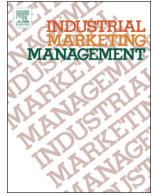




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A model of negotiation issue-based tactics in business-to-business sales negotiations☆

Ingmar Geiger

Aalen University, Beethoven Str. 1, 73430 Aalen, Germany

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ABSTRACT

Many business-to-business transactions rely on negotiation, yet extant research has not addressed key questions about *what* is negotiated and *how*. To tackle this persistent research gap, this article adopts a qualitative approach and seeks to discover, describe, and analyze negotiation issue-based tactics, defined as tactics that draw specifically on the negotiation content and issues. Data from semi-structured interviews with 39 sales and purchasing experts, employed by companies active in the industrial and service project business sectors, undergo analysis according to the Gioia methodology. The resulting model of negotiation issue-based tactics features business- and industry-specific negotiation issue subsets, as well as buyer/seller role properties as important boundary conditions. Tactical advantages and safeguarding emerge as two functions of issue-based tactics. Overall, this article identifies 11 tactics that deal with the number, the order, or the characteristics of negotiation issues and may partly serve as best practices for managers.

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1. Introduction

On most business markets, transactions result from a negotiation process between supplier and customer organizations (Eliashberg, Lilien, & Kim, 1995). Negotiations determine whether a selling firm manages to close a deal and thus beats competition (Anderson, Narus, & Narayandas, 2009; Wilken, Cornelißen, Backhaus, & Schmitz, 2010;) and whether the buying organization finds the most suitable partner, in terms of costs and benefits, for a given problem (e.g., Sarkis & Talluri, 2002) and is satisfied with the outcome (e.g., Mintu-Wimsatt & Graham, 2004; Shankarmahesh, Ford, & LaTour, 2004). If an agreement can be reached, it defines what each party gives and takes, the corresponding economic impact, and how well the parties manage to integrate their various interests to reach win-win agreements (Raiffa, 1982). Because of the importance of such negotiations in business-to-business (B2B) marketing, ongoing research efforts have addressed various determinants of the negotiation process and its outcomes, such as personality factors (Barry & Friedman, 1998), teams (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2012), cultural setting (Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2004; Shankarmahesh et al., 2004), power dependence relations (McAlister, Bazerman, & Fader, 1986), communication media (Purdy, Nye, & Balakrishnan, 2000), and interaction and information processing (Wilken et al., 2010).

However, questions about *what* is negotiated and *how* it is done have received far less attention. If studies focus on process elements, they do so in rather abstract terms of a competitive or co-operative strategic orientation, such as in cross-cultural sales negotiation research (e.g., Chairsakeo & Speece, 2004; Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2004; Pullins, Haugtvedt, Dickson, Fine, & Lewicki, 2000). Studies from the relational selling realm have disclosed successful seller influence strategies (e.g., McFarland, Challagalla, & Shervani, 2006; Plouffe, Bolander, & Cote, 2014; Reid, Pullins, & Plank, 2002). However, research that focuses on B2B sales negotiation needs to take a slightly different angle than relational selling research, because the research focus here is the negotiated transaction. Relational selling studies, in contrast, remain vague in how far seller influence attempts link to concrete negotiation contents and outcomes. In particular, the tangible issues, and their strategic and tactical uses in B2B sales negotiations, remain unclear, as does the agenda into which they assemble. For this study, a negotiation issue is some aspect of the discussion that must be resolved to come to an agreement (Bendahan, Camponovo, Monzani, & Pigneur, 2005). The negotiated issues and their order constitute the agenda, which structures the discussion between individuals or groups (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2012). Agenda setting then refers to putting the agenda together and gaining approval for it from the opponent. Because prior research has not addressed these concerns, some fundamental negotiation recommendations continue to be uncertain. For example, is it preferable to negotiate difficult issues first or last? When is it best to introduce a certain issue into a negotiation? These questions refer to how parties treat negotiation issues: which and how many issues they bring to the table, in which order and combination, and ultimately how parties might use or leverage the issues strategically and tactically.

☆ Author's note: Ingmar Geiger is Professor of Marketing and Statistics at Aalen University. A major part of this work was done when he was Assistant Professor at Freie Universität Berlin.

E-mail address: ingmar.geiger@hs-aalen.de.

A key reason for the relative lack of knowledge about issue-based tactics may stem from the experimental tradition that marks negotiation research. Nearly all experimental negotiation tasks include a fixed, limited number of negotiable issues (Carnevale & de Dreu, 2005), which are assumed to be independent of one another (Raiffa, 1982). This scenario excludes many negotiation issue related challenges that are relevant in practice. As Eliashberg et al. (1995, p. G56) caution with regard to generalizations about business marketing negotiations: “A clear gulf exists between research and real-world problems. Research articles and case materials that reflect actual bargaining issues overlap to a disappointing degree. We need more researcher-practitioner interaction to allow researchers to better understand the important elements of the real world negotiations problems they are researching.” A recent review of negotiation research in marketing provides two potential reasons for that gulf (Herbst, Voeth, & Meister, 2011): The unwillingness of practitioners to share sensitive information about their negotiations and the predominant use of student subjects instead of negotiation practitioners in experimental studies. To advance the field, the same authors call for “a more comprehensive examination of successful strategies and tactics” (p. 976).

In response, this study seeks to make two main contributions. First, it attempts to further understanding of the complex negotiation processes in B2B marketing by discovering, describing, and analyzing real-world negotiation tactics that are based on tangible issues in B2B sales negotiations. In so doing, it aspires to unveil important boundary conditions for the use and success of such tactics. Greater knowledge and understanding of issue-based tactics can benefit sales and purchasing practitioners, such that they might broaden their negotiation repertoire, e.g. by including best practice tactics they had not been aware of in the past. It also can contribute to literature on organizational buying and selling or research into transactions in B2B marketing in general. Second, the present study is designed to help bridge the researcher-practitioner divide. This extensive field study, with an exploratory and revelatory character, helps define the transferability of lab findings to the real world and reveals several new research avenues stemming from practically relevant problems. It thus contributes generally to the negotiation literature.

The next section offers an overview of the current state of research into agenda setting and issue-based negotiation tactics. After presenting the qualitative, exploration-oriented research methodology, this article outlines the findings, in the form of an emerging model of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation, including key tactics, the functions of those tactics, and some boundary conditions. Finally, the discussion details the implications of this model for both research and practice.

2. Issue-based tactics in negotiation

For the present study, it is useful to assume that negotiation starts when potential exchange partners begin discussing issues. Thus, the negotiation spans the whole process, from initial attempts to solve a customer problem to signing a legally binding contract (Geiger, 2016; Kapoutsis, Volkema, & Nikolopoulos, 2013). This view differs from the conventional approach in sales or purchasing practice, as reflected in many lab studies, in which negotiation only refers to the final personal encounter before signing an agreement. However, this wider temporal perspective helps illuminate various important patterns, strategies, and tactics involving negotiation issues.

Parties to B2B sales negotiations use different strategies and tactics (e.g., Perdue, 1992; Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2001). Negotiation strategies are often conceptualized as either integrative or distributive, such that they seek to maximize either joint or individual benefits, respectively (e.g., Raiffa, 1982; Zachariassen, 2008). In turn, the negotiation tactics that make up these strategies are “short-term, adaptive moves designed to enact or pursue broad (or higher level) strategies, which in turn provide stability, continuity, and direction for tactical behaviors. ... they are structured, directed, and driven by strategic consideration”

(Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2010, p. 110). A negotiation issue-based tactic in particular refers to a certain way of handling one or more negotiation issues in pursuit of a joint or individual goal. The negotiation and sales literature touches on several issue-based tactics, but remains fragmentary overall.

2.1. Negotiation agenda as a tactical device

As noted previously, a negotiation agenda comprises the negotiated issues and their order and structures the discussion (Patton & Balakrishnan, 2012). In the pursuit of joint negotiation outcomes—agreement and joint benefits—a negotiation agenda has long been identified as a significant structural characteristic (Schelling, 1956). Rubin and Brown (1975) discuss whether issues should be negotiated simultaneously, in subsets, or sequentially; Balakrishnan, Patton, and Lewis (1993) compare simultaneous with sequential bargaining and specify strategic considerations for defining which agendas benefit negotiators engaging in sequential bargaining (see also Fershtman, 1990).

Three empirical studies found that negotiating multiple issues simultaneously rather than sequentially leads to more efficient (win-win) outcomes. Froman and Cohen (1970) report this effect in a two-person dyadic setting. Patton and Balakrishnan found a similar effect in a condition in which a single seller negotiates either all issues simultaneously with a team of buyers or each issue sequentially with a different member of the team. Finally, Thompson, Mannix, and Bazerman (1988) show that negotiating multiple issues simultaneously instead of sequentially is also beneficial in a three-party negotiation. However, these empirical laboratory studies use relative few issues (mostly three, e.g. McAlister et al., 1986; Neale, Huber, & Northcraft, 1987; Patton & Balakrishnan, 2010, 2012; Pruitt & Lewis, 1975; Purdy et al., 2000; five, Adair, Weingart, & Brett, 2007; or eight, Naquin, 2003). They cannot definitively determine if simultaneous bargaining about all issues still is beneficial when the negotiation must deal with many issues (Geiger & Hüffmeier, 2014).

2.2. Number of issues

Rubin and Brown (1975) identify the number of issues and their ordering as potentially important determinants of bargaining outcomes. They also raise the question of issue interdependence, i.e. the fact that the value or availability of an option within an issue depends on the specific resolution of another issue, but their review of prior literature offered no empirical confirmation for any of these questions. Raiffa (1982) suggests that more, rather than fewer, issues can create more value for both parties, because they can leverage their different interests, resources, and priorities. However, the empirical evidence about how the number of issues affects negotiation outcomes is scarce. Naquin (2003) finds that more (eight) compared with less (four) issues leads to lower negotiator satisfaction. Geiger and Hüffmeier (2014) also show that more issues in a negotiation lead to less accurate judgments about the opponent's negotiation priorities and thus relatively less efficient outcomes. This finding resonates with Watkins's (2003) case-based recommendation of strategic simplification in complex, multi-issue negotiations. To come to an agreement, he proposes using four strategic simplification principles: eliminate issues from the agenda, negotiate guiding principles before detailed issues, split the issues into internally interdependent versus externally independent subsets, and negotiate the latter in sequence.

