

Newbie Corner: Diary of a bargaining newbie (2)

By a "newbie" team member

newbie - n : any new participant in some activity [syn: [newcomer](#), [fledgling](#), [fledgeling](#), [starter](#), [neophyte](#), [freshman](#), [entrant](#)]...

2005/April /03

Sunday

I called the hotel to confirm my reservations and check on our rooms. They had changed the location of the meeting room so I had to contact the chair of the team to let him know of the change and have him tell the other team members.

I set out for Toronto for our second set of bargaining dates. I am excited to get the process started again. I hope that we make the same progress as we did in the first set of dates.

7:00 pm

Arrived in Toronto

I checked in and went to my room (it took three trips to my car to get all my baggage). I am bringing healthy snacks for the team to keep up our strength for bargaining.

Day 1, morning April 4/05

(Caucus day)

All members of the team arrive. Our technical team members get all the technical toys connected. The bargaining team reviews the outstanding items from the first set of dates, and starts to deal with the remaining non-monetary issues. We discuss a number of housekeeping items and demands and then break for lunch.

Day 1, afternoon,

The team continues to discuss issues: lots of discussions. Since this is our second meeting I am feeling more comfortable with the process. The chair of the team is a good source of information and is helpful in ensuring all new team members are kept informed.

Day 2, morning April 5/05

Tuesday

We are caucusing again. Our negotiator is busily preparing position notes and starting to prepare some of our response documents. The management negotiator calls and informs us they are ready to meet. Off we go to find the Stevenson Room, where we meet the management team face to face. We discuss proposals and counter proposals.

Day 2, afternoon

We break for lunch, and we meet two unusual characters (Hans and Franz), who decide to share their philosophical look at life. Interesting conversation evolves: Toronto is certainly an eclectic place.

We return to the caucus meeting and continue to go over the remaining non-monetary items.

There is some confusion over one item that our team submitted (it was clear to us), so our negotiator, chair and vice chair met with the management negotiator and two

other members of their team and had a hallway discussion. On returning, our members tell us they now believe the management team understands the intent of our submission.

Day 2, evening

The bargaining team has one more professional development (PD) session this time showing how ruthless bargaining can be. It is now apparent the strengths and weakness of members are changed when introduced to this side of bargaining, although some members did better in these exercises than they did in the first PD session in March.

Day 3, morning April 06/05

Wednesday

We are back in the caucus room to discuss the items on the table; the morning seems to go by very quickly.

We prepare language on different articles to submit to the management team, if only our technical team could get the printer working (with two computer technical staff on the team, you would think that would be easy). We have lengthy discussions over some of the articles. This is the best part of the negotiations. The members of our team all come from different colleges and have different working relations with management. These caucus discussions allow us

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to dissect the language and each team member has their view of how the language could affect the membership.

Day 3, Afternoon

After a morning of caucus discussions our negotiator calls the management team and advises them we are ready to meet. We are off to Stevenson Room again.

We tell the management team our position on some articles and give examples of situations that have come up at different colleges that support our position. After we give them our documents, the management team gives us one of their proposed language changes. A brief discussion happens and then we return to the caucus room.

Day 3, Evening

I join the rest of the newbies and some of the veterans for dinner, and then I return to the caucus room for more discussions.

PD part 2 continues to dominate this evening. We attempt a new exercise, and all of us have a good time. This exercise was based on working with grievances and bargaining. The strategies are presented and a new set of rules for bargaining taught. All learn a great deal, but I don't believe these strategies will work at my college. It is now 1:00 am and I head for bed.

Day 4, Morning April 07/05

Thursday

The morning has arrived and I went for breakfast with all the newbies. After breakfast we meet in the caucus room. We discuss the management submission presented to us yesterday and formulate strategy around the

timelines of bargaining. One of the veterans points out that our discussion has come full circle and we decide it's time to break for lunch.

Day 4, afternoon

We come back to the caucus room fully recharged and quickly finish the items that we had been working on all morning. I find it interesting it takes three hours to discuss the issues before lunch but after lunch we wrap the discussion up in 30 minutes. Our negotiator is happy to see that all items are done. We call the management team and off we go to the Stevenson Room. Our negotiator steers the parties through the union's position on the language submitted by management and also some of our submissions. It is moving more slowly this time; it does not appear either side are agreeing to as many things as we did in the first set of dates. After discussions are done we return to the caucus room. The afternoon is almost over and some of us were ending, while others were already arranging for their next set of dates.

Day 4, Evening

I went to dinner with the rest of the team members. After dinner we went back to the caucus room, had more discussion as to strategies and how this week was different from the week in March. I look at my watch and it is 12:50 a.m. I tell the team that I am going to bed. I just get to bed and nicely drift off, and the fire alarm goes off. A voice comes over the PA system "ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen the alarm is coming from floor 2 and people of the main floor and floor 2 have to evacuate now." I get dressed, go back to the caucus room and wait for further instructions. I think to myself I know bargaining is supposed to "heat up", but I don't think this is what is meant.

The chair of the team opens the door and laughs at me, because I just left. The announcement continues for what seems to be an hour. After they announced that everything was alright I went back to bed.

Day 5, morning April 8/05

Friday

Last day in the Caucus room; I am tired. After the first session I felt good and ready to get to the next set of dates because we had made good progress. This set was not the same, as we're progressing through the non-monetary items, there was more discussion in caucus. This is because these items can have more of an impact on the membership and the team is working hard at getting language that will benefit the membership. We have to look very closely at the submission from the management side and the language we propose. We did not get as much movement at the table this time as we did in March.

We wrapped up our week with summary of where we are and where we are headed. We also discussed "slogans and themes" we could use for this round of bargaining. There were some good ideas and some effective but not so good ideas presented. All of our non-monetary items are now on the table. We discuss the strategy of addressing monetary items next round. The major consideration in determining our strategy is the strict time lines we have put into place. We call it a day

Day 5, Afternoon

I check out of my room and leave for home. My family missed me while I was gone and was happy to see me back home for a little while.