Negotiating Tactics

2026

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"Anticipate and respond to the buyer's negotiating tactics."

Program review notes

Overt Negotiating Tactics

What is a tactic?

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A tactic is any skillful action used to gain an end. Tactics usually occur in the middle of a negotiation during the bargaining phase of the process but not always. There are two types of tactics. Overt and covert.

What is coming at you? What will the other party try? Part of being prepared is trying to answer these questions before the negotiation. You need to identify tactics the other party is using so that you may counter them during the negotiation.

How are tactics and strategies different?

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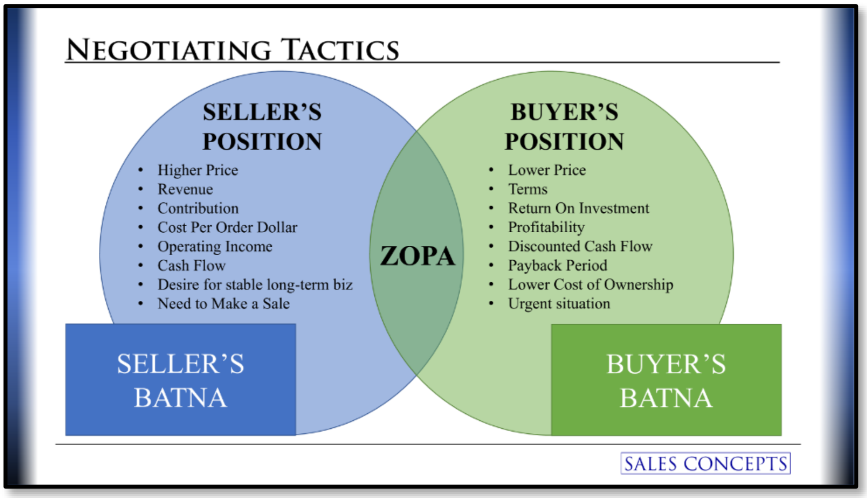
Overt Negotiating Tactics

Many people sell what they want to sell instead of what prospects should have or need. It is much easier to sell value if you ask the right questions to determine your customers' needs before recommending solutions. Negotiating begins the moment you meet the prospect, and it probably starts sooner than that! If the prospect or customer is familiar with your company, they already have an opinion. Their opinion becomes your starting position. It continues throughout the entire sales process. Value is the competitive advantage you bring to your customers. Quality is what goes into your product(s). Value is what your customers gain from it. You must understand what value you provide to sell it. Otherwise, you force yourself to sell on price if you do not understand this value, and value exists in the eyes of the customer.

Selling can be an art or a science, depending upon the view and position of the seller, the lateness of the hour, and most probably, the success or failure of the prior meeting. Understanding what makes for successful selling and what constitutes a professional salesperson is critical.

Buying can be seen as the process where the seller identifies and satisfies the buyer's need for the mutual benefit of both parties. The buyer recognizes the value of the product or service. The emphasis is on the needs of the buyer.



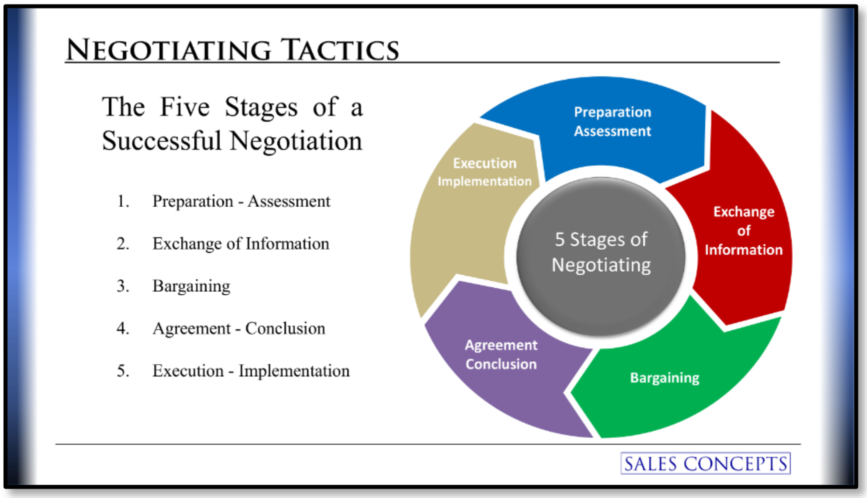
Where the two circles intercept is known as the Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA), this is where the needs of the seller meet the needs of the buyer.