2.3. Issue sequence and concessions

Questions about who should raise issues at the negotiation table and in which order have drawn some research interest, especially as they relate to individual negotiation outcomes. In distributive negotiations, Galinsky and Mussweiler (2001) reveal a positive effect of an ambitious first offer on the individual profits of the party that makes that first offer.

Moran and Ritov (2002) extend this finding to integrative negotiations. If first offers are unreasonably extreme, they may represent a manipulative tactic (lowball or highball), depending on the role of the negotiator (Lewicki et al., 2010). Cotter and Henley (2008) also note that the high first offer effect may reverse in repeated negotiations.

Studies of concession making also reveal some effects of issue sequence, across two main research streams. First, describing patterns of unilateral concessions in distributive, single-issue negotiation (e.g., Balakrishnan & Eliashberg, 1995), Hüffmeier, Freund, Zerres, Backhaus, and Hertel (2014) demonstrate in a meta-analysis that hardline bargaining involving few, small, and increasing concessions on a single issue leads to higher individual profit but less positive socio-emotional evaluations of the negotiation compared with softline bargaining that elicits concessions from the partner by offering one's own concessions. Second, in studies of simultaneous concessions and demands in integrative, multi-issue negotiation (e.g., Moran & Ritov, 2002; Northcraft, Brodt, & Neale, 1995), researchers use the term logrolling to refer to a negotiator offering a concession on a relatively unimportant issue while making demands about a more relevant issue, from his or her perspective. If different issue priorities exist between parties, logrolling is a powerful tactic for producing win-win agreements (Froman & Cohen, 1970). It also can increase a negotiator's individual profit if he or she is successful in correctly estimating the opponent's priorities across issues (Trötschel, Hüffmeier, Loschelder, Schwartz, & Gollwitzer, 2011).

2.4. Unilateral issue-based tactics

Negotiation textbooks also mention issue-based tactics that enlarge the user's share but may be classified as morally questionable (Lewicki et al., 2010; Shell, 1999). For example, a "bogey" (Lewicki et al., 2010) or "phony issue" (Shell, 1999) tactic involves exaggerating the subjective importance of an issue or simply introducing such an issue to the negotiation. By making concessions on this bogey or phony issue, the negotiator might gain reciprocal concessions on more important issues. This tactic also tends to be successful in economic terms, as long as the misrepresented issue goes unnoticed by the other party (O'Connor & Carnevale, 1997).

A nibble tactic means asking for a last small concession before closing a deal (Shell, 1999), referring to either a newly introduced issue or one believed to have been settled already. Compared with the volume of the total deal, the nibble is quite small (max. 3–5%), so it does not endanger the agreement but still can upset the party confronted with this demand (Lewicki et al., 2010).

As this review demonstrates, research on issue-based tactics, in negotiation in general and B2B sales negotiation in particular, is rather fragmentary. The complexity of real-world negotiations suggests that other issue-based tactics might exist but have thus far gone unnoticed by B2B and negotiation researchers. Moreover, most existing empirical findings are based on experimental designs that use simple exercises. In real-world negotiation situations, these simplifications might not generalize, especially with regard to the number and nature of negotiation issues (Eliashberg et al., 1995).

3. Research methodology

These research gaps suggest the need for a qualitative research approach to discover, describe, and analyze issue-based tactics as they are actually used in B2B practice. Qualitative data can help build new theory when the prior theory is underdeveloped, as well as explicate complex process-based issues (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012). To that end, interviewing knowledgeable key informants, such as experienced negotiators in the B2B realm, following a flexible, semi-structured guideline is an appropriate choice. For analysis and interpretation, this research adopts an abductive approach, combining deductive and inductive elements.

3.1. Sampling procedure

The sampling frame includes companies active in the project business (Backhaus & Mühlfeld, 2005), such that their transactions pertain to tailor-made offerings with substantial complexity, volume, economic value, and risk (Söhnchen & Albers, 2010). Their sales negotiations in turn are characterized by large degrees of freedom about what is negotiated, leaving ample room to use negotiation issues tactically. The degree of negotiation leeway in this business type (Backhaus & Mühlfeld, 2005) even includes the seller defining or helping the customer define the concrete specifications of a project. Thus, this sampling frame provides a high probability of revelatory findings (Langley & Abdallah, 2011), more so than transactions in the product business, for example. To obtain meaningful variance in the data, the informants came from both industrial (construction, plant engineering & construction, railway construction; two-digit standard industry classification [SIC] codes 15, 16, 34–38, 40; three digit North American classification system [NAICS] codes 236, 237, 332–336, 488) and service (auditing, consulting, legal advice; SIC codes 73, 81, 87; NAICS code 541) project business settings.

To qualify as a key informant, the interview partners had to be active in a company operating in a project business; work in sales, purchasing, or a similar function; and possess sufficient negotiation experience. Interview partners were identified through the alumni network of an executive education program on business marketing and professional social networks (e.g., LinkedIn, Xing). Some interviewees provided contacts for further interviews (snowball sampling; Johnson & Sohi, 2015). The interviewing process stopped upon reaching theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

3.2. Sample characteristics

The 39 interviewees from Western European countries provided insights into their B2B sales negotiation experiences and expertise. This sample size compares favorably to similar B2B studies (Johnson & Sohi, 2015). The interviewees worked for medium to very large companies, with annual company turnover ranging from EUR 95 m to EUR 82.5 bn. Their relevant professional experience extended from 4 to 25 years. Six interviewees worked in the procurement functions of their companies and were responsible for purchasing industrial or service projects; 15 were active in the selling side of an industrial project business, and 18 represented the same side in a service project business. Table 1 summarizes the sample.

As can be seen from Table 1, the sample contains 15% informants from the buying side and 85% from the selling side. During the interviews it became clear that purchasing professionals spend a much higher amount of their daily working time negotiating than salespeople. Thus, they are confronted with a greater variety of negotiation-related behaviors than sales people. They hence provided much more information about the questions of interest, as mirrored in the longer buyer interview durations. In consequence, it was necessary to interview a lot more negotiators from the selling side to attain a similar level of understanding. Overall, the information from both sides complemented and enriched each other until theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was reached.

3.3. Interview guide and procedure

A semi-structured interview guide applied to all the interviews. Thus the interviewer could ask about specific topics but with enough openness for respondents to mention aspects that the researcher had not previously considered (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). The guide consisted of five sections: (1) introduction, demographics, and interview procedures; (2) initiation of the negotiation; (3) negotiation preparation; (4) the negotiation itself; and (5) conclusion with any further, open comments. The bulk of the interview time focused on the third

Table 1
Sample characteristics.

Role	Industry	Number of interviewees by interview mode (In person/phone)	Company size [m EUR turnover] M (SD)	Professional experience [years] M (SD)	Interview duration [minutes] M (SD)
Purchasing	Various	0/6	33,799 (32,467)	12.3 (6.8)	52 (15)
	Sales				
	Construction	1/1	10,254 (8685)	7.7 (1.6)	36 (3)
	Plant engineering & construction	4/7	29,917 (25,779)	12.9 (6.5)	38 (8)
	Railway construction	0/2	7965 (7835)	11.0 (4.0)	29 (2)
	Auditing	3/1	20,338 (3107)	17.3 (3.3)	45 (12)
	Legal advice	0/5	1200 (442)	13.6 (3.1)	44 (6)
	Management consulting	1/8	9917 (12,741)	12.0 (3.6)	42 (5)
Total		9/30	19,325 (20,183)	12.7 (5.1)	42 (9)

and fourth sections, which refer to negotiation issues and their tactical and strategic use. The full interview guide is in the Appendix.

The interviewees began by identifying a prototypical sales or purchasing negotiation in their professional realm (e.g., Pratt, 2009). This study focus helped reveal the typical patterns these participants applied to use different negotiation issues. However, some interviewees also reported extreme cases that deviated from a typical negotiation situation. This type of information supplemented and enriched the interview material, especially with regard to discovery (e.g., Langley & Abdallah, 2011).

All interviews were conducted in 2013 and 2014 by the author and two research assistants, over the phone or in person, at prearranged times. Before the interviews, interviewers familiarized themselves with the interviewee's professional career, company, industry, and role through publicly available information. All interviewees agreed to have their interview recorded. At the start of the interview, the interviewers presented the topic as a "study on negotiation and negotiation issues." Then during the interviews, the guideline served as a flexible device: All the main topics were covered in all interviews, but respondents also had ample freedom to explain and remark on their particular situations, experiences, or conceptions. Overall, the interviews lasted up to 80 min (M = 42 min, SD = 9 min). The total interview material amounted to more than 27 h.

3.4. Analysis and interpretation according to the Gioia methodology

The fragmentary state of existing research on issue-based negotiation tactics suggests the need for an abductive approach to analysis and interpretation. That is, prior literature serves as a starting point for constructing the interview guide (deduction), but the analysis and interpretation stages largely followed the inductive Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013; Langley & Abdallah, 2011), as detailed subsequently. As one important result it aims at producing "nascent concepts that don't seem to have adequate theoretical referents in the existing literature" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20) and seems thus particularly suited to the present research endeavor. By laying open the different steps from informant language and meaning to the emergent theoretical concepts, it also provides a high standard of intersubjective traceability and trustworthiness.

Before the start of the analysis, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then the complete transcript was subjected to open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which uses the informants' own terms to represent particular thoughts, insights, or patterns. In this first coding phase, researchers should "faithfully adhere to informant terms" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20). The number of codes can easily reach more than 100 after analyzing the first ten interviews. As the research progresses, these codes are compared, differences and similarities are discovered, and the number of codes decreases. These consolidated codes represent first-order concepts. The comparison and abstraction of those first-order concepts lead to second-order themes (comparable to selective coding to reach theoretical saturation in grounded theory), mostly expressed in the researcher's terms (Gioia et al., 2013). For any

first-order concept to be included in the second-order themes, it must be mentioned by several informants (Tuli, Kohli, & Bharadwaj, 2007). The second-order themes then could be distilled into aggregate dimensions, which represent the top level categories for the proposed model of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation. In parallel with this lengthy coding process, memos with varying levels of abstraction were produced (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The most grounded ones illustrate first-order codes and concepts; others summarize key points from each interview, including comparisons. The most abstract and lengthy memos contain detailed descriptions of emerging negotiation process patterns in the different industries, as well as negotiation tactics and strategies. Fig. 1 displays the final data structure, mirroring the different levels of abstraction. The second-order themes form the basis for the proposed model of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation.

