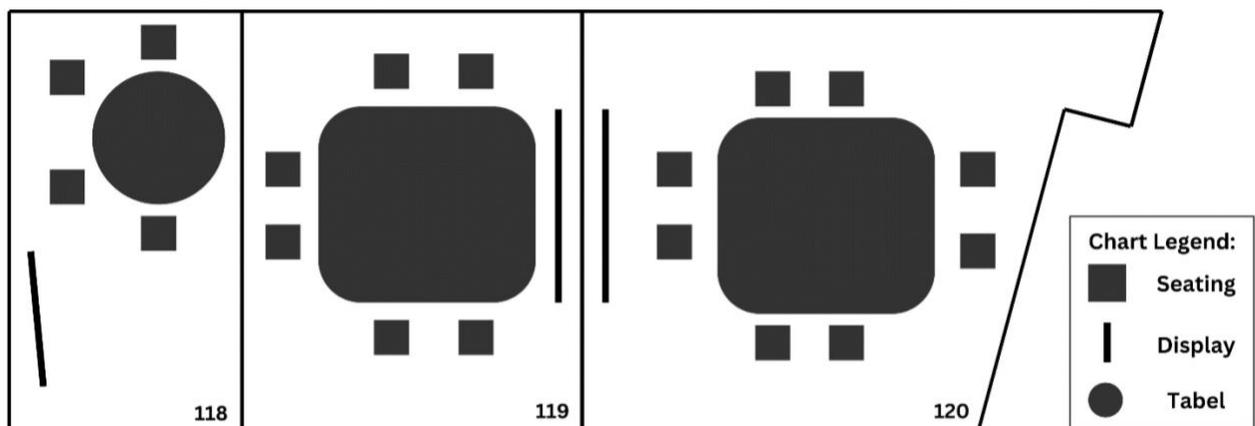
- *Enhancing Student Competencies:* One of the primary objectives of the BNCOW project is to increase the capacity of European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to equip students with the mindset and competencies required in contemporary international businesses.
- *Creating a Community of Practice:* The project aims to foster collaboration among European HEIs by establishing a European Community of Practice in business education. This community will work together to organize European-level business negotiation competitions, providing students with valuable experiential learning opportunities.
- *Facilitating Talent Recruitment:* BNCOW seeks to bridge the gap between academia and industry by facilitating interactions between students and companies. Through local and European online business negotiation competitions, companies can observe and recruit talented individuals, thereby enhancing students' employability in the short term.

Especially the [University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf](#) has adapted to a more vibrant and engaging approach to teaching. The project enabled [Prof. Dr. Kati Lang](#) to expand her teaching facilities for students to learn more about the art of negotiations firsthand. Besides the elaboration of WP2, we would like to stress the achieved impact and by that the results – so far: The adaptation of the current curriculum and the addition of new elective subjects was the key focus to strengthen the core competencies of learning students.

Teaching Technical Sales Negotiations at UAS Duesseldorf

The Art of Sales Negotiations was newly embedded into the curriculum of industrial engineering students from the Department of Electrical and Information Technology by implementing a new elective course “Digital Negotiations”. Before that, students relied upon the theoretical knowledge they had learned in other courses. After one successful semester of teaching “Digital Negotiations”, we took the gained feedback from the students and revised and developed an upgraded course “Negotiation Management – Strategies & Techniques”, which is taught this semester.

Moreover, the premises for this course shifted from a normal auditorium into a working environment, where students can interact with the professor at eye level. The [Technical Sales Lab](#) was designed as three modern group study rooms with top-of-the-notch technology to enable working with other students, mentors, industry partners, or professors remotely.



Technical Sales Lab - University of Applied Sciences
Duesseldorf

Basic plan from the Technical Sales Lab at HSD

Digital Negotiations

Our research at the BNCOW project showed the need for Sales Trainings in HEIs to sharpen the student's competencies, like the ending of a fascinating bachelor's thesis showed:

“Enhancing one's online negotiation capabilities presents a multifaceted challenge, yet it can be surmounted through a variety of methodologies and approaches. This intricate endeavor can be viewed as a dynamic and perpetually evolving process that mandates a commitment to continual learning and profound and consistent adaptation of practical experience.”¹

That is why the elective course "Digital Negotiations" was taught for the first-time last semester, so let's review the concept, utilized literature, outcomes, and student feedback.

Concept: "Digital Negotiations" represents a pioneering venture at the intersection of academia and industry, where the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication converges with the timeless art of negotiation. In today's globalized world, where geographical boundaries blur and interactions transcend physical spaces, the ability to negotiate effectively in virtual environments has become paramount. Drawing upon a diverse array of negotiation theories and practices, students embark on a transformative journey that transcends conventional classroom learning. From exploring foundational principles such as distributive and integrative bargaining to delving into advanced topics like cognitive biases and emotional intelligence, the course offers a comprehensive exploration of negotiation dynamics in digital contexts.