To be successful, the outcome of the negotiation must be the best alternative for both parties as compared to their BATNAs or the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. In other words, what can they do if they don't agree? What options do they have? If they don't buy from you, what will they do? Conversely, if you don't sell to them, what will you do?

Overt Negotiating Tactics

Skillful salespeople often quickly identify the needs of prospects and customers because they are involved objectively, not emotionally. Skillful salespeople are aware of new products and techniques, and they have the advantage of talking over these ideas with a variety of experts in the industry. Because these salespeople spend significant time in customers' offices and plants, they observe the good and the bad.

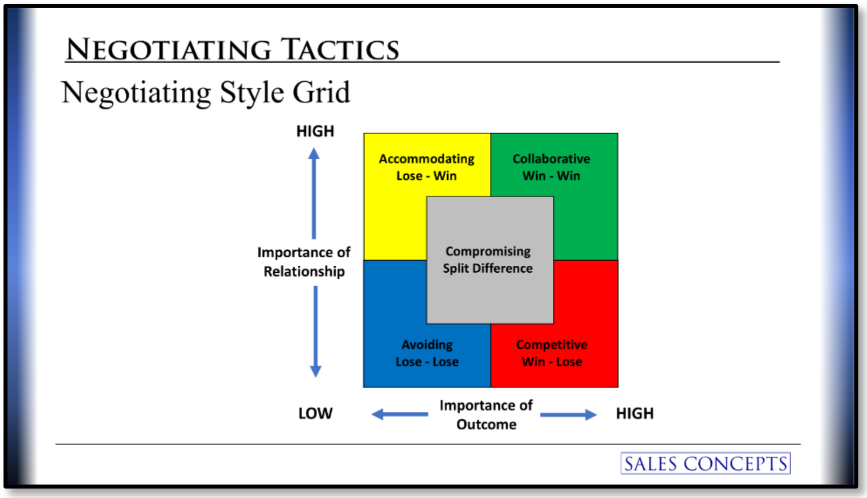
There are five fundamental stages of a successful negotiation. It becomes highly unlikely that a negotiation will conclude successfully if any one of the stages breaks down.



Notes:

Overt Negotiating Tactics

Profit is not a four-letter word. It is okay. We all have or will have to negotiate at various times. Negotiating should not produce negative feelings. It should be positive. The key is dealing with people and building value per their style. Both sides should win. Many times, we don't invest the time to find a win-win solution, and the negotiation ends with one or both parties being unhappy.
The goal of a successful negotiation is not to take advantage of the other side but to make sure they get what want as well as us getting what we want. This is what a collaborative agreement looks like.



What are the reasons to negotiate well?

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Why don't salespeople negotiate well?

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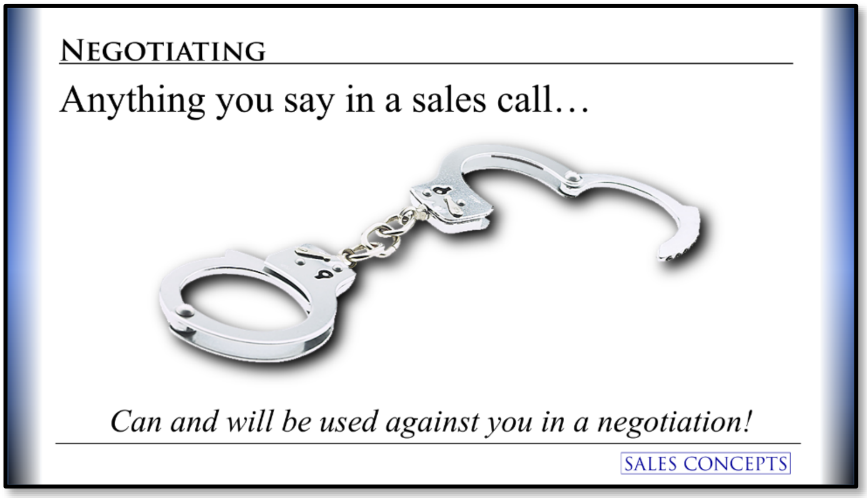
Remember