3.5. Trustworthiness of the data and findings

Following Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Corley and Gioia (2004), several measures sought to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and their interpretations. First, all data were managed with utmost care, using a qualitative data management and analysis program (MaxQDA). Data include audio records, transcripts, notes, and all other auxiliary documents (tables, graphs, figures). Second, the analysis and interpretation process was subjected to peer debriefing (Corley & Gioia, 2004), such that the field researcher solicited the opinions of other researchers, not involved in the study, to discuss the emerging findings and data patterns, elicit critical questions about data collection and analysis, and give general feedback about the procedures and findings. Peer debriefing provides an outsider's view on the research. For this study, the peers were knowledgeable qualitative researchers from the author's own school, as well as negotiation and B2B marketing experts from different universities. Third, the meaning and interpretation of the emerging concepts and themes were reaffirmed with several informants and adapted accordingly. The verbatim comments included in Tables 2–6 demonstrate the plausibility of the findings represented in Figs. 1–3.

4. Findings

Issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation reflect business, industry, and buyer/seller role-specific boundary conditions related to both issue-based tactics and agenda setting (Fig. 2). Issue-based tactics and the negotiation agenda both serve two broad functions: achieving tactical advantages and safeguarding the process and result. This study reveals three categories of issue-based tactics: issue order, issue number, and issue characteristic tactics.

4.1. Boundary conditions for issue-based tactics and agenda setting

The use of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation is delimited by the business- or industry-specific issue and agenda logic, as well as by buyer and seller roles, as the comments in Table 2 reveal.



Fig. 1. Data structure.

4.1.1. Business- or industry-specific issue and agenda logic

The analysis revealed quickly that all types of issue-based tactics or strategies reflect business-specific logics, which define the type, number,

and order of issues to discuss in a sales negotiation in a project business. Two distinct issue subset patterns emerged for the industrial versus service project businesses, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

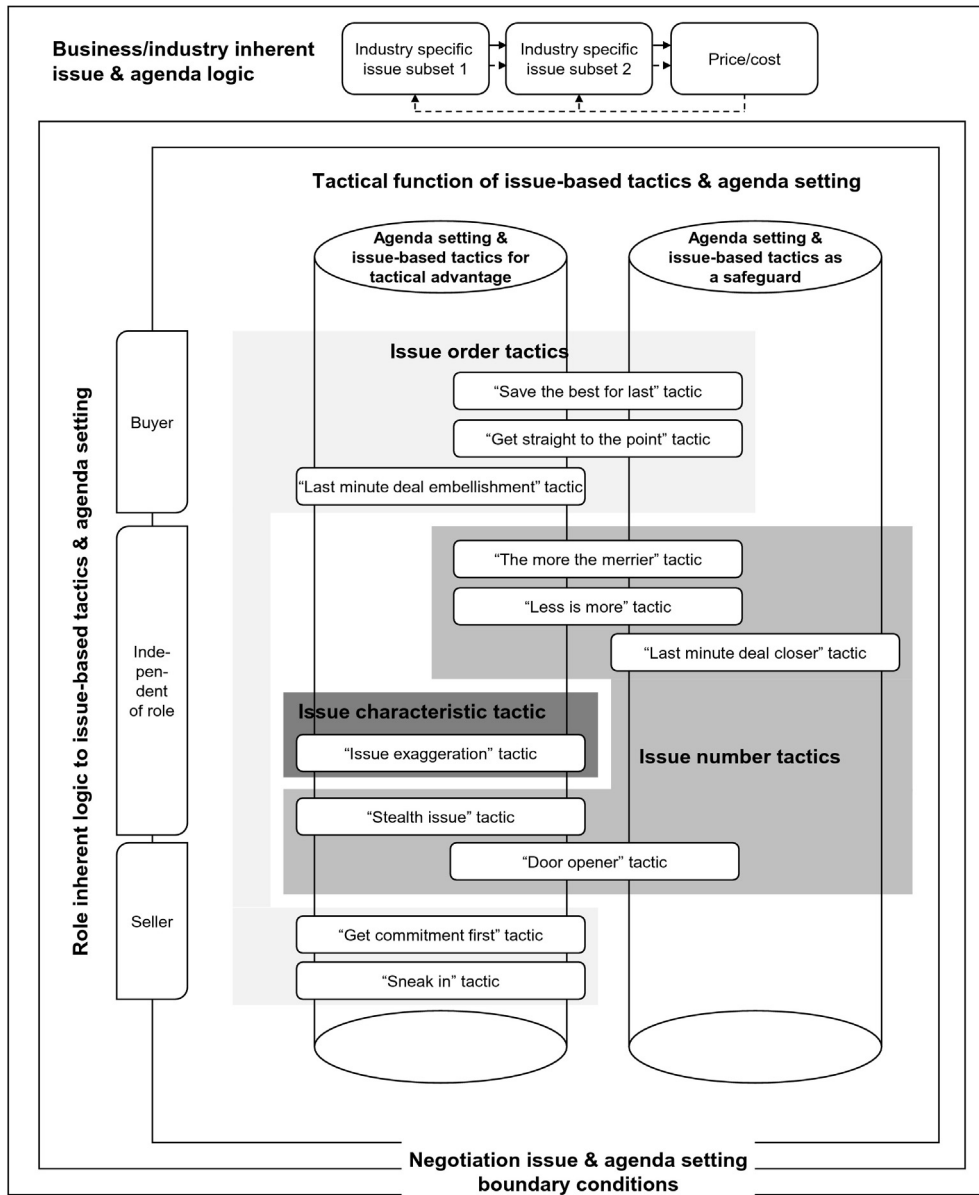


Fig. 2. A model of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation.

In the industrial project business, the first issue subset consists of technical and technological issues. Once these issues have been discussed, the negotiation can move on to commercial and legal issues, such as risk distribution, warranties, or financial engineering. Then the last issue subset consists of price-related issues. The main explanation for this order is the interdependence of the issues: Without an idea of the general technological scope, the negotiation partners cannot discuss the project duration. In other words, available options of one issue and their economic impact depend on the resolution of another issue. Without knowing the delivery scope and all risks associated with the commercial or legal issues, an overall price is hard to negotiate.

A relatively similar pattern emerged for the service project business. It was most pronounced for management consulting projects but also arose, with slight differences, in auditing and legal advice projects. The negotiation process starts with what some informants called “project scoping,” which entailed developing a shared understanding of the customer problem and its environment, as well as an idea about how to tackle the problem. From this discussion, potential problem solutions and objectives for the consulting project emerged. In the second issue subset, the parties discuss concrete project resources: duration, team size, depth

of analysis, third-party resources, and so on. Again, the final step focused on the price, which often was a direct consequence of the necessary project resources. Especially in management consulting settings, consulting firms appear eager to avoid discussing daily consultant rates and instead offer some free resources or redefine the project scope to arrive at an acceptable overall cost for the client. Thus in the service project business, a certain “natural” flow of different negotiation issues seems inherent to the business, as exemplified by the third quote in Table 2.

The solid lines in Fig. 3 represent these regular approaches, though the interviewees also noted many instances in which the issue subsets did not move in a single direction. If the parties do not agree on all issues, in the industrial project business, final negotiations return to the technological scope or commercial and legal issues, making changes to arrive at an overall acceptable package. In the service project business, project objectives may be downsized or the depth of analysis decreased if parties cannot agree after having gone through the different issue subsets for the first time. The dotted lines in Fig. 3 illustrate this back-and-forth shuttling.

Overall then, issue-based tactics may apply within each issue subset, across issue subsets, and in final negotiations, when issues from all subsets come back to the table. However, the general issue subset order

Table 2
Data pertaining to negotiation issue and agenda setting boundary conditions.

Theme	Representative quotations
Business- or industry-specific issue & agenda logic	<p>“Price is the last issue we negotiate. That’s totally clear. It is because I can negotiate price only when I know what I need to sell and when I know the associated commercial risks. Only when the technological negotiation and the commercial negotiation are concluded, can I talk price. First, we clarify the delivery scope...., then we talk about the technological parameters. And then we are facing the questions about which risks we would be willing to take. Those are few, but very important ones. Hence, we have clarified the delivery scope and the technology, and we know our [technological] risk. And then come the legal and commercial negotiations, for which we really define a strategy.” IP 3, senior vice president sales in a power plant engineering company</p> <p>“First, the technological offer is negotiated ... and then the commercial issues.... Obviously, we initially have to talk about what the customer wants or about what we can offer. Then we see what we can do regarding price or how we can arrange these things. This is really due to the nature of the business, it is not a strategy.” IP 1, project manager in a plant engineering company</p> <p>“What is the objective? What is the initial situation? How do we get [to the objective]? [If these questions are clarified], we can lash together the contents in broad strokes.... Duration is something that the customer often prescribes. But I would say team and budget are the two things we bring to the table.” SP 2, junior partner in one of the world’s leading top management consultancies</p> <p>“It always starts with the initial situation and the objectives. Then there is our solution proposal, then the procedures. Then we have our project organization and the performance limitations, that’s what we call it. What we will do, what the client will have to do, what third parties will do. Then we have conditions and some general terms. That means the solution at the beginning, unpleasant things like prices at the end.” SP 1, partner in a management consultancy</p> <p>“It should be a logical order. If I were to produce something, I cannot talk about quality matters before I have looked at the production flow. I have to make sure that it is logical so that I do not put the cart before the horse.” PU 1, senior vice-president of procurement in an IT corporation</p>
Buyer and seller role-inherent logic to agenda setting	<p>“Since we are dealing with customers in these negotiations, we have to be very flexible. That means, we will negotiate in the order that the customer desires. And even if we notice that certain issues do not really fit into a specific order, we try to adapt and maybe suggest to do it this or that way. But we have to be rather flexible.” IP 4, project manager in a construction and property development corporation</p> <p>“Generally, we try to follow a certain golden thread. However, since generally the customer leads the negotiation, this is always difficult. Of course, we can try to steer a little, but following my own thread all the time is very difficult. That’s why we have to be well prepared.” IP 2, sales manager in a plant engineering company</p> <p>“Of course, it is important to steer the order of things. Never leave the steering wheel to the supplier for an advertising session, otherwise only 10 min remain of an hour in order to tell them, ‘too expensive, please do something.’” PU 2, purchasing director at a media company</p>

delimits the applicability of certain issue order tactics. Thus, any negotiation issue-based tactics must be understood within the boundaries set by the seemingly inherent business- or industry-specific issue subset pattern.

