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EXECUTIVE NEGOTIATION PLAYBOOK: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CLOSING HIGH-STAKES DEALS

HOW TO GAIN THE UPPER HAND IN NEGOTIATIONS

Winning negotiations isn't about who argues better—it's about who manages the process better.
High-level negotiators:

- Shape the discussion before the deal starts.
- Ask the right questions instead of just making statements.
- Control the pace of the conversation instead of rushing into agreements.

This guide will walk you through a step-by-step process to take control and close deals on your terms.

STEP 1: PREPARE BEFORE YOU ENTER THE ROOM

The best negotiators don't start at the table. They start before it.

Set the Frame Before the First Meeting

- What key messages do you want to send them before negotiations start?
- How can you subtly shape expectations in early conversations?

Know Their Pressures & Priorities

- What deadlines or constraints are they facing?
- What's their biggest fear or risk in this deal?
- How can you make your offer the safest, most logical choice?

Define Your Walk-Away Point

- What's your best alternative to a negotiated agreement.
- What terms are non-negotiable?
- What's your ideal deal vs. acceptable deal?

Pro Tip: Winning starts before you enter the room. If the other side sees your offer as the best path forward before the meeting, you're already ahead.

STEP 2: USE QUESTIONS TO LEAD THE CONVERSATION

Most negotiators prepare their arguments—but the best prepare their questions.

Ask Open-Ended Questions to Guide the Discussion

- What would need to change in this deal for you to feel like it's a win?
- If we agreed on X, how would that impact your biggest concern?
- What are the key risks you're looking to avoid?

Don't Just Answer—Redirect with a Question

- Instead of defending price, ask: What's driving your budget concerns?
- Instead of reacting to a demand, ask: What's the real priority behind this request?

Pro tip: When you ask the right questions, the other side will reveal their true priorities—giving you control of the deal.

STEP 3: CONTROL THE TEMPO OF THE DEAL

Rushed negotiators make mistakes. Skilled negotiators slow things down to their advantage.

Test Urgency Before Making Concessions

If they say, “We need a decision today”, respond:
“I understand time is important. What’s driving this deadline?”

Use Strategic Silence

After making an offer, pause. Let them react first.

Break Big Decisions into Smaller Steps

Instead of agreeing immediately, say:
“Let me review this internally and come back with a structured response.”

Pro Tip: If you control the pace, you control the outcome. Rushed decisions lead to regret—on both sides.

STEP 4: HANDLE COMMON CHALLENGES LIKE A PRO

They Push for Price Cuts Too Soon

Wrong Approach: Defend your price aggressively.
Right Approach: Shift the conversation to value.

Say this:
“Let’s make sure we’re solving the right problem first. What’s the most important outcome for you in this deal?”

They Create Fake Urgency

Wrong Approach: Give in and rush the decision.
Right Approach: Test if the urgency is real.

Say this:
“A rushed decision might not give you the best long-term outcome. If we take a day to refine this, I can ensure we maximize value for you.”

Pro Tip: Most "urgent deadlines" are just tactics. Slow down and take control.

STEP 5: CLOSE THE DEAL ON YOUR TERMS

Before Agreeing, Confirm the Real Priorities
"Before we finalize, let's double-check—does this structure cover everything you need?"

Trade, Don't Give Away
If they ask for a discount, say:
"We can explore that, but in return, would you be open to extending the contract term?"

Ensure Long-Term Success
"Let's also set up a follow-up in three months to make sure this is delivering as expected."

Pro Tip: The best negotiators don't just close deals—they set them up for long-term success.

READY TO MASTER HIGH-STAKES NEGOTIATION?

At Hovingh & Partners, we offer a specialized training program designed to take your negotiation skills to the next level.

- Proven Negotiation Strategies – Learn techniques used by expert professionals in real-world scenarios.
- Hands-On Exercises – Engage in practical simulations to sharpen your skills.
- Tailored Training – Customized programs that align with your specific goals and challenges.
- Expert Feedback – Receive actionable insights from seasoned negotiation professionals.

Let's talk about how we can help you and your team negotiate with confidence.
Contact Us Today