

STRATEGO AERO Instructor's Notes

Stratego Aero is intended to illuminate a number of different points in negotiation.

Basic issues that you may wish to explore with your students, include these questions:

-In workplace disputes, which actor is generally held most responsible by the employer? (Students often underestimate the fact that the company may just blame Dana if things go wrong.)

-Should interpersonal disputes in the workplace be settled on the basis of the interests of the parties, or their rights, or their relative power? Should the solution be an integrative solution or distributive? If your answer differs depending on the subject matter, or on a case by case basis, explain briefly why you come to different answers in different situations.

-Who should be allowed to decide how a given dispute or complaint should be handled? Should the complainant be able to choose how the issue will be handled? Would your decision on this matter change after a first option has tried and is perceived to fail?

-How do your answers above affect the optimal design of the dispute resolution system for this company? For example, do you believe that a complainant should be *required* to deal first with the apparent offender in all cases, before moving on to a later step in a complaint process? In fact, should a complaint procedure have any required, sequential steps? If not, why not?

-Do you believe that people of different races (genders, nationalities, cultures, religions, etc.) generally negotiate differently than each other? Are they treated differently, on the average? Do they perceive things differently on the average? Should this be a matter taken into account by negotiators — and if so, how? One can get to these questions easily by noting how the students deal with assigning gender (and race) to Sandy, Dana and Chris.

-How would you define "success" at dealing with this case? If you are Sandy? Dana? Chris? the CEO of the company? Another employee at the company?

-People differ widely in how they see these cases.

The case may be assigned as homework before it is to be discussed. Encourage or assign students to talk about the case together, before class, and ask them, if possible, also to discuss the case with a person of different gender/ethnic background.

In the class: divide your students into groups of three to eight and, if possible, provide them each with a blackboard or flip chart. Ask them to discuss and write their answers to these questions in the basic case: Whose interests are at stake? What are those interests?

What are the options open to each actor? (The class should assume Chris knows the material of the case.) (Note there will also be a Secret Instruction.)

The use of the Secret Instructions—before the small group work is finished.

Your small group of three to eight will probably need to talk for 30+ minutes. When you sense they are nearly done with the flip chart tasks, go privately to each little group. Quietly (“ssh-h”) hand each student the Secret Instruction. Get one in each group to give you (secretly) the range of estimates and the group average. The students will not know you have given everyone (in each group) the same Secret Instruction.

At the end of the class announce the group averages, preferably on the board. There will likely be differences among all Sandy groups, all Danas, all Chris’. And there will certainly be wide differences intra-group.

Illuminate the point that people’s views of such cases differ very widely. If an employer wants a common view of such cases, there must be a lot of training.

In the ensuing discussion, with the class back together, discuss the importance of options for each actor — beginning with the options for Sandy. Especially with respect to Sandy it is important to examine a wide range of options open to this person. Depending on the policies of the employer, the options for Sandy are likely to be both constructive and unconstructive for the employer, for example:

Do nothing more, that is, just "hunker down," if Dana essentially does nothing, and try to outlast Chris.

Ask for a transfer.

Find a confidential complaint-handler like an ombudsperson, to talk over and develop options, and maybe to role-play several options.

Try for at least several months to get to know Chris better, without mentioning any of the personal issues. Check around the company or around the town — see if Chris has any close colleagues who might give useful advice.

Deal alone, directly with Chris, about some or all of the issues — in person or by writing a note.

Talk directly with Chris, possibly bringing along another employee or colleague.

Get Dana, or a mentor within the company, or an ombudsperson, or someone else to act as a shuttle diplomat.

Ask for formal mediation (some companies and some ombuds offices offer this option).

Go to the company EEO office, and see what options they offer.

Bring a formal written complaint, in whatever fashion the company permits, alone or together with other employees.

Ask for a generic option, like a company training program on diversity, or posters on subtle discrimination.

Encourage other employees to act to send anonymous complaints to the CEO, call employee meetings at lunchtime, put up posters, etc.

Lose commitment to the company, and even act out in some fashion: go slow, work to rule, engage in petty sabotage, gossip, etc.

Quit. Go to a competitor. Take valuable ideas and employees to a competitor.

Bring an agency complaint. Sue.

Go public — Appeal to a local newspaper, a local congressperson, etc. Go on a local radio program. Testify to Congress. Write a thinly-veiled short story for the New Yorker.

Together with the class discuss the issue of choosing an option based on interests, rights, or power — or on some mix of these. Label each of the options open to each actor as to whether they are basically interest-based, or rights-based, or power-based. First pursue this exercise for each of the major actors and then examine the probable effects of various negotiation options on each of the other actors.

Finally, ask each student to tell (or write a paragraph) about how they would think the case ideally should be settled, if they were Sandy? or Chris? or Dana? or the CEO? Which options above are most cost effective? How would a company get this to happen?