4.1.2. Buyer and seller role-inherent logic to agenda setting

The interviewees unanimously agreed that, in terms of agenda setting (i.e., who decides which issues are discussed and in which order), the

buyer has first rights. For example, if a tender process starts a negotiation, the buyer produces the tender documents and thereby sets the issues to be discussed. Even in less structured negotiation processes, most sellers assume that the buyer determines the scope and order of issues. Only when the buyer does not want to proceed do sellers develop an agenda of their own. This shared role conception leads to a specific distribution of issue-based tactics across roles: Some tactics seem reserved exclusively for the buyer, while others are left to the seller.

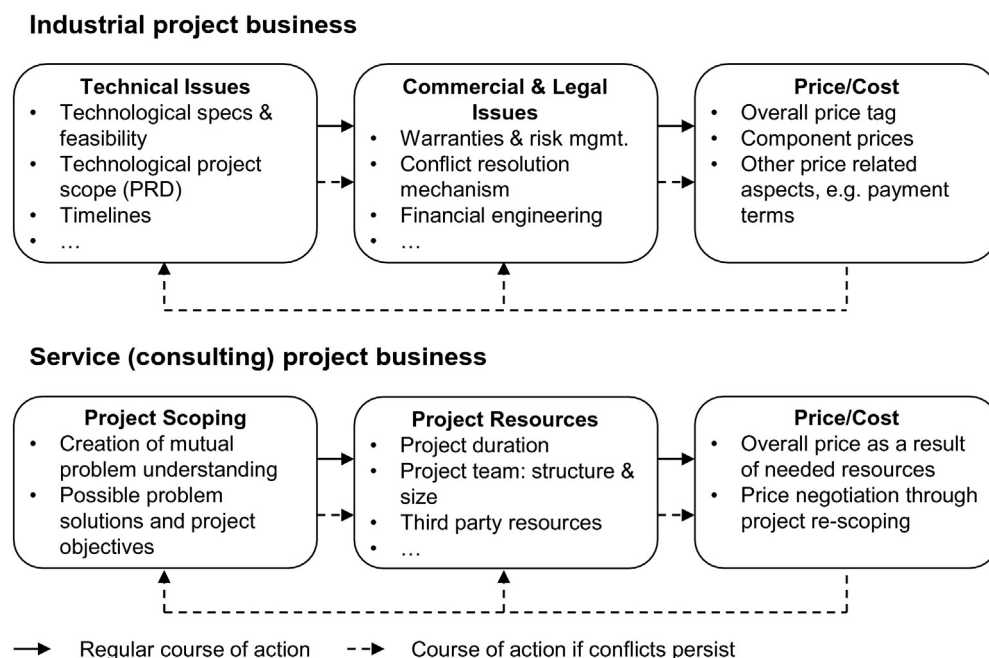


Fig. 3. Business or industry specific issue and agenda logic.

4.2. Tactical functions of the agenda and issue-based tactics

Two broad tactical functions emerge as the second model dimension (Fig. 2): tactical advantage and safeguarding. Table 3 contains verbatim evidence of this dimension.

4.2.1. Agenda setting and issue-based tactics for tactical advantage

Most respondents shared the idea that being able to set the agenda—understood as the scope and order of negotiation issues—represents a tactical advantage. The advantage mostly stems from the possibility of steering the flow of arguments, demands, and concessions. The tactical advantage then ideally leads to increased (negotiation) profits for the party that holds this advantage. Because of the common role conceptions of buyers and sellers, a “natural” state would involve the buyer setting the agenda. However, most sellers seem prepared to take over its navigation, if the buyer allows it. Other tactics also clearly follow the goal to attain tactical advantage.

4.2.2. Agenda setting and issue-based tactics as a safeguard

The agenda and totality of negotiation issues also serve various safeguarding functions. On a general level, safeguarding can be understood as supporting the negotiation and post-negotiation process without focus on a particular unilateral advantage in a final agreement. This can be achieved in a variety of ways. First of all, it can mean that an agreement is found that is acceptable to both parties. Finding such an agreement may necessitate creativity and problem-solving that uncovers formerly hidden integrative potential, thus leading to win-win solutions for both parties. For sellers, it may mean ensuring that the process can continue during the negotiation. This means that the particular seller does not exit the negotiation process prematurely (e.g. due to a non-competitive first offer). From a buyer's perspective, safeguarding the process may also mean something else: Finding out early in the process which sellers' offerings are not worth negotiating in order to focus limited resources (e.g. time, personnel) on negotiations with those sellers whose offerings seem most promising. In addition, the agenda and certain issue-based tactics can help safeguard the best possible anticipation of project eventualities. That is, negotiation partners try to envision all issues that may endanger the implementation of the project. Especially in industrial project businesses, selling companies use extensive checklists and internal approval hierarchies before agreeing to a final contract.

4.3. Issue order tactics

Issue order tactics refer to the ordering of issues on the agenda. Considering the previously established roles, buyers primarily use these tactics, though two seller-specific tactics also fall into the category, focused

on issue ordering but not really an open agenda. Three issue order tactics solely aim to generate a unilateral advantage; the two others also serve safeguarding functions: They either ensure that the (sometimes difficult) process continues or they try to save time by breaking through early barriers or ending negotiations at an early stage if agreement seems unlikely. Empirical evidence of these issue order tactics is in Table 4.

4.3.1. “Save the best for last” tactic

The general idea of this tactic is to relegate difficult, contentious, or the most important issues to the end of the negotiation but discuss the easy and less important issues at the beginning. The buyer can normally decide which issues to discuss at what time, reflecting a dominant role of buyer needs and expectations in the negotiation process; so this tactic is mostly applied by the buying side. Starting with the supposedly easier issues helps the negotiation gain momentum, which may encourage the parties to stick with the process and come to an agreement. In that sense, the “save the best for last” tactic fulfills a safeguarding function, because it averts early termination of the negotiation. However, it also may produce a unilateral advantage, because the buyer can gauge how the selling company reacts to its demands on easier issues. The other party also may become tired and be more willing to make concessions, just to finish the negotiation and come to an agreement.

These factors can create a tactical advantage for a buyer negotiating with a selling party that is eager to close a deal. However, the “save the best for last” tactic also can backfire, if it transforms into a “get commitment first” tactic, as discussed subsequently.

4.3.2. “Get straight to the point” tactic

The opposite of the “save the best for last” tactic is getting straight to the point. With this tactic, the agenda setter, usually the buyer, starts out with the most important, contentious, or difficult issues. A rationale for this approach, in principle, is that it allows the negotiation parties to check if an agreement can be reached or if their differences are too great to be bridged. This aspect constitutes a safeguarding function: If parties cannot deal with the most difficult issues, they may be better off using their time in other pursuits. Especially in a very competitive situation, with many comparable suppliers, this move may make great sense to a buying company. For a selling company, this buyer tactic can be beneficial if it means that competitors drop out of the process but it can stay in the game. In that case, the seller even could encourage the buyer to discuss the most important issues first. However, the tactic also can lead to a unilateral advantage: Because the most important points get discussed at the beginning, the buyer can always come back and demand more concessions on that issue, in exchange for other, less important issues discussed later.

Table 3
Data pertaining to tactical functions of agenda and issue management.

Theme	Representative quotations
Agenda setting and issue management for tactical advantage	“Well, you have a clear advantage when you are the one who sets the agenda or who works with an agenda that was not communicated to the other party. On the other hand, if you as a salesperson manage to take over the communication, then I'd have to applaud you, then you'd be in the driver's seat.” PU 3, purchaser of professional services at a media company “He certainly has his own agenda, he clearly has, but we would not know it.” SP 3, director of a global auditing corporation “It is possible that our counterpart, i.e. the buying side, has set up agenda, which it does not disclose. There are many Q&A sessions, in which it is very unclear with which goal they have been set up. If you shortly present your offer in one of those, the situation may turn into a veritable bargaining situation, without having been declared as such before.” SP 4, business development manager in a global law firm
Agenda setting and issue management as a safeguard	“There are very clear guidelines which are applicable to the whole corporation. They represent a roadmap as to which risk profile is acceptable to our company, and if we want to deviate from that, to which management level we have to go to gain approval. There is a very exact procedure for that. That way, we also always know where we stand regarding the remaining open issues; i.e. whether we are able to promise something to the customer, or whether we have to gain top management approval first or whether we do not believe we can gain approval at all.” IP 5, contract manager of a large plant engineering corporation “Normally, we would go into these meetings and would have set up an agenda for ourselves. If the client is not prepared, we have to be prepared. We would tell the client then, ‘we have set up a little agenda which we would like to go through with you, unless you have a better suggestion.’” SP 5, partner in a global law firm

Table 4
Data pertaining to issue order tactics.