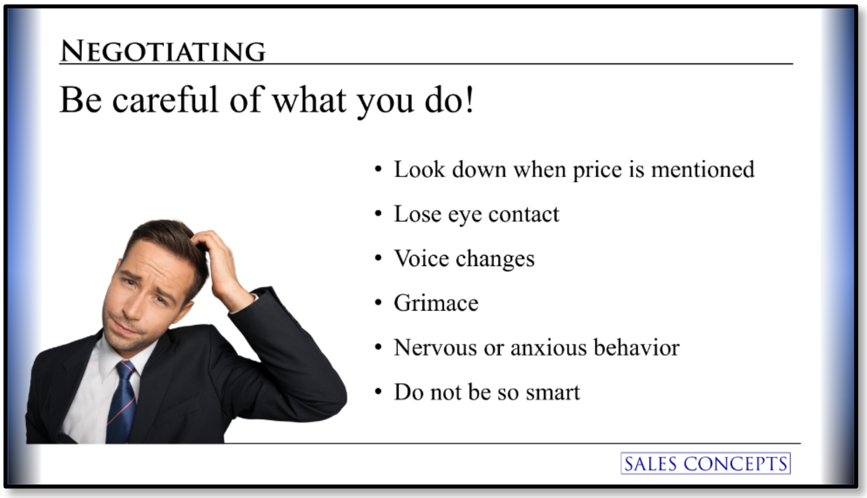


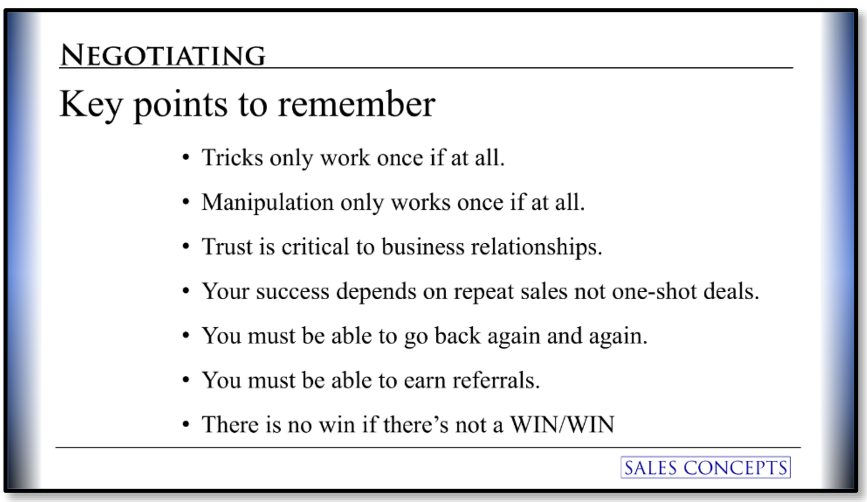
Be careful of how you respond, what you say, and what you do. Skilled negotiators pay attention to how you behave. When they sense weakness, they will pounce on it. Watch the verbal part of your negotiating skills.

Notes:

Overt Negotiating Tactics

Watch the physical part of your negotiating skills.