Moreover, "Digital Negotiations" serves as a conduit for bridging the gap between academic research and real-world application, leveraging insights gleaned from industry partnerships and collaborative initiatives such as the BNCOW project. By synthesizing findings from leading scholars and practitioners in the field, students gain unparalleled access to the latest trends, methodologies, and best practices in online negotiation. Beyond theoretical discourse, "Digital Negotiations" places a strong emphasis on experiential learning in a safe learning environment, providing students with ample

¹ *Online Negotiations: An analysis of the importance and impact of different negotiation competencies by Jonah Theisen, B.Eng.*

opportunities to hone their negotiation skills through case studies, interactive exercises, and negotiations with industry experts. Leveraging state-of-the-art digital platforms students engage in realistic negotiation scenarios that mirror the intricacies of modern business environments. These hands-on experiences not only deepen their understanding of negotiation principles but also cultivate critical thinking, adaptability, and resilience in the face of diverse negotiation challenges.

Furthermore, the course adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing upon insights from fields such as psychology, communication studies, and information technology to offer a nuanced understanding of digital negotiation dynamics. Through interdisciplinary exploration, students gain valuable insights into the cognitive, behavioural, and technological dimensions of online interactions, empowering them to navigate complex negotiation scenarios with confidence and acumen.

The exam in this course was to prepare an interdisciplinary learning unit of forty-five minutes including a negotiation case that should be played out during the examination by the other students to highlight the concept of their specific topic.

Literature:

The course draws heavily from both contemporary literature on negotiation theory and practices and renowned resources like the Harvard Program on Negotiation (PON), also the scripts of an older course “Market Psychology” by Prof. Dr. Kati Lang were available and discussed. A focus lay on the developed self-assessment from the BNCOW Partner Universitatea „Babeş-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca as well as the script from Wiener Neustadt.

Used books:

- Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without giving in by Rodger Fisher and William Ury
- Getting Ready to Negotiate: The Getting to Yes Workbook
- Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations by William Ury
- Never Split the Difference: Negotiating as if Your Life Depended on It by Chris Voss
- The Psychology of Selling by Brian Tracy

- Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion by Robert B. Cialdini
- The Psychology of Money by Morgan Housel
- Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman
- Noise by Daniel Kahneman

Used PONs:

- Sales Negotiations: How to get to WIN-WIN
- Negotiations Skills: Negotiation Strategies and Negotiation Techniques to Help You Become a better Negotiator
- Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Negotiation
- Business Negotiation Strategies: How to Negotiate Better Business Deals

Other articles, books and videos were shown but not mentioned here.

Results: Throughout the course, the students valued every lesson with a strong interest. The first negotiation was directly with three industry experts, who brought a case in which the students needed to sell the company cars. The students got split up into two teams and competed against the other team. The negotiation took place over a simulated period of “three workdays”², so three separate negotiations. As intended, the students made a lot of mistakes, which they will probably never forget they did, but luckily for them, they did them in a learning environment, without any real consequences.

After this visit from our industry partners the motivation for a deeper understanding of sales negotiations was thriving. We replayed parts from the negotiation and revised what could have been done better.

A lot of other negotiation cases were trained. Each Case was so designed, that the main was either in a face-to-face situation which was livestreamed to the other students to see the negotiation, or an online negotiation, where the other students watched the negotiation together on a screen in the Technical Sales Lab.

The played cases and scenarios were:

² Each negotiation was 20min, then the other group had time to negotiate in the Technical Sales Lab 120. In the meantime, the other group would prepare the negotiations in another room 118.

- Rent increase negotiation between a tenant and a landlord.
- Business interview for a sales position
- Asking for a raise
- The need for a new parking lot, that is closer to the office building
- Having private problems (i.e. Breakup, Mental Problems...), which is why more flexibility is needed.
- The option to work from home in a company that only works from offices
- Buyer and Seller – Cases in many different occasions with different products

Each case was performed either in a 1o1 situation, 1o2, or 2o2 situation, depending on the focus of the case and the valuable lessons they emphasized. The opponents got each a description of the goals, their character, and preparation time. One slight problem occurred after the first couple of negotiations, the students knew each other too well too quickly, so a slight bias might have influenced their behaviour there. This bias will be reduced in the newer course this summer by involving more industry partners, who the students do not know, which forces them to learn more about handling different characters.