Theme	Representative quotations
"Save the best for last" tactic	<p>"We save price for last, when we want to find out how they react to all the other issues.... It's the same with the [written] contract when we know there will be many questions.... We've been there and done that and said 'we'll go through the contract document in the very end, and when the boys get tired and want to go home, then we start digging into the contract and see how far we get.'" PU 4, purchasing director at a major IT corporation</p> <p>"It may be that we say, 'let's first discuss everything else, that's so much, we have to settle this first.' And the things that are most conflict laden and most difficult, we do in the end." IP 6, sales manager in an engineering corporation</p> <p>"Oftentimes, it happens that the customer says, 'we go through the contract document top down.' Then it may happen that we do not agree on an issue and discussions start. Then it is our concern to relegate that issue to the back and continue with the other issues. Generally, three to four issues remain unsettled, over which we have to talk again in the end. Before we get into real conflict [midway through the negotiation], we try to pour oil onto troubled waters." IP 3, senior vice-president sales in a power plant engineering company</p> <p>"Price is the most critical issue that we deal with. That's why we have it in the end. First, we try to talk about issues where we arrive at mutual yea-saying, things that are not problematic, project content and organization, for example. These issues are rather unproblematic in comparison to price; we manage to get through those rather smoothly." SP 6, partner in a global tax advisory</p>
"Get straight to the point" tactic	<p>"We start with the most important issues [i.e. duration, team size and composition, daily rates] because they will take up most of the time. And then after [seemingly] having discussed them, you will distribute some extra beatings. That means we will have said, 'good that we agree on this already. If you agree to this, we can tick that off.' Then the service provider thinks that at the end we'll discuss payment terms and other contractual conditions.... Then comes the variant, you start decreasing team size [in the end, meaning you take out billable consulting days].</p> <p>Imagine you have negotiated a consultant team [at the start]. They will have offered a senior consultant for 1500 a day, a director for 3000, and two interns for a grand. I would have negotiated daily rates, mostly the rates of those consultants that will be staffed the most days. This will probably be the senior consultant. In return, I will have left the managing director's and the intern's rates as they were. But I want to really push down the senior consultant's rate, because he will work the most days.</p> <p>At the end of the negotiation, I will demand to take out billable days of the interns and the managing director. Had I demanded those cuts in billable days at the beginning and demanded cuts in the rates, they would probably not have agreed to a cut in the most important daily rates." PU 3, purchasing manager at a media company, describing a typical negotiation to purchase the services of a team of management consultants</p> <p>"It may well be the other way around. That we'd say, we want to get the difficult stuff out of the way first. However, it really depends on the situation and the customer." IP 6, sales manager in an engineering corporation</p> <p>"I would try to find out what's most important to him and start with that." SP 7, partner in a global auditing corporation</p> <p>"Sometimes, we have that special case in which the client says, 'this is the price, what can you offer me for that price?' Then we negotiate price first, that happens sometimes." SP 6, partner in a global tax advisory</p>
"Last minute deal embellishment" tactic	<p>"If you negotiate with a company (as opposed to a private investor), it is extremely unpleasant when your negotiation partner changes [shortly before the deal is closed]. You negotiate one set of issues, and then another person comes in and negotiates on something else. This is very, very unpleasant. And this guy may come from a totally different perspective and tell you 'we'll also need this and that.'" IP 4, project manager in a construction and property development corporation</p> <p>"It happens that your counterpart raises already discussed or new issues just before agreement. This occurs and is also quite dependent on the counterpart's origin. In the Arabic region, for example, it is quite usual that you renegotiate and renegotiate. And then stories are told that the main sheikh also needs to sign and is not yet satisfied, and all these things. That way, it has a strong cultural character." IP 1, project manager in a plant engineering company</p> <p>"A last demand before the end of negotiation sometimes happens, but we experience that as something very unsportsmanlike... this is something you do not want to do with a customer. You would really want to avoid that, because it interferes with your trusting relationship." IP 7, sales manager in a railway systems corporation</p> <p>"Being confronted with last minute demands mostly only happens with the purchasing department. They may all of a sudden bring issues such as payment terms, applicable jurisdiction, warranty conditions, warranty clauses, etc., to the table. This may well happen, and we normally agree in a pragmatic fashion. The whole negotiation would not fail, but you would often have to swallow a pill that you would not have swallowed otherwise." SP 8, partner in a top management consultancy</p>
"Get commitment first" tactic	<p>"We generally try to argue for our offer in terms of technology and get to the price only in the end. If we discussed price first, we would not even be able to show the things that differentiate us from the competition. Then, only price is looked at and you have to make sure that the technology somehow fits. This would rarely be the right way for a supplier." IP 9, sales manager at a plant engineering company</p> <p>"You can say generally that price is relegated to the end. That's a psychological affair from two sides. One side is that you first sell a solution and its value [convincing the customer], and then on the other side at some point you have to talk about the price." IP 8, vice-president sales in a plant automation and technology corporation</p> <p>"When you are dealing with a key account, for which you have worked for some time, then the customer is satisfied with certain consultants and not their seniority. In that case I would definitely change the order of issues or the order would evolve automatically: You would say, 'these two consultants are the core team in a team of ten. These are definitely staffed on your project.' Success in negotiation correlates with the possibility that you can present all aces you have in hand. I definitely want to have placed all my assets, before the conversation starts turning into a completely different direction." SP 1, partner in a management consultancy</p> <p>"A salesperson will of course try to present his solution and technology as long as possible. Thereby he tries to limit the time for all other issues so that time pressure rather develops on the side of the purchaser." PU 2, purchasing director at a media company</p>
"Sneak in" tactic	<p>"One concrete example: We have roadside weather stations. And we offer a corresponding software. The customer can see what happens in his area. With this type of product, we have a strategy: First of all, we present the hardware to the customer. But in the end, it is a lot more interesting for us if the customer buys a service from us. And this [service] issue we treat in a by-the-way fashion. If we put that into the foreground, we'd be bargaining quickly about it. But we only really talk about the hardware and we get to a point where we say, 'we could do something for you [regarding hardware price], if you also commissioned us with regular updates and maintenance'.... This is an example where we really work with one parameter, but reach another, our main goal." IP 10, sales director of a company supplying meteorological equipment to infrastructure projects</p> <p>"We often raise issues of major importance to us midway through the negotiation for the first time. This way, we do not burden the negotiation with too many potentially difficult issues at the start. What's more, our counterpart is a lot more receptive to our demands on this type of issue midway through the encounter, because then the issue looks a lot less important to them, since many other important ones to them have already been settled." IP 4, project manager in a construction and property development corporation</p>

4.3.3. "Last minute deal embellishment" tactic

The clear goal of this tactic is to gain a unilateral advantage for the buyer. Informants unanimously agreed that only buyers use this tactic.

The buyer issues one last, unanticipated demand before closing the deal, whether about an already discussed topic or a new but minor issue. Another variation consists of the buying side introducing a new

stakeholder, such as a decision maker from a related department, who makes this last minute demand. The selling company—which is eager to close the deal—often begrudgingly agrees to the demand. The perceived unfairness of this tactic depends on the prior negotiation process and cultural circumstances.

Salespeople dealing with customers from Eastern cultures note that the perceptions of Westerners and Easterners often differ with regard to when a negotiation ends. In Middle Eastern countries for example, post-agreement demands are regarded as normal, but they would be perceived as unusual in Western countries. The tactic also is not without risk. If the power-dependence relation between business partners is balanced, a selling company may retaliate in a future transaction or cease doing business with the customer altogether.

4.3.4. “Get commitment first” tactic

Another issue order tactic is the “get commitment first” tactic, such that the negotiation focuses on issues related to the seller’s offering as long and as intensively as possible, to gain commitment before discussing price and related issues. If the buyer is persuaded about the eventual advantages of the seller’s offering and becomes committed, it should be prepared to pay a higher price. In both the industrial and service project businesses, price-related issues are often discussed at the end anyway, so salespeople may succeed in applying this tactic, despite the buyer’s agenda-setting supremacy.

4.3.5. “Sneak in” tactic

To increase a seller’s profit from a negotiation, it might use the “sneak in” tactic. The selling company introduces an important, previously unaddressed issue in a by-the-way fashion, midway through the negotiation, such as an extra service offered with the hardware. If the buyer does not realize the importance of this issue to the seller, it might agree without much thought, which provides the seller with an important advantage.

4.4. Issue number tactics

The second main category of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation refers to the number of issues. With these tactics, negotiators add or subtract issues in the negotiation, to reach a specific goal that might be one-sided or mutual. The first two tactics described in this section constitute rather strategic approaches to the overall negotiation, while the latter three come into play only in selected instances, due to events during the negotiation or specific role properties of the seller and buyer. Table 5 offers some quotes about issue number tactics.

4.4.1. “The more the merrier” tactic

By bringing many, as opposed to few, issues to the table, parties seek to increase the negotiation pie. Even if the buyer is the natural agenda setter, both parties can add issues to the agenda, so this tactic is applied by both sides. A general idea is that discussing more issues offers greater possibilities for mutually beneficial concessions.

In addition, “the more the merrier” tactic provides a safeguarding function for the negotiation process and agreement. By adding issues, the bargaining zone can be expanded and enhanced. As a consequence, both parties claim more from the enlarged pool of resources. However, some aspects of this tactic may work in the favor of only one party. For example, informants on the sales side reported that with more issues, they were able to charge higher prices, because a package containing many issues becomes less transparent for the buyer. Thus, the buyer cannot negotiate component prices to achieve a lower overall price. Furthermore, the relative importance of price to the customer might decrease. If a seller can negotiate more performance-related issues (rather than fewer), the probability of a project with a greater scope and higher value increases. Depending on the total number of issues in the negotiation, increasing their number also may be beneficial to the buyer.

4.4.2. “Less is more” tactic

The “less is more” tactic is the contrast to “the more the merrier” tactic. In following this tactic, parties try to limit the number of issues to a certain important set, so that they can understand each other’s priorities well and reach a high degree of mutual understanding. In turn, they seek to identify all available win-win potential and create the highest possible value for both parties.

This preference for fewer rather than more issues likely reflects the different expert roles a negotiator must fulfill. If a situation only allows for a single negotiator, he or she must handle all pertinent issues and thus needs expertise in various subject areas (e.g., quality assurance, pricing). Negotiation is a mentally taxing activity, so limiting the number of issues may be preferable in such situations. Because it leverages the full integrative potential in a negotiation, this tactic can fulfill a safeguarding function that makes agreement possible. It also may create a unilateral advantage if one party can claim the extra resources exclusively.

Applying the “less is more” tactic requires stated or tacit approval from both parties to limit the number of issues. Because the buyer generally defines the agenda and thus the number of issues, it is easier for the buyer side to apply this tactic. However, the present data suggest that selling organizations also find benefits from limiting the number of issues and may try to convince the buying side to stick to that subset.

