

WINNING THE DEAL

MASTERING NEGOTIATION STYLES
TO GROW YOUR ADVANTAGE

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INTRODUCTION

TWO STYLES, ONE GOAL: A PRACTICAL PLAYBOOK FOR GETTING BETTER DEALS

NEGOTIATION ISN'T RESERVED FOR high-powered CEOs or hostage negotiators. It's for anyone who wants to get better outcomes in business and in life—whether you're closing on a property, buying a company, hiring talent, asking for a raise, or simply deciding who takes out the trash. The problem is that most people either avoid negotiation altogether or they wing it.

We wrote this book to help you improve.

But this isn't a lecture. It's a conversation, a contrast, a collision between two experienced negotiators—one strategic and collaborative, the other bold and unapologetically aggressive—who often take different routes to reach the same goal: the best possible deal.

MEET YOUR NEGOTIATORS

Jim Schleckser is a CEO advisor and seasoned strategist. He focuses on long-term success, builds trust, and rarely raises his voice. His approach is based on logic, patience, and preparation. He has negotiated hundreds of business contracts over his career.

Onyi Odunukwe is a commercial real estate investor, franchise owner, and dealmaker who has negotiated over 100 transactions. His approach? Make the pie bigger, not fight over slices. While others see negotiation as a tug-of-war, Onyi engineers deals where everyone walks away with more than they imagined—often by structuring creative solutions that unlock value others don't see. His secret: patience, perspective, and the willingness to walk away until the deal makes sense for all parties.

We don't always see eye to eye, and that's the point. There's no universal method for negotiations. What works in a corporate merger might not succeed in a real estate deal. What gets the job done in a salary discussion could fail in a joint venture. Different styles, different tools, same goal: a better deal.

Here's an example:

REAL LIFE NEGOTIATION—JIM: A few years ago, I received a package in the mail—no return address, just a large manila envelope. Inside? Confidential data from our biggest competitor. Customer lists. Pricing. Sales forecasts. Pure gold. And completely unethical to use.

I resealed it, sent it straight to the competitor's CEO, and gave him a call. Five years later, we finally met face-to-face. He shook my hand and told his colleague, "This guy? One of the ethical ones."

A year later, I bought his company. Not because I cut corners, but because I established trust. That trust and openness became the foundation of an excellent business arrangement for both parties.

REAL LIFE NEGOTIATION—ONYI: I once purchased a \$2.8 million building with no cash out of pocket—and solved a major problem for the seller in the process. He was underwater on the property and facing a potential loss.

Instead of grinding him down, I offered him full price, which cleared his underwater loan, and structured financing at 0% interest so he kept equity in the deal. He signed an above-market lease because he wanted to stay in the building and the terms worked for his business.

Two years later, the building was valued at over \$5 million. That's what happens when you focus on solving problems instead of "winning" negotiations. The best deals aren't extracted—they're engineered.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

We aim to provide you with a toolkit—not a script. Our aim is for you to leave this book more confident, capable, and better

prepared to think strategically, adapt tactically, and succeed with integrity.

Each chapter in this book is a step in the full lifecycle of a deal. We don't just teach you what to say at the table—we walk you through the mindset, strategy, pressure points, recovery moments, and follow-up that shape successful negotiations from start to finish.

Here's how the book breaks down:

- **Chapter 1: Negotiation Philosophies—Which One Fits You?**: Learn the major schools of negotiation thought and discover which style best fits your natural instincts—and when to adapt.
- **Chapter 2: Before the Deal—Win It Before You Begin**: Everything necessary happens before the first handshake. This chapter shows you how to prepare, define your walkaway point, and develop a three-step reaction matrix.
- **Chapter 3: Tactics for a Successful Negotiation**: From anchoring and silence to humor and framing, you'll learn the most effective tools to use in real time—plus how to read the room and adjust on the fly.
- **Chapter 4: Negotiation Tactics to Avoid**: A savvy negotiator knows what not to do. We'll walk you through common pitfalls—like “nibbling,” overplaying your hand, or chasing perfection—and show how to avoid sabotaging your own deals.

- **Chapter 5: Closing the Deal: Negotiation Tactics in Action:** Closing the deal isn't the end—it's the beginning of ensuring the agreement is implemented smoothly, protected legally, and structured for long-term success through clear documentation, competent legal counsel, and proactive relationship management.
- **Chapter 6: After the Negotiation:** What happens after the contract is signed? A lot. Discover how to follow through, prevent post-deal breakdowns, and cultivate momentum for the next opportunity.

WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK

Because we've all seen the costs of poor negotiation—money left on the table, strained relationships, damaged reputations, or deals falling through. And we've also witnessed how a well-timed question, a thoughtful pause, or a creative term sheet can completely change the game.

Whether you're a seasoned pro or negotiating your first deal, this book serves as your field guide. It's not about winning at all costs. It's about achieving what matters, walking away confidently, and building a career where people want to negotiate with you again.

Let's get to work.

CHAPTER ONE

NEGOTIATION PHILOSOPHIES— WHICH ONE FITS YOU?

NEGOTIATION ISN'T ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL. DIFFERENT situations need different approaches. What works in a corporate boardroom might not work in a real estate deal—or during a salary negotiation. In this chapter, we'll look at various established negotiation strategies, explain how they work in real-life situations, and share insights and stories from both of us—Jim and Onyi—about how we've used (or reacted to) each in real deals.

Before we dive into the deep analysis, take a look at the quick comparison of the schools of thought shown in the table.

Now, let's explore each of these philosophies in more detail and share some of our insights on when they work best and when they don't.

Negotiation Schools of Thought

School/ Style	Key Traits	When to Use It	Jim's Take	Onyi's Take
<i>Harvard (Principled)</i>	Win-win, focus on interests, objective criteria	When trust matters, long-term deals	My go-to. It builds durable relationships.	Great when you have the upper hand.
<i>Yale (Trust-Based)</i>	Assertive yet empathetic, builds rapport	Ongoing partnerships, sensitive deals	Strong for team or talent negotiations.	Too soft if stakes are high.
<i>Stanford (Adaptive)</i>	Flexible, creative, context-driven	Fast-changing or ambiguous situations	Smart for complex, evolving negotiations.	Good—if you're the one setting the pace.
<i>MIT (Analytical)</i>	Data-focused, logical, systems-thinking	Tech, finance, and high-stakes deals	Great if you have the numbers.	Just don't forget the human element.
<i>Chris Voss (FBI)</i>	Empathy, mirroring, tactical silence	Emotional, high-pressure environments	Tactical empathy is powerful.	Silence and leverage—I'm all in.
<i>Winner Takes All</i>	Aggressive, zero-sum	Short-term, transactional deals	High risk, low relationship.	Fun—but only if you're holding aces.
<i>Lose-Lose (Our Pick)</i>	Mutual sacrifice for mutual gain	Complex deals with misaligned priorities	It's not weakness—it's strategy.	Give a little, get a lot—if you're smart.

THE HARVARD APPROACH: PRINCIPLED NEGOTIATION

The Harvard Negotiation philosophy, often referred to as the “principled negotiation” approach, is about finding solutions that benefit everyone involved. Instead of focusing on beating the other side or just splitting the difference, this method encourages both parties to collaborate and seek a mutually beneficial outcome:

1. **Separate People from the Problem:** Keep emotions out of the negotiation. Concentrate on resolving the issue, not criticizing the person.
2. **Focus on Interests, Not Positions:** Instead of sticking to your position (like “I want a higher salary”), identify the underlying reasons (your interest might be “I need enough money to cover my expenses”). This approach enables you to find innovative solutions that meet the needs of both parties.
3. **Invent Options for Mutual Gain:** Brainstorm multiple solutions to create choices and think creatively about ways both sides can succeed.
4. **Use Objective Criteria:** Rely on facts and standards, such as market value or legal precedents, instead of opinions or power struggles.

The Harvard style promotes collaboration and fairness, with the goal that everyone feels like they've gained

something and there's no "winner" or "loser." It's an intelligent way to maintain good business relationships while getting your needs met.

JIM'S PERSPECTIVE: This is my preferred default style. It promotes mutual respect and lays the groundwork for long-term relationships. When I returned a confidential packet from a competitor and later bought their company, that was Harvard-style trust-building in action. Ultimately, the best deal isn't in hardline negotiations as those deals are unstable. A deep understanding of both parties to find a creative solution can build a lasting and stable relationship.

ONYI'S TAKE: Win-win is fine—it's table stakes. But honestly? It's boring. When you walk away from a win-win deal, you can't help but wonder: did we leave opportunity on the table?

That's why I don't stop at win-win. I go for win-MORE. Instead of splitting value fairly, I look for ways to create value that wouldn't exist otherwise. The \$2.8M building deal I described in the last chapter? A win-win would've been negotiating a fair price, shaking hands, moving on. Instead, I structured 0% financing, an above-market lease, and cleared his debt—he got more relief than he imagined, I got the property with zero down, and two years later it's worth more than \$5 million. That's not splitting a pie. That's baking a bigger one.