

# NEGOTIATION

The Art of Reaching Agreement

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**Søren Hilligsøe and Henning Sejer Jakobsen**

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**Academica**

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### **The Art of Reaching Agreement**

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# Prologue

Why write another book on negotiation? A quick search on amazon.co.uk shows that thousands of books are available, and google.com lists over 32 million references to the word 'negotiations'. The relevance may be debatable, but it is a fact that the problem is not lack of information; it is more a question of finding the *right* information.

This book is the result of extensive negotiations. We have negotiated with the publishers, with the contributors, and with each other as editors about the approach to writing about negotiations and negotiation techniques. It is not a description of only one way of reaching a result at the negotiation table; it tries to present an overview of the art and science of negotiating. The book seeks to describe such aspects as cultural diversity, the importance of gender, how emotions may have an impact, the semiotic approach, and it gives an introduction to mediation as well as an illustration of the complexity of the negotiation process. Each chapter is written by a leading international expert on his/her chosen subject. As editors, we have commented on each chapter to add our perspective on the relevance of the chapter for a prospective negotiator. There is a short profile of the contributor at the beginning of his or her chapter, and the Further Reading list at the back of the book lists references and recommended reading.

The book is intended for the business student or businessperson who wants an introduction to negotiation theory. It is not an exhaustive account that will present the definitive answer to everybody's questions, but it is based on our experience of designing training programmes for practitioners as well as for business students. Our training is designed around the principle that if you want to be a good swimmer, it is not enough to read a book about swimming, you need to get into the water to practise. The same applies to learning how to negotiate. You need to get to the table and work with case studies that are close to real-life situations. You also need to leave the training session and try negotiating "in real life": trying to find better solutions in business cases, trying to combine interests in leadership and management, and even trying to see if the theory fits in "everyday negotiation". Once you have

done that, books like this one are there to give you inspiration in becoming an even better negotiator, just as a good swimmer may be able to improve his or her training techniques by reading about the subject.

The Danish writer, inventor and mathematician Piet Hein once said this about art: "Art is what you can't do – otherwise it would not be an art". In that sense, negotiating is an art because it involves skills, knowledge and understanding of diverse and not always compatible interests in a process of uniting all of these elements in order to reach an agreement.

Aarhus, Denmark, January 2009  
Søren Hilligsøe & Henning Sejer Jakobsen