HARVARD HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE

Frontline Associates
REACHING ACROSS THE DIVIDE

Mastering Complex and High-Stakes Negotiations: An Immersive Online Executive Course

Course Description

Background

In an era of increasing polarization and rising tensions across political, social, and security domains, professionals engaged in humanitarian, health, and crisis response work face unprecedented challenges. To navigate these environments effectively, practitioners must excel in high-stakes negotiations and foster constructive dialogues with diverse stakeholders. The ability to build trust and drive positive outcomes amidst adversarial conditions is more critical than ever.

Purpose of the Course

The primary aims of this course are as follows:

1. Empower participants with essential strategic frameworks and practical tools enhanced by AI to engage effectively in high-stakes policy dialogue and negotiation.
2. Offer participants a comprehensive understanding of crisis negotiation, drawing from contemporary practices in the realms of politics, society, and humanitarian efforts.
3. Augment participants' technical proficiency and bolster their self-assurance when dealing with challenging face-to-face negotiations involving adversarial or intimidating counterparts.
4. Facilitate connections between participants and seasoned negotiation experts from diverse sectors, enabling them to broaden their personal network within this specialized field.

Utilizing an experiential learning approach, this course will provide participants with a systematic methodology for proactively and critically addressing crisis situations in a practical manner. Drawing from extensive empirical research on negotiation practices in contexts spanning conflict situations, health crises, and natural disasters, the course will equip participants with the tangible tools needed to strategize and execute such engagements effectively. It will serve as a valuable complement to existing courses in public policy and leadership, particularly for individuals aspiring to work in demanding environments like pandemic response, climate crisis mitigation, disaster management, conflict resolution, and other high-stakes scenarios.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, participants should be able to:

- Analyze complex political and social environments in times of crisis;
- Design a robust plan to set up and facilitate a professional dialogue on high-stake contentious issues and frame this plan in a shared vision;
- Define the conceptual framework of a complex negotiation process based on a thorough analysis of the environment, the stakeholders involved, their respective positions, interests and motives;
- Draw from the experience of field practitioners in the planning and undertaking of complex negotiation processes; and,
- Able to use the latest AI tools to design proper negotiation plans in an effective and robust manner.

Course Method

This live, online course spans 20 hours over 5 days and uses a case-based approach, combining in-depth discussions with practical exercises to build the skills needed for high-stakes negotiations in complex environments. The course is using four specific experiential approaches:

1. **Engaging Participants' Reasoning in Difficult Negotiation**

This approach leverages structured and interactive presentations to appeal to the participants' logic, reasoning, and personal experience in difficult negotiations. The objective is to encourage participants to delve into the proposed negotiation challenges, reflect upon them, and seek out solutions. Through the regular use of case challenges and quizzes, participants are positioned as an integral part of solution-finding processes, which enhances their engagement and understanding of the course material. This method underscores the significance of prior experiences, the power of critical thinking, and the importance of continual learning in problem-solving.

<u>Key Features:</u>

- A comprehensive set of live sessions on the necessary concepts, tools and methods to navigate tense negotiations;
- The regular use of negotiation challenges and practical exercises;
- The use of interactive tools, polls and Miro boards to engage participants by asking questions related to the course content as well as breakout rooms for small group discussions, problem-solving activities, or peer-to-peer learning; and,
- Live Chat and Q&A to encourage participants to use the chat feature to ask questions, share thoughts, or discuss ideas with peers.

2. Immersive Engagement in Negotiation Tools and Methods

This course is designed to immerse participants in a specific, real-world negotiation case, ensuring they engage with both the complexities and the human aspects of high-stakes negotiations.

Each iteration of the course will focus on a unique case study, allowing participants to apply their learning in a context that mirrors the challenges they may face in their professional lives. The experiential nature of this course will aim to foster a deep connection between participants and the case, encouraging them to invest emotionally and intellectually in understanding the problem and crafting viable solutions.

Domains and situations include:

- Emergency health negotiation in humanitarian settings
- Irregular migration in Europe, Mexico's border or NYC
- Climate negotiation in a multilateral environment
- Environmental negotiation dealing with industrial waste
- Negotiation in tense community environments (e.g. campuses)
- Access negotiation in conflict settings
- Hostage and extortion negotiation, etc.

This immersive approach will not only enhance the acquisition of negotiation tools and methods but also ensures that participants leave the course with practical experience and a deep understanding of how to navigate complex negotiation scenarios.

