IMPACT
Negotiation 2.0

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE
2026 EDITION

FOR COMMERCIAL TEAMS IN FMCG

The Negotiation Readiness Playbook.

A practical playbook for FMCG negotiations that consistently lands bigger and more profitable deals.

THIS PLAYBOOK IS BASED ON

€4.1B
SUPPORTED IN DEALS SINCE 2022

5,935
NEGOTIATORS TRAINED

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
ABInBev MARS DANONE KraftHeinz Dr.Oetker

01

You get one shot.

Your annual negotiations decide whether the year is a success or not. Twelve months of margin on the table.

Most teams are less ready than they think, because objectives are unclear, nobody has tested the walk-away point, and teams assume internal alignment instead of confirming it.

These weaknesses stay hidden until the plan meets real pressure: when the other side rejects a proposal, the conversation stops going as expected, and the untested gaps start to give way, often just as your own people begin to question the plan too.

That's the moment a team stops executing and starts reacting: internal discussions pile up, decisions slow down, and people make concessions nobody planned to make.

The team quietly refocuses on the walk away point and leaves real value on the table,

because nobody tested them before it mattered.

02

A plan that has never been challenged is just a hypothesis.

Having a plan and having a tested plan are not the same thing. A plan that has never been challenged is a hypothesis. It looks solid on a slide. Nobody has actually tried to break it yet.

> A tested plan has been argued with, poked at, and defended out loud by someone playing the other side before the other side ever gets the chance.

Weak objectives. An unchallenged walk-away. A mandate nobody actually signed off on. A scenario plan that only covers the outcome you are hoping for. All of it surfaces while there is still time to fix it.

That is the whole idea behind Negotiation Readiness: replace optimism with evidence. Not a pep talk before the meeting. A pressure test.

03

The Readiness Stack.

The stack has six layers, and each one depends on the one below it. Skip a layer, and everything built on top of it is guesswork wearing the costume of a strategy.

1. **Objectives & Mandate**
   The four numbers that define the negotiation before it starts.

2. **Power**
   Who actually has the leverage, and why.

3. **Internal Alignment**
   Negotiating your own organisation before you negotiate theirs.

4. **Trajectory**
   The sequence of moves, mapped to real dates.

5. **Communication & Q&A**
   What they believe before you say a word, and what you say when they push.

6. **Rehearsal**
   Living through the meeting once, before it happens for real.

Build these in order. Most negotiations that unravel didn't fail in the room. They failed two or three layers down, months before the first meeting happened.

04

Layer 1:

Objectives & Mandate.

Before you say a word to the other side, write down four numbers on paper, not in your head.

01

Your best possible outcome

The best deal you could realistically get knowing your client. Not a dream number.

02

Your walk away point

The point where you walk away if they do not accept. Write it down, then put it away. You will need it later.

03

Your opening position

Always more than you need. If your first offer can be accepted, you are not asking enough. You need this to generate satisfaction by moving.

04

Their walk away point

Your best estimate of where the maximum is, they are willing to go. This is the number that actually matters, because it is your real target.

THE TRAP

The gap between your mandate and your walk-away.

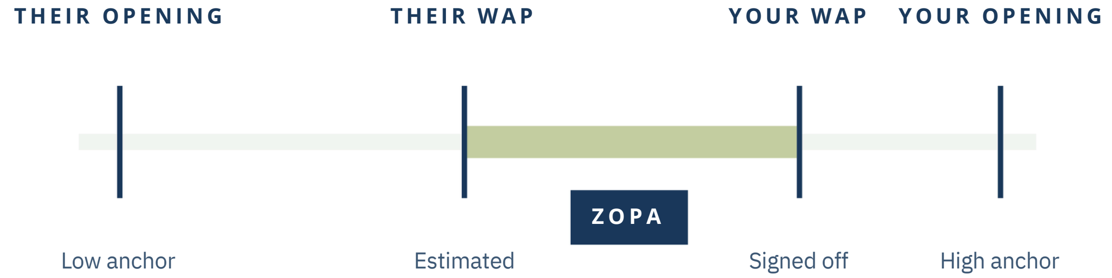
Somewhere in this process, your own management gives you a mandate, the number you're allowed to move down to. That mandate and your walk away point are often not the same figure.