4.4.3. “Last minute deal closer” tactic

Applied at the end of the negotiation, this tactic entails wrapping up all necessary issues to reach an agreement and discovering something essential that has been missing. This essential issue then gets added to the agenda and contract, so that both parties are able to close the deal. In that sense, it is a safeguard; only by including this issue can the parties achieve agreement. For example, such a move may be necessary if technological advances have progressed during the negotiation and require updating. In another situation, not all relevant decision makers and their interests might have been included in the negotiation thus far, but they need to enter at the last minute. In an example raised in the interviews, a buyer that is willing to close with the focal supplier also might have a very good alternative and therefore need for the seller to match its competitor’s offer. Unlike the “last minute deal embellishment” tactic, this tactic does not represent an attempt to gain a unilateral advantage but rather is a means to be able to come to an agreement.

4.4.4. “Door opener” tactic

A tactic that involves the number of performance-related issues discussed is the “door opener” tactic, which sellers might employ when they are missing exact information about the other party, such as its willingness to pay. Informants described two versions of this tactic. The first consists of presenting an opening offer that is missing one or two essential features but leaves the overall price tag in an acceptable range. As a safeguarding function, this tactic keeps the focal supplier in the negotiation process, even if competition is strong. A second version includes two or more initial offers that differ substantially in their scope and cost. Ideally, it helps the seller stay in the game and reap a nice profit.

4.4.5. “Stealth issue” tactic

With this unilateral tactic, one side introduces an issue to the contract that is not discussed actively but still becomes part of the legally binding contract. In professional services, a seller might mention travel expenses in the offer document but not raise them actively in the negotiation. If those issues go unnoticed by the buyer during the negotiation, they become part of the agreement and can have important profit implications.

Within applicable legal boundaries, related to which terms and conditions may apply, a similar tactic applies to terms and conditions. That is, terms and conditions are often formulated by one side, so they may benefit the company that slips certain terms into an offer (seller) or a tender document (buyer), as long as they are tacitly accepted by the other party.

Table 5
Data pertaining to issue number tactics.

Theme	Representative quotations
"The more the merrier" tactic	<p>"It is certainly better to offer more ancillary services.... Sometimes we are surprised when we touch on something which is especially, sometimes irrationally important to the client. On these points, we can easily concede and he in turn will concede on the fees in an irrational manner. In principle, enlarging the negotiation pie [by bringing in more issues] makes it easier for us...." SP 5, partner in a major global law firm</p> <p>"The more variables are on the table, the more preparation we need. Before I enter into negotiation I guess which variables are of major importance to the customer, how priorities are distributed across the variables. Then I analyze what would happen if I offered two variables in a bundle to the customer and brought that to the table as a package. For example, 'I offer you product A and give you an engineering service on top, by supporting your track layer [railway construction] for another week.' This makes it easier later on, because it is a little less lucid for the opposing side. For us, it gives us the opportunity to get out of [the role] as a pure product supplier to a systems supplier. And for complete and complex systems, customers are prepared to pay more money, just because he reduces his risks." IP 11, sales director in a railway construction company</p> <p>"We are also interested in bringing in as many aspects as possible, to enrich a project.... We always go in and show them the complexity of the topic, underscored by relating experiences. That's negotiating over the project scope. We want to sell a big scope with many days, of course. And the customer only wants to have a good solution, as quick as possible, and without doing too much for it." SP 1, partner in a management consultancy</p> <p>"Our interest is to sell our service as dear as possible. If we only negotiate price, that's unfavorable [to us]. For us it is beneficial to have different issues [to discuss] with the client. Finally we manage to establish higher prices because we convincingly demonstrate on the other issues that we will perform very well." SP 9, senior partner in a global law firm</p> <p>"Fewer [issues] have an influence on the negotiation, in that it appears to the supplier that we only want to press on price. More [issues] means that [the supplier] gets the impression that he's dealing with a tough negotiation partner who's knowledgeable and discusses content and all performance-related aspects.... The fewer issues you negotiate, the less probable it becomes that you reach a minimum of success. Of course, you may be successful, but if you compare it to discussing all aspects down to the last detail, [it is less promising]." PU 3, purchasing manager in a media company</p>
"Less is more" tactic	<p>"Personally, my impression is the following: If you already have a great mutual understanding of each other and only a few points are concerned, that you can negotiate profoundly and calmly, it is better [to only negotiate few issues]. The result is also better compared to when you have a heap of issues. That makes an already complex subject, like consulting or all these non-traditional areas [for the corporate purchasing function] only more complex. It also makes it more complicated for both parties or for us to reach a satisfying result. That's why I would tend toward fewer aspects and a related better result." PU 5, purchasing director at a large, first-tier supplier to the automotive industry, responsible for buying high-value professional services</p> <p>"It is more comfortable [to negotiate fewer issues]. That's because in our industry it is not common to offer sequential negotiations with a corresponding backup in terms of intelligence. By intelligence I mean, someone is doing all price-related stuff, someone is concerned with quality assurance and so forth. We don't have the structure to send specialist teams for that. That's why one person has to handle everything [related to the negotiation]. Generally, that's ok, because this is our model and our self-image.... That's why fewer issues is better from the perspective of how we are organized today." SP 4, business development manager in a global law firm</p> <p>"I guess the fewer [issues] you have the easier is the negotiation. But because our draft contract contains several issues, we have no choice but go through all of them. And when we go through those documents, I mean our suppliers get them beforehand, such negotiations don't last a day or a couple of hours. We are talking about two to three days, because it is necessary to go through the whole contract with new suppliers. That's why we try to develop our suppliers, such that they already know a great deal of our contracts and we have already lived with them in such a legal regime." PU 1, senior vice-president procurement in an IT corporation</p>
"Last minute deal closer" tactic	<p>"Yesterday, for example, I had Danish customers over. They brought with them new specifications, including new acceptance terms that had not been discussed before. That way the component under discussion became more expensive. In such a case, you basically have to restart anew. We have said, 'we have to stop here,' since it was not clear whether their specifications could actually be implemented technology wise. We wrote them a new offer document, and also do not produce their order." IP 12, salesperson in an engineering corporation</p> <p>"New issues at the end of negotiation may be introduced when not all stakeholders or decision makers were involved in the prior conversations. That happens sometimes, but not out of a bargaining tactic [i.e., to gain unilateral advantage]." SP 10, partner in a global top management consultancy</p>
"Door opener" tactic	<p>"We present to the customer three exemplary project options that clearly follow the logic 'good–better–best' and that... are differentiated in many regards. The 'best' option has the purpose of influencing the customer's willingness-to-pay positively.... In that offer, we think about, 'What would we do to solve the customer's described problem to perfection?' Generally a very exhaustive project proposal would follow for which we describe how no stone would remain unturned, which methodologies we would use, etc. Then we have the entry option offer. We often use it with new customers whose potential willingness to pay we are unsure of. If we get it wrong, this entry option offer would not close the doors completely for us. However, while it contains the basic features of a meaningful consulting project to solve the customer's problem, it also lacks one or two features, considered essential by the customer. And then we have the middle option to which we would like to steer the customer. This middle option is a good balance between costs and benefits. Typically, however, it is constructed in a way to exceed the customer's willingness to pay.... With this three-tier architecture we manage to never it get it wrong in terms of willingness to pay, especially with new customers whose willingness to pay we are unsure of." SP 12, partner in a major marketing and management consultancy</p> <p>"We do customer segmentation and try to find out their willingness to pay. Therefore, we leave out some ideas and try to get very close to the customer's wishes with our modular offer system." IP 13, sales manager in an engineering company</p> <p>"Yes we do [prepare alternative offers]. This may be in the very beginning, e.g. by saying we have two different buildings, which may be suitable for you. And then he can choose one of them. Or he wants to pay a lower rent, and then we go up with the contract duration. We often prepare an offer in two alternatives. One variant may be the 'all inclusive package', the other one a low cost version. One is speedy, the other one may take a while. Especially when we don't know where he wants to go, we provide alternatives." IP 4, project manager in a project development and construction corporation</p>
"Stealth issue" tactic	<p>"We have that issue with travel costs and other expenses. With these, we include reimbursement of expenses as standard rates into our contract document, but we do not negotiate them directly. Not at all. At no point." SP 7, partner in one of the major auditing firms</p> <p>"Are travel expenses included or are they reimbursed as they arise? If I have to go to the customer, I incur costs for that, train tickets, rental cars, you name it. Generally, we have standard clauses that this is passed on to the customer." SP 11, partner in a management consultancy</p> <p>"We do not actively address expenses because this always has such a nickel-and-dime character. Because of their [low] value, we most often let them go by the board." SP 12, partner in a management consultancy</p> <p>"Part of the tender documents is our basic contracts, which may present a certain difficulty for new suppliers. We include those terms and conditions, those framework contracts. General agreement to these contracts is a first step to participate in the bidding process." PU 4, purchasing director in an IT corporation</p>

4.5. Issue characteristic tactic: Issue exaggeration

Finally, one last tactic that emerged from the data centers on the character of the issues. Table 6 provides relevant evidence.

The basic idea behind the "issue exaggeration" tactic used by both sides in a sales negotiation is to misrepresent an important feature by exaggerating it to the other party, such as potential implementation difficulties or the importance of issues on which competitors are weak or

Table 6
Data pertaining to the issue characteristic tactic.

Theme	Representative quotations
"Issue exaggeration" tactic	<p>"Yes, this can happen. This is at the offer manager's discretion, depending on how he leads his offer strategy. So he will think, 'How I am going to do this, I have to fulfill the margin, I will have to receive the first upfront payment by this and that date.' It may be that he says, 'We will really emphasize training and then have the other side negotiate us down. And then we negotiate what we really need.'" IP 1, project manager in a plant engineering company</p> <p>"Yes, sure [we sometimes exaggerate on certain issues]. And that's very important. You become better able to compromise. In the end, it becomes a little psychological. You build up a negotiation issue—possibly even in an emotional way—and then you concede on this issue and your [negotiation] partner gets the feeling that it was worth the effort on that point." IP 7, sales manager in a railway systems corporation</p> <p>"Oh yes, [we exaggerate issues]. Especially when we know that other [competing] companies cannot score [on those issues]." IP 13, sales manager in an engineering company</p> <p>"Well, I already mentioned that [we exaggerate on some points]. In conjecture with the contract document, we have a couple of issues where we have some leeway, e.g., error rates. I would say, there we enter aggressively and are able to concede a little to the supplier. On these issues we have already built in some possibilities for concessions, just as the supplier does with his costs. They also have something to concede, because they also know the game." PU 4, purchasing director in an IT corporation</p>

the party planned to concede anyway. By blowing up the significance of this issue in the eyes of the opponent, the party using the tactic can later make concessions on it, in return for more valuable concessions on other issues.