3. Inspiring the Participant's Creativity and Collaboration

This third approach utilizes digital technology to foster the exchange of experience on frontline negotiation among participants and promote collaborative engagements with fellow practitioners to address negotiation challenges. The emphasis in this mode is on sparking participants' creativity and imagination through the use of digital whiteboards on Miro as well as collaboration with other practitioners engaged in group work, leaving a lasting impression of empowerment and inspiration.

Key Features:

Throughout the course, participants will be invited to explore:

- Explore the Frontline Associates Negotiation Lab on *Miro* where all the negotiation tools are organized and can be used in a collaborative manner;
- Promote collaborative behavior using the whiteboard as a shared space for teamwork; and,
- Develop their own depository of tools and information on their private Miro Board encouraging them to continue this collaborative process.

4. Introducing AI-Powered Tools to Plan Negotiation Effectively

This fourth and final approach involves the use of LLM technology in the planning of a negotiation process, in particular analyzing complex environments and assessing the interest of the parties in the search for a compromise.

Key Features:

Throughout the course, participants will be invited to experience:

- The use of AI-powered tools in crisis negotiation and understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks of this technology in negotiation;
- The activities of an emerging Community of Practice among frontline negotiators aiming to further expand and develop the practice of frontline negotiation.

Course Structure

The live online course is organized in a series of five live modules over one week. The completion of the preliminary readings, live sessions, quizzes and group work is expected to require approximately 20 - 25 hours of engagement in total from the participants.

1. Live Online Modules

The five Live Online Modules will cover the following topics and tools:

A. Operating on the Frontlines

a. Analyzing complex and evolving environments
b. Dealing with contentious issues
c. Handling and mitigating power relationships

B. Building a rapport with difficult counterparts and stakeholders

a. Fostering legitimacy
b. Building and managing trust
c. Active listening
d. Leveraging influence on the counterpart

C. Drawing a negotiation plan

a. Using the Naivasha Grid
b. Analyzing the typology of a negotiation
c. Drawing of negotiation scenarios

D. Engaging in efficient and effective transactions

a. On the crafting of an effective and viable transaction in an adversarial environment
b. Managing the risks of failed transactions and safeguarding relationships
c. Ensuring compliance to the agreed arrangement and dealing with spoilers.

2. Negotiation challenges and quizzes

The presentations on tools and methods will be interwoven with negotiation challenges and quizzes illustrating the use of the tools and re-enforcing the acquisition of knowledge and experience in their

appropriate implementation in scenarios inspired by real negotiation. Each module should have an average of 8 quiz questions and one negotiation exercise.

Targeted Audience

This course is specifically designed to enhance the skills of young to mid-career practitioners involved in complex negotiations. It demands a high level of engagement from participants, who should possess some experience in negotiation or in the specific theme of the course. To ensure a rich and effective learning environment, participants are required to meet the following minimum qualifications:

- A university degree (Bachelor's level or equivalent).
- One to two years of experience in dealing with challenging counterparts.
- The ability to critically reflect on negotiation dilemmas.
- A strong interest in collaborative work.

Applicants will be required to submit an application detailing their qualifications and relevant experience to ensure they meet these criteria.

Regarding the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI)

The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) is a leading research center within Harvard University dedicated to advancing the science and practice of humanitarian response worldwide. Combining rigorous academic research with hands-on field experience, HHI aims to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action in complex emergencies and disaster settings. The organization collaborates with NGOs, governments, and international organizations to address pressing global issues, from conflict resolution and health crises to disaster preparedness and response. HHI's work emphasizes ethical, evidence-based approaches to aid, empowering professionals with data-driven insights, training, and practical tools. Through its commitment to education and innovation, HHI has become a trusted authority in humanitarian research and a key resource for practitioners and policymakers facing challenging environments around the globe.

About Frontline Associates

Frontline Associates is dedicated to fostering a vibrant community of practice around crisis negotiation, with a mission to support professionals working in complex, high-stakes settings through shared learning and collaboration. Committed to crafting a network of practitioners, researchers, and experts, Frontline Associates focuses on developing systematic, practical tools and methodologies to empower individuals and organizations to engage effectively in challenging negotiations. Central to this mission is the belief that collective insights and shared experiences enhance the ability to address real-world negotiation challenges. Through initiatives like the AI Negotiation Challenge, Frontline Associates not only promotes the fair, effective and responsible use of artificial intelligence in negotiation but also strengthens its community's capacity to tackle difficult situations ensuring that each member contributes to and benefits from this growing field of knowledge.

* * *