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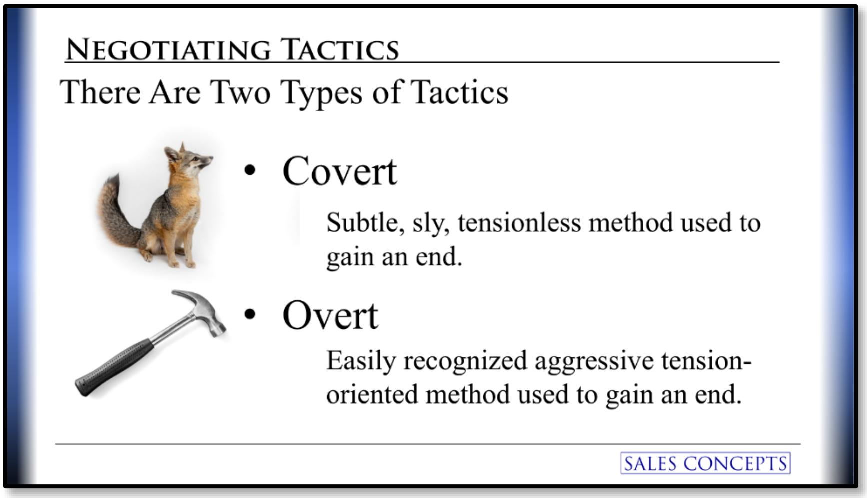
Overt Negotiating Tactics



Overt Negotiating Tactics

Notes

The Big Pot

They try to overwhelm you with everything at once.

Some of it may be unreasonable to put you on the defensive.

Purposes of the big pot tactic

- Reduces aspirations
- Gives trading room
- Proves worth as bargainer
- Lower price more acceptable

Counters to the big pot tactic

- Slow down
- Ask them to prioritize their wants and needs
- Limit your authority
- Big pot them back
- Say “You’re Kidding?”
- Apologize and say NO
- Start over
- Be silent

Questions to ponder:

- When a buyer brings 14 demands to the table, and 3 are real, how do you efficiently sort signal from noise without revealing what you know?
- What does your Big Pot look like? What do you bundle in that has low cost to you but high perceived value?
- How do you use "asking them to prioritize" as an intelligence-gathering technique, not just a stall?

A Final thought:

The Big Pot works *on salespeople* partly because we want to please our customers and their problems. The counter isn't to solve them all, it’s to make solving selectively look like generosity.

The Bogey

They give you a target to hit for whatever seeming plausible reason.

"I only have 160,000 dollars in my budget."

Purposes of the bogey

- May be a distraction or bluff
- Makes something unimportant seem important
- Compels you to give up something important for their sacrifice
- Lowers your aspiration level

Counters to the bogey

- Ask "Why?"
- Budgets are flexible
- Change specs
- Get others involved
- Be prepared
- Have alternatives
- Ask a lot of questions about it.

Questions to ponder:

- When you hear a "budget number," what proof do you require before believing it?
- How do you find out whether the number is a constraint, a preference, or a bluff?
- What would you ask to uncover what happens if the "bogey" isn't met?

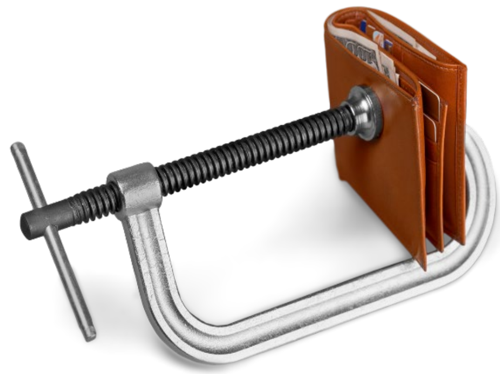
Thoughts to ponder:

A budget is often a negotiation anchor disguised as a fact.

The bogey works because sellers argue with the number instead of interrogating the story behind it.

The Crunch

"You've got to do better than that."



