

16

tactics buyers use in

SALES NEGOTIATIONS

RAIN Group

Sometimes buyers use tactics to gain advantages in negotiation at the seller's expense. Even if your mindset and approach is win-win, you need to know how to counter any tactics that might be thrown your way.



GOING, GOING, GONE

Buyer Says: "I'm talking to [name of your competitor] later, and I'm confident they'll go for this."

Description: A competitor-centric form of time pressure where "if you don't accept the agreement, somebody else will."

Response Strategy:

- Decide if it's a bluff or real—the buyer may be doing this with other vendors as well.
- Know your BATNA (best alt. to a negotiated agreement).
- Make a Best and Final offer, which may be one further value add or concession.
- Always be willing to walk.



RED HERRING

Buyer Says: "We're really concerned about this huge issue..." (But, in reality, they're not.)

Description: Buyer distracts the negotiation by introducing an unimportant issue to the seller, but making it seem important, so they'll get a concession from you when they drop it. Then you are not inclined to stand firm on more important issues.

Response Strategy:

- Suggest dealing with issues separately.
- If something else is important, don't lose steam to negotiate when you get to it.



PENCIL SHARPENING

Buyer Says: "You're going to have to do better than this. We need to get it for less."

Description: A common pushback to 'get you ready' to drop your price because 'they'll expect that.'

Response Strategy:

- Ask, "Why?"
- Respond quickly that it's not your expectation to simply drop price for no reason.
- Focus on differentiation.
- Have value-adds ready to bargain and help them save face. Add more vs. dropping price.



GOOD COP, BAD COP

Buyer Says: "I've brought along our colleague, Darth CFO..."

Description: Buyer introduces a "bad cop" late in discussions to pressure price, change the agreement, and reopen closed issues.

Response Strategy:

- Bring your own bad cop.
- Don't blink or look intimidated.
- Stick to objectives, possibilities, requirements, and alternatives, and focus on outcomes.
- Wait it out, stay present, don't rush.



SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE

Buyer Says: "Just meet me in the middle and let's call it a day..."

Description: Buyer asks you to meet them in the middle, even though the middle may not be fair for you.

Response Strategy:

- Beware of the emotional appeal of showing "good faith" by splitting the difference.
- Don't cave.
- Search for a better solution.



ONE LAST THING

Buyer Says: "I can get that signed today if you give this one last concession..."

Description: Buyer catches the seller at their most vulnerable point and uses eagerness to get the deal done to wring out final concessions.

Response Strategy:

- Don't be tempted to cave.
- Remind the buyer that the process to get to final agreement includes flexibility on both sides.
- Respond with questions and a trade offer.



CHERRY PICKING

Buyer Says: "I know I said our initial order would be 5,000 units with 5 components, but we'll just need this piece first..."

Description: Buyer tries to unbundle a solution but assumes all will be the same price when it isn't.

Response Strategy:

- Make sure to respond that it won't work immediately to address the issue.
- Note on proposals that price assumes "this solution and volume" and changes will affect overall price structure.
- Engage discussion to work out appropriate pricing.



"WE'RE DONE."

Buyer Says: "We can't go forward with what you've proposed..."

Description: Scare tactic to see if you'll cave to the buyer's communication that they will walk.

Response Strategy:

- If you think it's a bluff, don't cave or blink.
- Ask, "Why?"
- Focus on opportunities and possibilities.
- Consider changing the scope vs. just dropping the price.



ANCHORING

Buyer Says: "We're looking to spend no more than \$500,000 for this..."

Description: Buyer shares a target number, such as a budget cap, to anchor the bargaining range on the low side.

Response Strategy:

- Go first with price. Don't wait for them.
- Find out whether it's a real number or a ploy.
- Understand what their likely alternatives are—this will help you respond.



TEMPER TANTRUM

Buyer Says: "I can't believe this!"

Description: A sometimes-planned, heightened emotional reaction to price or a specific term in the proposal in order to evoke a response from you.

Response Strategy:

- Don't get rattled. Remain professional.
- Suggest taking a short break.
- Get back to objectives and possibilities.



OUTLAST

Buyer Says: "This is too much for now. Then I'll be out. Let's re-engage in 2 months..."

Description: Buyer tries to outlast you and wear you down with delays.

Response Strategy:

- Share your willingness to do the same.
- Don't seem too excited about moving forward.
- Focus on urgency on their end with questions. If not urgent, then don't rush.



SELECTIVE MEMORY

Buyer Says: "I don't remember agreeing to that..."

Description: Buyer conveniently "forgets" what they agreed to.

Response Strategy:

- Avoid the issue altogether. Keep and share notes after all meetings.
- If you agreed to it, you agreed. Stick to that if it's important.
- Get back to objectives and possibilities.



CLOSING WINDOW

Buyer Says: "Let's do a site tour first..."

Description: You have limited time to do a deal. They suggest time wasters first so you are time pressured when you actually get to negotiating.

Response Strategy: If they're stalling, ask to focus on the business agenda.



WHACK BACK

Buyer Says: "Your price is too high..."

Description: Common buyer tactic to ALWAYS push back on the first price offered.

Response Strategy:

- Ask, "Why?" Response is often faulty logic.
- Follow the RAIN process for responding to objections.
- Focus on objectives and possibilities.



THEATER OF THE ABSURD

Buyer Says: "We've revised our agreement. We want your first born child, too..."

Description: Buyer asks for the sun and the stars, knowing it's absurd, hoping to then appear reasonable by lowering demands that are still, actually, unreasonable.

Response Strategy: Reverse direction by giving them an example of why what they are asking for is silly.



STICKER SHOCK

Buyer Says: "It costs how much?!"

Description: Buyer appears to be shocked with the price. It could be an orchestrated response.

Response Strategy:

- Wait for theatrics to die down.
- Ignore their flinch, and ask why it seems high to them. Often their reasoning is faulty.

Learn more!

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