5. Discussion

The proposed model of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation offers two notable contributions. First, it advances understanding of complex B2B sales negotiations in a variety of ways. Second, it helps bridge the researcher–practitioner divide by qualifying the transferability of empirical findings from the lab to B2B marketing and sales practice. In turn, these overarching contributions suggest several managerial implications and research directions.

5.1. Boundary conditions of issue-based tactics

Two important boundary conditions affect B2B sales negotiations: industry- or business-specific negotiation patterns and buyer/seller role properties. This finding furthers our theoretical understanding of real-world negotiation processes in a variety of ways: While all types of negotiation possess a similarity at the core, B2B sales negotiations are bound by their inherent, content-related structure as well as the deeply ingrained role properties of the involved actors. Hence, the negotiators' behavioral freedom is constrained in a similar way across different types of B2B sales negotiation.

5.1.1. Business- and industry-specific issue subset patterns

The two distinct issue subset patterns in industrial and service project businesses, which also are similar in their gestalt, reveal new understanding of real-world B2B negotiation processes. These insights became possible only through the purposeful sampling (Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Pratt, 2009) and the wide temporal perspective on negotiation, defined to range from initial attempts to solve a customer problem to legally binding contracts (Geiger, 2016).

This finding also shrinks the researcher–practitioner gulf, because it shows that issue interdependence—such that the resolution of one issue and its related economic impact depends on or influences the resolution of other issues (Raiffa, 1982; Rubin & Brown, 1975)—shapes real-world negotiation processes, such as in the form of issue subsets. However, issue interdependence rarely arises in laboratory settings in negotiation research (e.g., Pruitt & Lewis, 1975; cf. Backhaus, van Doorn, & Wilken, 2008; Geiger, 2014). Empirical findings about the benefits of simultaneous versus sequential bargaining (e.g., Balakrishnan et al., 1993; Fershtman, 1990; Patton & Balakrishnan, 2012) thus demand some caution, because parties are only partially free in setting their agenda. As the current study reveals, the type of business at least partially dictates the basic negotiation structure. These findings also resonate with international negotiation literature, such as Watkins' (2003, p. 155) proposal that

The ideal way to divide a complex negotiation is to identify sub-negotiation modules that are both internally interdependent and externally independent. Doing so calls for identifying ... subsets of issues such that each of the resulting modules has significant potential for value creation through cross-issue trades. Unless the modular negotiations are completely independent, the results must be integrated in a separate negotiation in the end.

This negotiation process structure naturally delimits the use of issue-based tactics and strategies. Negotiators can apply them within each subset or at the end, when open issues from all subsets get discussed simultaneously. In this sense, the general shape of the negotiation process creates a significant boundary condition for the use of issue-based tactics. Less complex B2B sales negotiation situations, such as in the product business (Backhaus & Mühlfeld, 2005), may exhibit a more straightforward agenda with few issues, so these boundary conditions could be less applicable. However, most complex negotiation domains (e.g., collective bargaining) appear to require some recognition of the subject-inherent logic to the issue structure, as a condition sine qua non for defining and understanding strategies or tactics.

5.1.2. Buyer and seller role properties

The findings of this research show that the buyer generally assumes control over the agenda, and sellers take the initiative when they can. In the relational selling literature, this finding is well-known and discussed under the notion of adaptive selling (e.g., McFarland et al., 2006; Reid et al., 2002). Thus, some tactics are only open to buyers, and others are exclusively used by sellers. Recent marketing research offers some theorizing about different role properties in B2B buyer–seller relationships (e.g., Geiger et al., 2012) or generally in marketing negotiations (Bagchi, Koukova, Gurmani, Nagarajan, & Oza, 2016), but this differentiation is rare in negotiation textbooks or empirical negotiation research. This gap is surprising; evidence shows that buyers and sellers perform differently even in lab settings (e.g., Neale et al., 1987; Zerres, Hüffmeier, Freund, Backhaus, & Hertel, 2013). Thus, research into buyer–seller and other important role distinctions, as found in this field study, may help bridge the researcher–practitioner divide in negotiation research even more effectively.

For managers, these role properties have important implications for both preparation and negotiation. Buyers should prepare general issue order tactics for their unilateral advantage ("save the best for last," "get straight to the point"). Sellers often must rely on more subtle tactics ("sneak in," "get commitment first") and hope for the chance to apply them. Sellers also should develop a comprehensive agenda as a backup, to avoid difficulties in implementation due to oversights during the negotiation. On a more general level, the present research indicates that managerial implications offered by lab research, without regard for buyer and seller roles, need to be checked whether they fit the particular role characteristics.

5.2. Functions of issue-based tactics: Tactical advantage and safeguarding

This study shows that negotiation issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiations fulfill two broad functions: tactical advantage and safeguarding, where the latter encompasses more than integrative bargaining as discussed in the literature (e.g., Raiffa, 1982). A tactic may also address both functions in parallel, which reflects the mixed-motive nature of negotiations (Thompson, 2012).

Not surprisingly, tactical advantages are a primary goal associated with using issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation. By creating a tactical advantage, one party tries to increase its economic profit, in the present or future (e.g., Eliashberg et al., 1995; Wilken et al., 2010), possibly through distributive bargaining, as discussed in negotiation textbooks (e.g., Lewicki et al., 2010; Raiffa, 1982; Thompson, 2012). In contrast, the tactical function of safeguarding, as emerged from the present study, suggests a wider conceptualization. Safeguarding can help a buying organization faced with many potential suppliers save time; it can help suppliers stay in this competitive game. Thus, an agenda's safeguarding function mirrors the role-specific goals that define most B2B sales negotiations: finding the most suitable partner efficiently (buyer) versus securing the deal (seller) (Anderson et al., 2009; Sarkis & Talluri, 2002). Safeguarding also might mean creating options for (win–win) agreements. This connotation comes close to integrative bargaining (Raiffa, 1982), though the present study also highlights an additional facet for B2B marketing practice: implementation. That is, an agenda reflects how well parties anticipate eventualities and their resolution, which they seek to agree on and thus pave the way for the project's smooth implementation. Cross-checking internal approval requirements and hierarchies against the negotiation agenda thus is of critical importance to many selling organizations.

5.3. Negotiation issue-based tactics

In accordance with these boundary conditions and tactical functions, this research identifies an extensive set of negotiation issue-based tactics, as they occur in complex B2B sales negotiations. Depending on their characteristics, they reflect the order, number, or character of the issues. This categorization of issue-based tactics provides a useful typology to the messiness of twists, turns, and tactics in real-world negotiations and thus marks a step toward greater theoretical clarity. Some tactics may overlap to a certain degree, but presenting and discussing them in the main text as separate tactics helps clarify B2B sales negotiations. This section classifies them according to whether each tactic serves a single or dual function.

5.3.1. Tactics with dual functions

Two pairs of opposing tactics reflect traditional theoretical discussions in negotiation literature (e.g., Pruitt & s, 1981; Rubin & Brown, 1975) that remain practically relevant but rarely appear in modern research. Regarding the order of issues, the “save the best for last” and “get straight to the point” tactics are fundamentally different approaches. Rubin and Brown (1975, p. 148) describe these options and conclude with the realization: “Unfortunately, there is little or no empirical evidence by which to evaluate the relative usefulness of the above alternatives.” The present data suggest that parties to a B2B sales negotiation value the “save the best for last” tactic for its ability to advance the negotiation process, by building trust and satisfaction before taking on more difficult issues. This tactic underscores the importance of good interpersonal relations between bargainers (e.g., Greenhalgh & Chapman, 1998; Palmatier, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 2007). Sellers seem especially eager to adopt this tactic, because in competitive situations, they remain in the process longer and may be able to gain some commitment from the buying organization by continuing the negotiation. In this respect, the “save the best for last” tactic also represents a “get commitment first” tactic. In contrast, buyers tend to prefer the “get straight to the point” tactic, especially when multiple suppliers are

lining up to negotiate and time is at a premium. Similar to procurement auctions (e.g., Jap, 2007), this tactic aims to find the best-suited supply partner quickly. The best tactic for any particular negotiation may vary in terms of individual or joint profit, as well as socio-economic outcomes, which represents an important question for further research and may thus also help close the practitioner–researcher gap.

A similar duality emerges in relation to the number of issues. According to “the more the merrier” tactic, more issues generate more possibilities for logrolling (Geiger & Hüffmeier, 2014; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Sebenius, 1983) and thus increase the bargaining zone and the potential for integrative agreement (Raiffa, 1982). The present research also suggests that more, compared with fewer, issues may benefit one party, because more issues lead to less transparency, more balanced relative importance of performance and cost- or price-related topics, and a signaling function. Managers should consider these potentially beneficial aspects when preparing for B2B sales negotiations. The “less is more” tactic is the logical opposite, and it reflects theoretical discussions about limited human information processing capacity (Geiger & Hüffmeier, 2014; Pruitt & s, 1981; Rubin & Brown, 1975), which can easily become exhausted by too many issues in a negotiation. One respondent to this study explicitly stated that he found discussing fewer issues more satisfying, which resonates with Naquin's (2003) finding of a positive effect of fewer issues on negotiator satisfaction in two lab studies. It is also in line with the wider B2B sales literature that sees buyer satisfaction as one important outcome of a selling encounter (e.g., Plouffe et al., 2014). Which of these two opposing tactics is more effective, in terms of economic negotiation outcomes, seems to depend on what the negotiators want. Preliminary empirical evidence by Geiger and Hüffmeier (2014) suggests that when fewer issues are negotiated, agreements become relatively more win–win.

