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**Research Cover Sheet**

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## **Book Analysis**

### ***Guerrilla Negotiating – Unconventional Weapons and Tactics to Get What You Want***

*Guerrilla Negotiating*, published in 1999 and co-authored by Jay Conrad Levinson, Mark S. A. Smith and Orvel Ray Wilson, is actually one in a series of business related publications focused on sales and marketing. Packaged and titled to catch the eye of the traveling business person browsing the airport bookstore's self-improvement section, the authors of this 248-page work infer their purpose in writing *Guerrilla Negotiating* is to give a "fair" advantage in an "unfair" world. While the authors may have added breadth to their "guerrilla" collection, they fall short in providing a comprehensive work on negotiation. To this reader, the title inferred a unique approach to develop a hard-nosed negotiating style "to get what you want" or in other words, make your opposite comply with your wishes. What in fact is presented is an incoherent attempt at rebranding the cooperative negotiation style. It is clear the authors aren't attempting to provide a large descriptive work on negotiation theory and application; however, their prescriptive advice falls short of building successful cooperative strategy skills and in some cases actually undermines factors that would favor successful cooperative negotiation. On the positive side, the authors do concisely provide useful information and tools about understanding your negotiating peer and how to communicate effectively. Although military-like in title, this book is business-focused and poorly translates to military negotiation applications.

The book is arranged in 12 chapters which attempt to anchor the reader, first in recognizing the ubiquitous nature of negotiation and the importance of learning to negotiate better, then walking the reader through negotiation preparation and execution. The overall style uses short paragraph structure, Microsoft PowerPoint™-type bullet headers and numbered lists. This style improves ease of reading but unfortunately the reader can become lost in the excessive

length of the numbered lists or quantity of descriptive/prescriptive paragraphs. The overall work does not present any research-based information but proffers information based on the authors' business experience. None of the three authors claim any unique negotiation experience or expertise other than what can be inferred from their business experience. The 4-page bibliography cites notable books and authors on negotiating but somewhat troubling is the lack of citations to those works throughout the text where it appears some of the ideas were borrowed.

The book's preface is effective in motivating the reader to learn more about negotiating. Within the second paragraph we find the concise observations that "first, negotiating is an integral part of living and second, that the quality of your negotiating determines the quality of your life" (Levinson, Smith and Wilson 1999, p. xiii). This sentence is the one gem in the preface and introduction that otherwise serve their purpose of convincing the airport bookstore patron to go ahead and buy this book to read on their next flight.

The opening chapter titled "Why Negotiate?" again reinforces or brings to fore the realization that negotiating is a fact of everyday life. In the first paragraph we find an initial clue that this is really re-packaged cooperative negotiation style in the form of the question: "How surprised would you be to discover that you *can* get what you want *and* have the other party be happy, too?" emphasis in the original (Levinson, Smith and Wilson 1999, p. 5). In the subsequent list of 25 reasons to negotiate, look no further that the first six listed reasons to identify the cooperative style as we find "There is a Bigger Pie", "Don't Define Winning as Beating the Other Guy", "The Other Party Will Give You What You Want", "You Have as Much Power as the Other Guy" and "The Other Party Isn't the Enemy" (Levinson, Smith and Wilson 1999, pp. 6-8). In the remaining "reasons to negotiate" the authors quickly digress off point and begin listing negotiation concepts, such as aspirations, expectations, and a rough

equivalent of best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), to actual negotiation execution details such as trust building and concessions. Although a 25-item list is distracting and veers off course, some of the “reasons” listed take the form of prescriptive advice and generally support a cooperative negotiating style. Notable prescriptions are leveraging past performance, flexibility and disclosure to build trust, attempting to see things from the other’s point of view and developing skills to test new ideas to find options.

The second chapter “Negotiating Styles” is where we find the authors’ only (unsuccessful I would add) attempt to define negotiation and further support for cooperative negotiating strategy rather than any true definitions or descriptive work on negotiating styles. The authors indirectly define negotiation through outcome in the statement “The guerrilla constantly seeks *agreement*, because by definition, a successful outcome is one that both parties can accept.” (Levinson, Smith and Wilson 1999, p. 26). This poorly scopes the nature of negotiation but does further highlight the authors’ tendency toward a cooperative style. In support of a cooperative style, there are sound recommendations to approach negotiations as a collaboration and problem solving effort rather than a competition, considering the other party as a “counterpart rather than opponent” and actively seeking a greater whole or “bigger pie”. Unfortunately, as the chapter progresses to negotiating strategies or styles, we find vague references to actual strategies and a laundry list of negotiation tactics (hardball, stonewall, guilt trip, etc.) not styles or strategies. Comparing this book to the Negotiation Preferences and Styles Chart (NPSC) (Eisen 2010), one can clearly identify cooperative strategy but find only slight references to other strategies. The list of negotiation styles begins well where it lists the “whatever” style. This brief, four-paragraph discussion hints to the Insist and Comply styles. The following section on “whatever’s fair” seems to allude to a Settle strategy but neither of the sections develops the

ideas of relationship and task orientation well enough to understand the style. The remaining “styles” in the list are really tactics, not styles or strategies. The rest of the chapter again seems to digress off point but in this we find a good nugget on generational differences and a disappointing glossing over of culture.

