

UCT course develops skills for effective negotiating

Issued by [UCT Graduate School of Business](#)

14 Sep 2007

The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) this October runs a short-course that will provide dealmakers with the negotiating skills to turn tough stand-offs into win-win situations.

According to course director Barney Jordaan, a director of Maserumule Employment Consultancy, a specialist employment law and relations consultancy, the course is the distillation of years of experience in negotiation and addresses an important shortfall in skills development in the field.

“Negotiation is an all-pervasive practice for individuals, businesses, and countries. In business it happens at all levels – between employers and employees, in business deals, in sales, and at board level to name a few. While the great majority of negotiations involve long-term relationships that need to be preserved, few people have the inherent ability to negotiate deals that are good for both sides. Many still cling to an outmoded view that they can only win if the other side loses,” he said.

“While this may result in a deal, the deal itself is often not the best one that could have been obtained but worse still, the relationship that was supposed to be maintained or established starts off on a strained note or is destroyed altogether,” he added.

Jordaan explained that the course, running from 3 - 5 October, will explore different approaches to negotiation in detail and teach negotiators how to advance their interests in a co-operative manner.

“It combines both theory and practice and uses a host of relevant real world case studies. Negotiation is like training for long distance running - being good at it requires training and thorough preparation. To be an effective negotiator, you also require problem-solving, analytical and communication skills - essential life skills we don't get taught as a standard part of our secondary or tertiary education. Yet they are critically important in today's changing world,” he said.

Jordaan added that there some key factors to ensuring negotiations reach a positive outcome.

“The first of these would be to prepare well and know what is most important to each side, why they want what they want and what each brings to the table. Secondly, be flexible. The best outcome is not going to be your outcome so it is important to be prepared to allow for some concessions. Thirdly, all the relevant stakeholders must be involved, particularly those affected by the decisions. Finally, use power wisely. In any negotiation, it is important to be assertive in a way that preserves the dignity of the other party,” he said.

The course is being run by the UCT GSB's Executive Education unit, which has a global top ten rating in 2005 and 2006 from the Economist Intelligence Unit, and was this May listed by the International University Consortium for Executive Education (UNICON) – the leading global body for the advancement of executive education – as one of six leading business school innovators.

For more information on the course, contact Dudu Mahlangu on (021) 406 1268 or email .

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