Say your walk away point is 1,5%, but your mandate only lets you move to 1,9%. That gap of 0,4% is where deadlocks are born: reach 1,9% with no deal, and you're out of room, out of plan, with a deadline closing in and the other side able to feel it.

Where the deal actually lives.

Your opening and their opening sit outside the deal zone. That is normal. The Zone of Possible Agreement is the overlap between what they will accept and what you will accept. Everything you do in the room is about steering the outcome toward the far edge of that zone.

THENEGOTIATION LINE



Read it this way. Your real target is not the middle of your own range. It is their walk away point (WAP) Every move you make should aim there, not at what you would settle for.

If you do not know their walk-away, your target is a guess. Estimate it to your best ability, defend it and hold on to it. Changing it, can mean you are being influenced by <u>them</u> instead of the other way around.

05

Layer 2:

Power

Once your numbers are set, ask one more question: who actually has more power here, and why? A lot of factors can play a role. Here are three key ones:

01 Time pressure, and who is really carrying it.

If neither side reaches a deal, one of three things happens automatically. Sometimes the old terms keep running, so pressure sits with you. Sometimes new terms kick in on a fixed date regardless, so pressure flips to them. Sometimes terms apply retroactively once signed, so pressure builds quietly on their side. Know which situation you're in: it's usually written into your contract, not something you pick fresh each year.

02 Real alternatives, viewed as a portfolio.

How easily can they replace what you sell them? Don't judge this product by product in isolation, weigh how replaceable each item is against how much revenue it represents, then add it up. A product that's easy to replace but tiny in revenue matters far less than one that's hard to replace and makes up a third of the business. Would a shopper leave the store if the product is unavailable? This means the entire basket moves to another retailer.

03 Circumstances that shift the balance without anyone doing anything.

A supply shortage, a competitor's quality issue, or a sudden market shift: power can move overnight, with no action from either side. This is the one factor you don't set once and forget. You watch it all the way through the negotiation, not only during prep.

06

Layer 3:

Internal Alignment.

The hardest negotiation is sometimes not with the other side at all: it's with your own company.

Before you can negotiate well outside, you need to negotiate well inside, with your manager, with finance, marketing, with every function that can quietly undo your work without ever sitting at the table.

What to align before the first external meeting:

A **Business drivers.**
Why are you really doing this? Is the goal the number itself, or something the number is a proxy for? Think of your company strategy and what the objectives contribute to specifically.

B **Restrictions.**
Legal, organisational, stakeholder, time, and resource constraints that could slow you down or box you in.

C **Must-haves versus nice-to-haves.**
Be honest. If everything is a must-have, nothing is.

THE TRAP

The trap senior management sets without meaning to:

Ask for a walk away point and sometimes you'll get, “let's just see how it goes.” That answer feels harmless, but it isn't. Without that number, you can't plan your moves, and every surprise sends you back up the chain at the worst possible moment, with the other side watching.

Get your objectives, restrictions, and walk away point written down and signed off internally before the first external meeting.

Skip this, and you are not negotiating with one party. You are negotiating with two, and the second one is often harder to manage than the first.