The “door opener offer” tactic—or offering at least two quite different proposals at the start of the negotiation—also speaks to at least two literature streams. In complex B2B transactions, this tactic likely is an effective, individualized, and widely applicable move to elicit a customer's willingness to pay. Most elicitation methods (e.g., Sichtmann, Wilken, & Diamantopoulos, 2011) are limited in their ability to handle widely divergent offer scopes, so this tactic might be very effective for sales managers who need to approximate a customer's preferences (see also Sigauw, Kimes, & Gassenheimer, 2003) and remain in the negotiation process. During the negotiation, the “door opener offer” tactic resembles a trial-and-error process to find integrative agreement (Kelley & Schenitzky, 1972) and may signal the party's own priorities implicitly (Adair et al., 2007). It is thus similar to multiple, equivalent, simultaneous offers (MESO; Medvec, Leonardelli, Galinsky, & Claussen-Schulz, 2005), in that it allows the negotiation opponent to choose how to proceed, which leaves the proposer in a more favorable light (Thompson, 2012). Additional advantages of MESOs, such as being able to persist and overcome concession aversion on the other side (Thompson, 2012), also may apply here. The relation of the “door opener offer” tactic to discussions of first offers and anchoring (e.g., Gunia, Swaab, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2013) may be an interesting avenue for research, thereby also helping to close the researcher–practitioner gap. Since the “door opener offer” tactic was mentioned only by few informants and did not feature in prior literature, it may be a valuable addition to most sales managers' negotiation skill set who haven't considered it yet. Evidence from recent research–practice transfer workshops with sales practitioners seems to corroborate this assertion.

5.3.2. Tactics with a single function

The present research has identified six issue-based tactics that predominantly serve a single tactical function each, either unilateral advantage or safeguarding. The “last minute deal embellishment” tactic, which resembles “the nibble” tactic described in prior literature (Lewicki et al., 2010; Shell, 1999), aims to gain a last unilateral advantage. In line with prior research, it is regarded as morally questionable. If used too often, it might poison the relationship. Moving beyond existing literature, the present study suggests that buying organizations

nearly exclusively use this tactic, likely reflecting the present state of most B2B markets, as buyer markets (e.g., Kelly & Gosman, 2000).

In contrast, the “last minute deal closer” tactic has a pure safeguarding function. Raising a new issue at the very end of negotiation might serve solely to close the deal or ensure its smooth implementation. It thus may reflect the complexity of the B2B sales negotiations considered herein, with regard to both the total number of issues and the people involved.

The “issue exaggeration” tactic is the only one that pertains to the inherent characteristics of the negotiation. In B2B sales negotiations, both sides use it regularly to gain some leeway for concessions. Although it appears somewhat similar to the “bogey” or “phony issue” tactic described in prior literature (Lewicki et al., 2010; Shell, 1999), it lacks any negative, morally questionable connotation. Instead, B2B sales and purchasing professionals seem to regard it as a common tactic to gain bargaining latitude—as a part of the game, which they expect the other party to use too. Thus, they do not fear negative consequences, such as losing face or gaining a reputation as an untrustworthy bargainer.

A tactic not mentioned in prior literature is the “stealth issue” tactic. By slipping an issue into a legally binding contract document, both parties come to a tacit agreement about the stealth issue. Its application might reflect industry practices (e.g., travel expenses in the professional services industry) or questionable behavior, such as when the receiving party agrees to something it would not have accepted had the issue been discussed openly. Whether it can be implemented successfully remains for future research to determine. Similarly, the “sneak in” tactic, as sometimes used by sellers, depends on the other party’s attention. It is likely to succeed when the opposing party barely notices it. Whether this move is clever or may damage a negotiator’s reputation also may be subject to debate. Because only few respondents actually mentioned this tactic and it also did not appear in the literature yet, considering it and adding it to a sales manager’s tactical repertoire may be a valuable managerial implication.

Finally, the effect of the “get commitment first” tactic used by sellers depends on commitment and consistency heuristics (Cialdini, 1993). By applying it, sellers try to gain a commitment to their offering, on which they hope the buyer will act at the end of the negotiation, when they discuss price and related topics. The issues used to gain commitment tend to be factual or technological, so they help increase the seller’s persistence in the negotiation. Further research should define the circumstances in which a “get commitment first” tactic is most successful.

6. Limitations and conclusion

This proposed model of issue-based tactics in B2B sales negotiation has emerged from qualitative data, gained from multiple industrial and service project businesses. This business type is characterized by substantial freedom with regard to the number and nature of issues up for negotiation. The purposeful sampling for revelation sought to gain the richest possible data to discover issue-based tactics, their use, and their boundary conditions. The resulting model suggests that this endeavor has been successful.

However, this research also has its limitations. Using an exploration oriented, qualitative methodology, it managed to discover new tactics and explore their intended effects. However, whether the newly found tactics and the ones that have been discussed in a rather fragmentary way in the literature before are actually effective is out of scope of this research. Both economic and socio-emotional outcomes, such as satisfaction, should be analyzed in subsequent studies. Their effectiveness may also depend on the way that negotiation partners’ use of tactics align or work against each other (e.g., McFarland et al., 2006). The whole complex of questions related to the discovered tactics’ usefulness and effects thus represent interesting avenues for future research, which should be more confirmatory in nature.

Whether other issue-based tactics or important boundary conditions might arise from different data, may be another open question.

In this study, respondents came predominantly from the selling side. It cannot be ruled out that a sample consisting of purchasing professionals predominantly or exclusively would shed a different light on the research questions in focus. Additional research could address this.

Finally, the choice of sample that stems purely from the project business may also be considered a shortcoming of this paper. In this business type very individualized, partly extremely complex transactions prevail. This complexity was helpful in discovering a wide array of negotiation issue-based tactics. However, it may also cast doubt on which parts of the present model of issue-based tactics can be applied in simpler transaction environments. Other issue subset patterns, or a lack of patterns, might emerge in some business settings. In seller markets, buyer–seller role properties could have a less pronounced role or even reverse. Not all the issue-based tactics included in this model likely apply identically in other negotiation situations either.

However, the overall insights of this model (i.e., relevance of boundary conditions, functions) and its core contents (i.e., tactics) likely apply to most B2B sales negotiations and thus can help managers become more effective negotiators, by considering and applying tactics that did not feature in their negotiation skill set previously.

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Appendix A. Interview guide

- *General and organizational points:*
 - Interview will be audiotaped if you agree
 - Your name and your company’s name will only be used anonymously
 - If you agree, we would like to use quotes from the interview
 - You will receive an aggregated executive summary of the findings from this research project
- *Procedure and type of questions:*
 - We will ask you very open questions with the goal of creating a maximum of latitude in your answers. This is to avoid any influence on our part in formulating your answers. We are conducting an exploratory study and want to learn more about your experience and expertise in your negotiations.
- *Explanation of what we mean by “negotiation issue” as the object of the present study:*
 - Negotiation issues = all items, topics, aspects, or conditions where parties may have conflicting interests and that need to be solved to come to an agreement
 - Example: Price of an offering or a product (but also different, potentially less obvious items or topics)

Introduction (Information on your company and your own professional experience).

To better understand the background of the negotiations you conduct, please briefly describe your department and your function in the company, as well as the customers (suppliers) of your company.

- Offerings/products
- Size, FTE, etc.
- Number of customers, turnover, number of salespeople/size of purchasing department)
- Type of customers/suppliers in terms of size, industry, etc.

Please briefly describe your educational and professional background and your experience.

- Years in the industry, in the current position

What is your negotiation experience?

- Number of negotiations conducted (all in all, per month)
- Trainings?

When answering the following questions, please think about a typical negotiation situation with a customer (supplier) on a new project, which you remember well. Please also add experiences from other negotiations, which deviate from the typical example (no re-negotiation!).

Part 1: Initiation of the negotiation/the transaction

1. How is the first contact between you and your counterpart established?

- Who is the first contact person?
- Who initiates the first contact: selling or buying side?
- Which content does the first information exchange have?

2. After making first contact, how does the first offer come about, and what issues are contained in such a first offer?

- Shape of first offer: Request for proposal by client, offer document by supplier?

- Process over time: information exchange, conversations, emails, etc.?
- Are there formal guidelines/documents to be followed?

Part 2: Negotiation preparation

3. How do you prepare for a negotiation?

- Standardized vs. customer- (supplier-)/industry-specific preparation
- Are very important issues/aspects explicitly identified?
- Are preferences and priorities compared and scored?
- Are alternative offers or proposals prepared (e.g., stripped down offering), in case the preferred bundle does not lead to agreement?

Part 3: Negotiation

IMPORTANT: After each answer in this section, ask for effect on negotiation outcomes (e.g., pie enlargement/agreement/negotiation profit/business relationship/personal relationship/saving face/emotions/idea generation).

Ex: "Why do you conduct a formal negotiation?"

4. Do you conduct formal negotiations? If so, how does it unfold?

- In person, pre-planned meeting (not via telephone or email)

5. Which people take part in the negotiations (both sides)?

- Which influence does this have on the negotiated issues and the course of action?
- With regard to that question, would you prefer more or less people sitting at the table?

6. Which issues are negotiated?

- Pre-determined issues (agenda)? How determined? By whom?
- Pre-determined order?
- Number of issues?

7. How do you conduct a negotiation with regard to the negotiation issues?

- Guideline by company?
- Influence through bargaining power?

- When are the different issues negotiated? Why?
- Is the importance of some issues exaggerated? Why?
- Are issues treated alone or in packages? Why?
- Are new issues brought in to create packages? Why?

8. Does it happen that new issues pop up though the negotiation seemed to be finalized? How do you handle such a situation?

- E.g., last minute throw ins (consciously/unconsciously forgotten)?

9. Are new issues included through (formal) contracts?

- Terms and conditions
- Contingency clauses?
- In case of unexpected events: Safeguards? Why?

Conclusion (Miscellaneous remarks and conclusion)

- Would you like to add something important? Do you have more remarks about the negotiation issues, how they are brought to the table, which effect they have?

Acquisition: Do you know other potential interview partners (e.g., colleagues from purchasing/sales [other function]; past or current business partners)?

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