Purposes of the crunch

- May be a distraction or bluff
- Makes something unimportant seem important
- Puts you on the defensive
- Compels you to justify your position.
- Lowers your aspiration level

Counters to the crunch

- Ask "Why?"
- Compare apples to apples
- Slow down, don't rush
- Change the shape of the deal
- Defend your price.
- Politely say "No"

Questions to ponder:

- When you hear "do better," what do you typically do—defend, discount, or diagnose?
- What does "better" mean to them: lower price, fewer terms, faster delivery, less risk?
- How do you keep "The Crunch" from becoming an emotional reflex?

Thoughts to ponder:

"You've got to do better" is not feedback—it's a test of your confidence.

The crunch is a shortcut buyers use when sellers haven't made value measurable.

The Squish

"I'm really disappointed with this. I was hoping you could do better"

Purposes of the squish

- May be a distraction or bluff
- Makes something unimportant seem important
- Compels you to justify your position.
- Lowers your aspiration level
- Makes you feel guilty for not providing a better offer.

Counters to the squish

- Ask "Why?"
- Don't get mad or upset
- Apologize, and squish them back.
- Don't be so smart. Ask about it.
- Say, "You've got to be kidding, right?.

Questions to ponder:

- When disappointment shows up, do you comfort, concede, or clarify?
- What makes this tactic hard for you, empathy, desire to be liked, fear of conflict?
- How can you validate emotion without validating the demand?

A thought to ponder:

The squish works because nice sellers confuse empathy with agreement.

Anchoring

"I'll buy it for 79 cents a pound."

Market price is 96 cents per lb.

Purposes of anchoring

- Establishes boundaries
- Puts you on the defensive
- Makes you lose your composure
- Makes you question your position
- Sets an extreme beginning
- Lowers your aspiration level

Counters to anchoring

- Ask them how they figured it.
- Don't get mad or upset
- Refuse their offer and tell them to rethink their position.
- Offer something different
- Change the deal
- Start over
- Give them an extreme response
- Don't be so smart, except be smart, ask questions
- Say, "You've got to be kidding?"

Questions to ponder:

- What's your standard move when you hear an extreme first number, pause, probe, or counter-anchor?
- How do you keep their anchor from becoming your internal reference point? You must set a new one.
- What question forces them to justify their math and assumptions?

A thought to ponder:

The first number spoken often becomes the invisible "truth" unless you actively replace it.

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Grand Auction

"Here is a quote from your competitor(s). Can you beat it?"

Purposes of the Grand Auction

- Lowers aspiration level
- Creates a credible target
- Instills fear
- Escalates risks of losing the deal

Counters to the grand auction

- Study your weaknesses and be prepared with answers
- Don 't hurry to make concessions
- Sell your strengths and benefits
- Limit your authority
- Have alternatives
- Confusion for the sellers means that buyers sometimes get confused too
- Request a different meeting date time or place
- Slow the process down

Questions to ponder:

- How do you verify whether the competitor quote is real, comparable, and current?
- What questions expose "apples-to-apples" differences (scope, terms, service, risk)?
- Should you walk away rather than participate in a race to the bottom?

A thought to ponder:

An auction is what happens when sellers fail to differentiate in measurable terms.

Renege

"Uh . . . No!

I take that back."

Purposes of renege

- Lowers aspiration level
- Creates a credible target
- Instills fear
- Escalates risks of losing the deal

Counters to renege

- Think about what actions you will have to perform
- Just say "No."
- Slow Down
- Change the commitment
- Ask "Why?"
- Walk away

Questions to ponder:

- When a buyer reneges, do you pursue accountability, or try to "save" the deal?
- What commitments (email, timeline, scope) do you need documented to prevent this?
- How do you respond without escalating conflict?

Thoughts to ponder:

Renege reveals how little commitment you actually secured.

The longer you chase a reneging buyer, the cheaper you become in their mind.

Every time you renegotiate after agreement, you teach the buyer that agreements are optional.

The Ultimatum

"Take it or leave it. That's my final offer."