07

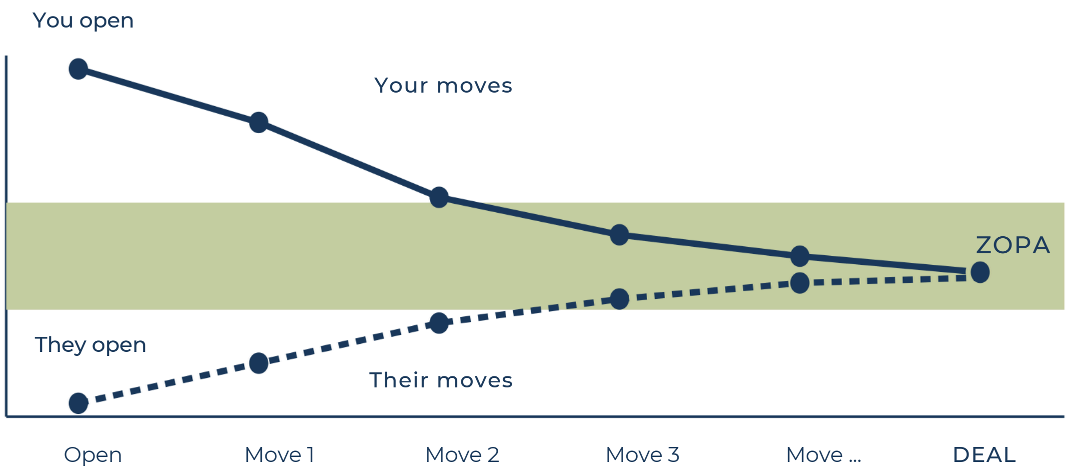
Layer 4:

Trajectory.

Most negotiators know where they want to end up. Few know exactly how they plan to get there.

Start with a simple line: your walk away point, your target, their target, their walk away point. Somewhere in the middle sits the zone where a deal is possible.
Everyone opens outside it, that's normal.

PLANNED MOVES ACROSS MEETINGS



Steps get smaller as the deal closes.
Each move you make should be smaller than the last, and never free.

Add time.

Instead of deciding "I'll move from X to Y at some point," decide "I make this move in the third meeting, and only if they've moved first."

Give something, get something.

A negotiator who jumps from their opening to their real target in one move looks like someone who had far more room than they admitted. The buyer remembers that next year too.

08

Layer 5:

Communication plan.

This is where most of your real advantage gets built, long before any one sits down at the table.

01

Communication planning.

Decide, in advance, what you want the buyer to think and feel before you say a word. Use more than one source so it lands as fact, not opinion. Stay consistent across everyone on your side. Repeat it enough that it settles in.

02

Preconditioning.

Get the message in early and quietly: a passing remark, a trade report, an earnings call. By the time you formally raise the topic, it is not a surprise. It is confirmation of something they already half-expected.

03

Q&A preparation.

Your answers to the hardest questions, written down before you need them. Built around the real objections: why now, why this much, why more than before. Keep every answer short. Over-explaining opens you up to weak arguments and costs you credibility.

WEAK ANSWER

"We were thinking the increase might need to be around this number."

STRONG ANSWER

"The increase is this number."

A weak answer sounds like a conversation. A strong answer sounds like a fact. Use your strongest argument and stick to it.

09

Layer 6:

Rehearsal.

Reading a script and living through it are two different skills.
Only one can be practised alone at a desk.

Pick someone to play the buyer, ideally someone who enjoys being difficult or who has met your counterpart many times. Hand them your real Q&A. Let them attack the weak spots.

Time it. Five minutes, not thirty. Real meetings do not give you thirty. Film it if you can. What you think you said and what you actually said are often two different things.

After the rehearsal, check yourself.

- [ ] Did you stick to your Q&A, or drift into over-justifying it?
- [ ] Did you talk more than your counterpart?
- [ ] Did revealing language slip in? "We were thinking around..." "There might be some room..."
- [ ] Did silence make you uncomfortable enough to fill it yourself?

> **Silence is one of the most underused tools in the room. After a firm proposal, stop talking. The person who feels the discomfort of silence first is usually the one who speaks next, often softening their own position without being asked.**

10

Six tactics they will use on you.

Every experienced counterpart has a playbook, and most of it repeats every year, in every market. Once you can name a tactic, it loses most of its power over you.

