In the political and economic spheres, negotiations are frequently not conducted by individual negotiators, but by a group, the *negotiating delegation*. This has a number of advantages: important specialist knowledge is available to be drawn on during the negotiations themselves, and the workload can be divided up among several people. That relieves the chief negotiator of a burden and gives him more freedom of movement. In addition, four, six, eight or sixteen eyes see more than just two. And finally, a delegation is often used instead of a single negotiator because it offers greater creativity and more thorough examination of all the alternatives available. But the measure in which all these expectations are effectively fulfilled by the delegation depends on how well the specific problems of delegation leadership are dealt with. Working with a group is a fundamentally different experience for the negotiator than working alone. If this is not taken into account, the chances of success are accordingly reduced. The intention of this chapter is to prepare the experienced negotiator for the differences that exist in a teamwork situation, and his particular role in it. Let us therefore look at the basic problems that arise when assembling and leading a multiple delegation.

**Leading the delegation**

A smoothly functioning group does not materialize by itself. First it needs to be put together out of a balanced mixture of suitable people possessing the broadest possible range of skills. The members of the group must have time to get to know one another (and that *well before* the negotiation!) and to accept their colleagues. Each should be assigned (or take
Leading a delegation

on spontaneously) a role commensurate with his or her particular abilities and personality. These roles should then be thoroughly practised – perhaps in a simulation of the forthcoming negotiation. This leaves sufficient time to address any conflicts and other difficulties that arise and to clear them up. Further, the lines of communication within the group need to be clearly defined and practised.

The first task of the chief negotiator is to work on this long before the actual negotiation date. Once the actual bargaining process is under way, there is no time for matters of this nature – this is the moment of truth, when the quality of the delegation makes itself known. At this point, too, it will become clear how much time and trouble the head of delegation needs to invest in taking the direction and guidance of his group. In a good negotiation team, the complex interplay between the team members is always kept well in hand. Ideally, it will run itself, leaving the chief negotiator’s back clear. His job is to think about the content of the negotiations, not his team. But a disharmonious or poorly prepared delegation is worse than no delegation at all; it provides no support for the negotiator, but just puts one more problem on his shoulders. And the head of delegation also has his own task in the negotiations to prepare. If we liken a one-to-one negotiation to a light aircraft, then a big affair with a large delegation on each side is like a jumbo jet. It hardly needs to be said that the demands made of the respective captains are very different in the two cases. Whereas the pilot of a light aircraft flying in good weather can rely mainly on his local knowledge and fly ‘by the seat of his pants’, the captain of a Boeing 747, with its enormous takeoff weight, must consult a huge array of instruments and activate any number of controls. Unlike the sports machine, every move he makes needs to overcome a certain inertia before it can take effect. In addition, the captain of the jumbo has a co-pilot, a flight engineer and a navigator in his crew. Each of them has a different task to fulfil, and each of these tasks is necessary. The sports pilot would be helplessly overtaxed in the captain’s seat, for he would not be up to handling either the complex technical system or the coordination of his crew. To graduate to such a task, he would first need a whole special training.

If we now carry this situation over to the negotiation, we must start with the training of the head of delegation. Perhaps the best place to start is to look at the most common mistakes that are made in conducting