The second chapter on pages 39-42 contains a very concise yet effective discussion on generational differences and negotiating. True to the book’s form of prescriptive advice, this section results in a “if you’re dealing with generation \_\_\_\_, then do this” formulation, but the material does further the discussion on communication and negotiation expectations within an American generational context. While too short to serve as stand-alone information on this narrow subject area, these pages do serve as a good primer to highlight issue and perhaps motivate negotiators to further study this area with a focus on negotiation preparation, expectations, concessions and executing a negotiated agreement. Bookending the chapter and standing in stark contrast to the above mentioned pages, the authors devote a scant two paragraphs on negotiating with other cultures and close with a weak call to study this area further. Even if the target audience is American business people, this short treatment of culture in negotiation is a major shortfall of this book considering its publication date and the context of globalization and business which requires cultural awareness.

The third chapter contains the so-called (by subtitle) “Unconventional” or “Guerrilla Negotiating Weapons.” These are not unconventional or digestible for that matter as this chapter lists out 98 “weapons.” The reader is encouraged to “choose weapons” from this “arsenal” to give them a “fair advantage”. Again, the style approach is very concise, rarely more than a two paragraphs, prescriptive advice that falls short of realistic applicability, fails to coherently walk one through a cooperative negotiating strategy and even introduces concepts that would be

counterproductive to a cooperative strategy. In the latter category the authors list “stand your ground” or position holding until presumably the other side concedes; not exactly in the best interest if a win-win, bigger pie outcome is desired. More disturbingly, after urging ethical and legal adherence in the preface, introduction and first chapter, the authors then list sex and spies as negotiating tools to choose from. However, in the remainder of the list of 98 weapons the authors hit on some fundamental negotiation concepts of trust, information and power but unfortunately these are not presented in a coherent model such as the Trust, Information, Power, Outcome (TIPO) model (Eisen 2010).

The fourth chapter intends to describe negotiating tactics but instead half-heartedly describes key negotiation concepts. The discussion ranges from setting aspiration and reservation points to prepping/controlling the negotiation site environment to influencing the other party. The chapter wanders haphazardly and fails to coherently and chronologically walk the reader from the first indication of requirement to negotiate and through the actual negotiation itself. Notable however, and supportive of cooperative negotiating style, is a 7-page discussion on team problem-solving and developing creative solutions (pages 92-98).

In the fifth chapter you’ll find a redeeming dive into the power of words and communication. Although again somewhat of a laundry list of items, this chapter has worth in its discussion on psychology and the effects of selected words. The format is overall prescriptive and sometimes clearly pitched to the “salesman” in the crowd, however, at 30 pages, this section is a quick read that serves as a quick reference guide to phrases and if nothing else, a tool to recognize in which way the other negotiating party is trying to influence you based on the words and phrases they are saying. Skip the next two chapters unless the only reason you care about negotiation is to be a salesman then move on to the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter.

Chapter 8 addresses opening negotiation maneuvers. The strength in this chapter lies in the section titled “Just Say No.” While it doesn’t lend to the overall discussion on cooperative negotiation strategy, it does present some good suggestions on how to handle certain “no” situations. In this case, the concise, prescriptive style is effective, for example from page 183: “Flat ‘No’: Just that. No emotional content. Use when no justification is required...When you hear a flat no, respond with ‘I’m confused...’ or ask for an explanation.” The prescriptive approach is also successful in Chapter 9 which is titled toward gaining information in the negotiation and in practicality is heavy on communication. This chapter contains a good summary on active listening (pp. 191-204) and an excellent discussion on communication styles (e.g. external versus internal) (pp. 208-225) along with how to communicate, persuade and motivate within each style. The authors could have improved understanding or at least relevance of the generational difference discussion had they placed it within the context of this chapter. The remaining chapters deal with controlling a negotiation, “gaining high ground” which is actually information based and keeping a negotiated deal together. Each contains some prudent negotiation execution considerations but nothing generally supportive of any particular negotiating style or presenting new information to the field of negotiation study.

In the opening “beliefs” or thoughts presented by the authors of *Guerrilla Negotiating* it is clear their approach to negotiation is a cooperative style. However, the book does not develop or present an approach to a cooperative style. The concise, almost “bulletized”, format and style of the book leads to easy readability of small sections but loses coherency as the reader is easily lost in oversized lists and divergent thoughts. As some of the presented tactics or techniques are actually counterproductive to a cooperative negotiation style, the book ultimately fails in supporting this approach to negotiation while ignoring other negotiation styles altogether. For

these reasons, I do not believe this book would be on my desk in another ten years. As a quick reference for understanding generational differences, active listening and communication styles and techniques, it has some merits. In the end, this book does not greatly contribute to the overall body of work in negotiation theory and practice, and that was clearly not the authors' intentions, but the presentation of ideas that contradict even the one negotiating style seemingly endorsed by the authors, further erodes from the usefulness of this text.

Eisen, Stefan Jr. "Practical Guide to Negotiating in the Military." Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2010.

Levinson, Jay Conrad, Mark S.A. Smith, and Orvel Ray Wilson. *Guerrilla Negotiating*. New York : John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1999.