Purposes of the ultimatum

- Lowers aspiration level
- Speeds things up
- Ends the negotiation
- Establishes a hard boundary
- Goes for an immediate result
- Escalates risks of losing the deal

Counters to the ultimatum

- Ask why
- Change The Deal
- Stand Firm
- Ignore It And Continue
- Go To Higher Management
- Do Something Yourself
- Help them back off from their position
- Walk away

Questions to ponder:

- When you hear "final offer," what's your first move to uncover the real motive?
- What would you need to know to decide whether it's a bluff or a boundary?
- How will you avoid reacting as if the buyer is in charge of reality?

Thoughts to ponder:

"Final offer" works best on sellers who haven't built alternatives.

If you accept ultimatums routinely, you become the buyer's discount button.

Good guy / Bad guy

"Look, I want to help you, but we have to do something."

Purposes of the ultimatum

- Tell them their demands are unreasonable
- Who or what can you use as your bad guy?
- Don't Interrupt the bad guy
- Have the good guy negotiate for you
- Don't be intimidated
- Look for and ask about the real position of bad guy
- Watch out for the good guy!

Counters to the ultimatum

- Ask why
- Change The Deal
- Stand Firm
- Ignore It and Continue
- Go To Higher Management
- Do Something Yourself
- Help them back off from their position
- Walk away

Questions to ponder:

- Who plays "bad guy" in your deals—procurement, finance, legal, engineering?
- How do you keep the "good guy" from being the one who extracts concessions?
- What's your plan to get direct access to the real decision criteria?

Thoughts to ponder:

The "good guy" often costs you more than the bad guy.

Covert Negotiating Tactics

Notes

Reciprocity - The Freebie

Something small given for free with the hopes of receiving something large in the future.

Purposes of reciprocity

- Creates an indebted attitude
- Establishes a sense of obligation
- Creates a sense of trust

Counters to reciprocity

- Recognize it's a negotiating tool.
- Don't accept or rely on gifts, samples, dinners, etc.
- Once you realize it's a negotiating tool, you become immune to it.

Questions to ponder:

- What freebies do you give away that buyers never pay for later?
- How can you turn "free" into "included with…" (conditional value) instead?
- What small give could be a strategic investment—and what gives are simply leaks?

Thoughts to ponder:

The moment you feel indebted is the moment you stop thinking like a negotiator.

Contrast

Comparison of a high-priced item with a lower priced item.

Purposes of contrast

- Makes something look more affordable than it otherwise would.
- Creates urgency.
- Makes the price seem trivial.
- Makes something look like a great deal.
- Preys upon emotion and impulse.
- Creates a sense of trust

Counters to contrast

- Be Prepared. Know what you want.
- Know your BATNA
- Have a plan!
- Know what you are willing to pay.
- Set an acceptable range
- Preparation is key.
- Once you realize it's a negotiating tool, you become immune to it.

Questions to ponder:

- Where do buyers use contrast: comparing to competitor price, prior pricing, or "gold-plated" options?
- How do you prevent the buyer from using a high anchor to make a smaller ask seem "reasonable"?
- What comparisons can you introduce that favor value (downtime cost, lifecycle cost, risk)?

Thoughts to ponder:

Contrast doesn't change value, it changes perception, which influences decisions.

What if?

Simply ask "What if?" to isolate significance of needs and wants.

Purposes of "What if?"

- Opens the door to alternatives
- Change the thinking of the other party
- Encourages the other party to share information
- Helps isolate what is truly important to the other party
- Can lead to meaningful conversations with positive results
- Quickly becomes stale if overused

Counters to "What if?"

- "What if?" 'em back!
- Ask a different question
- Ask them why they are proposing that?
- Follow up with "What if we did X would you consider Y?

Questions to ponder:

- What "what if" question would reveal what the buyer truly values?
- How can you use "what if" to explore options without making commitments?
- How will you respond if the buyer uses "what if" to fish for freebies?

Thoughts to ponder:

"What if?" is how negotiators learn the truth without demanding it.

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