01 Social Pressure

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

"You're the only one asking for this. Nobody else is pushing this kind of increase."

HOW YOU ANSWER

"That is surprising. I cannot speak for others. This is what we need."

02 The Should-Cost Model

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

"We have seen your real cost development, including a decrease in commodity pricing. Your number is wrong."

HOW YOU ANSWER

"Where did that number come from? What did you assume?" Then let them explain. Most cannot.

03 The Bogus Benchmark

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

"You are a lot more expensive than in other countries. We should not be paying this."

HOW YOU ANSWER

"We do not discuss terms from other markets. The markets and consumers are completely different."

04 The Nibble

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

A small extra ask right after the deal is agreed. "We just need one extra lump sum of €20,000."

HOW YOU ANSWER

Name it lightly: "Nice try. Let's leave it at what we agreed." Better still, ask for something in return. "If you give us one extra listing, we can agree to the €20,000."

SIX TACTICS - CONTINUED

05 Splitting the Difference

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

"Let's just meet in the middle. That's only fair."

HOW YOU ANSWER

Only accept if the middle was already your real target. Otherwise treat it like any other offer: reject and make a counterproposal.

06 The Flinch

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

An immediate, visible rejection meant to make you doubt your own number.

HOW YOU ANSWER

Stay still. Say nothing. Let the silence outlast their reaction.

None of these are personal. They are designed to influence you, and they are used because they have worked on others before.

Once you react to the tactic instead of the person, their influence stops.

11

Your best tool:

The Broken Record.

Say the same thing, calmly, every time, no matter what new pressure they throw at you: no clever new wording, only the same firm sentence, repeated.

It works because most people expect a negotiation to move forward with each exchange.

Break that pattern, and your position starts to feel less like an opinion and more like a fact that isn't going to change. The other side usually runs out of new ways of asking before you run out of patience.

THE EXIT

Held too long, the Broken Record stops sounding firm and starts sounding like a wall with no door. The best way out is not defending the number a fourth time.

It is shifting the entire conversation forward: from what you will not do to what you can build together.

IN PRACTICE

Them: "We need 2+2 promotions on this range."

You: "We do not do 2+2 promotions." *(Repeat, calmly, every time they push.)*

Then the exit: "But let's talk about what we can do together in terms of joint business planning."

12

Negotiation Readiness Self-assessment.

Rate your team, 1 (not there yet) to 5 (fully tested), on each layer, before your next high-value negotiation.

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	We have written, signed-off numbers: best possible, walk away, opening, and their estimated walk-away.	○	○	○	○	○
2	We have assessed power on: time pressure, real alternatives, and market circumstances, not just gut feel.	○	○	○	○	○
3	Our objectives, restrictions, and walk away point are aligned and signed off internally, before the first external meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
4	We have a Trajectory: planned moves, in decreasing conditional steps, mapped to real meetings and dates.	○	○	○	○	○
5	We have a written Q&A with short, firm answers to our hardest expected questions and objections.	○	○	○	○	○
6	We have rehearsed the opening meeting live, against someone playing the buyer, under time pressure.	○	○	○	○	○

Your Score

26 - 30

Your plan is tested. Go execute it.

18 - 25

Solid foundations, real gaps. The layers you scored lowest are exactly where the buyer will find you first.

Below 18

Right now you have a hope, not a plan. Worth fixing before you are in the room.

Get ready before the meeting room

Everything in this playbook is a taste of what our practitioners would do with your team, live, on your real accounts, not in the abstract.

Negotiation Readiness is a facilitated working session where we sit on the other side of your thinking and force every assumption into the open, before your counterpart does.

You leave with a plan already defended under pressure, and the discipline to hold their ground on what matters, and trade on what doesn't.

Book a Free Strategy Call →

See Upcoming Workshops

€4.1B	5,935	9.4	14.9x
IN DEALS SUPPORTED	NEGOTIATORS TRAINED	CUSTOMER RATING	ROI RECORD

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