In addition to the cases, the kind of examining the students was almost completely new to them and students told us afterward that this was an innovative form of examination that provides not only theoretical input but also provides practical experience, which is more memorable than excessively cramming in all the needed knowledge to pass a regular written exam. Next to the presentation about a PON-related topic, the students prepared in-depth negotiation cases, which triggered the responses they wanted to show and how to act in these kinds of situations. Especially the fact that the examinations were semester ongoing and in front of the whole group forced them to thrive and engage in the given input and industry negotiation partners.

The students who were enrolled in “Digital Negotiations” were delighted by the from the multifaceted module and valued the connections to the industry. We revised the feedback and tried to plan it into a new module.

Negotiation Management: Strategies and Techniques

Many of the previous concepts of “Digital Negotiations” were reused in the newer module, but we funneled the main theoretical focus, which is taught in the lessons but brightened it for further learning possibilities intern. We dive deeper into the concepts of negotiating and revising old negotiations, with historical background for example the Brexit Negotiations or Disney’s Purchase of Lucasfilm.

The course introduces students to a wide range of advanced negotiation strategies employed by experienced negotiators in real-world settings. Topics may include principled negotiation like integrative bargaining, distributive negotiation tactics, and multi-party negotiations. Through case studies, simulations, and role-playing exercises, students analyze complex negotiation scenarios and develop strategies for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.

To deepen the student's understanding of negotiations and the ongoing pressure involved with it, we designed cases that force one party to postpone the negotiation to the next event, where also another party might be involved. Also, the bias of knowing your opponent too well is lowered, by implementing more cooperation with industry experts. These experts share their knowledge and expertise, which forces the students to bring their A-Game, to connect with these experts for future working opportunities. Besides the part of industry experts, the cases got revised, which leaves almost no room for questions left on small misunderstandings due to unclear case design.

In addition to that, we implemented in the Technical Sales lab the newest software for facial analysis and eye tracking, which helps the students understand not only their behavior in negotiations but also to understand their opponents’ characteristics and when to act quickly. This software enables them to question their appearance in negotiations, as well as questioning what answers or information is necessarily needed by the other party and in which wording.

The results so far show that the students find it fascinating how different characteristics in humans show different emotions in different situations and how to prepare for these kinds of situations. Furthermore, the analysis of their own mistakes and winnings, makes it possible for them to strengthen their tactics and routines.

An integral component of the course is the exploration of strategic decision-making processes within negotiations. Students learn how to assess and analyze negotiation situations, identify key interests and priorities, and formulate effective negotiation strategies aligned with overarching organizational goals. Given the increasingly global nature of negotiations, the course addresses the impact of cultural differences on negotiation dynamics. Additionally, ethical considerations in negotiation are examined, emphasizing the importance of integrity, honesty, and fairness in the negotiation process.

Summary and Outlook in the Future of Sales Negotiations

Sales negotiations at UAS Düsseldorf have undergone a transformative evolution, propelled by innovative initiatives and strategic collaborations aimed at equipping students with the requisite skills and competencies to excel in contemporary business landscapes. Leveraging methodologies, interdisciplinary insights, and industry partnerships, the curriculum has been reimagined to offer a dynamic and immersive learning experience that transcends traditional boundaries.

The integration of digital negotiation principles, facilitated by the BNCOW project, has heralded a new era of pedagogical innovation, empowering students to navigate the complexities of virtual interactions with poise and proficiency. Through courses such as "Digital Negotiations," students engage in experiential learning opportunities that mirror

real-world negotiation scenarios, enabling them to develop critical thinking, adaptability, and resilience in digital environments.

Furthermore, the implementation of advanced technologies such as iMotions in the Technical Sales Lab has provided invaluable insights into the nuances of negotiation psychology, enhancing students' understanding of nonverbal cues and behavioral dynamics. By leveraging facial analysis and eye tracking, students gain deeper insights into the subconscious drivers of negotiation outcomes, paving the way for more informed and strategic decision-making.

The future of sales negotiations holds boundless potential, marked by a convergence of innovation, collaboration, and experiential learning. Building upon the foundation laid by initiatives such as the BNCOW project and the integration of iMotions technology, the curriculum will continue to evolve to meet the evolving needs of students and industry alike.

Looking forward, interdisciplinary collaboration will remain a cornerstone of pedagogical innovation, as faculty members from diverse disciplines collaborate to offer a holistic and multifaceted approach to sales negotiation education. By leveraging insights from fields such as psychology, communication studies, and information technology, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of negotiation dynamics, empowering them to excel in diverse business environments.

In conclusion, the future of sales negotiations is bright and full of promise, fueled by a commitment to innovation, excellence, and student success. By embracing digitalization, interdisciplinary collaboration, and experiential learning, the curriculum will continue to evolve to meet the evolving needs of students and industry, preparing them to thrive in an ever-changing business landscape.

Our framework underlies an evolving process of confirmation and constant change, so in the next step, a conference will be held to question our underlying results so far by a panel of industry sales experts.