



# The Role of the Lawyer in Complex Negotiations: Lessons from a Business Case

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## Abstract

This case study explores the complexities of negotiation in a business setting, highlighting the importance of strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication. A seasoned lawyer recounts their experience negotiating a Build-to-Suit (BTS) contract with a new investor, navigating unusual demands, and finding creative solutions to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. The outcome led to a successful partnership, with the investor becoming the company's largest partner. The study offers valuable insights into the negotiation process, emphasizing the need to understand the other party's interests, weigh pros and cons, and manage unfavorable situations. The findings provide practical lessons for professionals engaged in complex business negotiations.

## Keywords:

Business negotiation; Type II negotiation; Build-to-Suit (BTS) contract.

**How to cite:** Teodoro, M. do C., & Dias, M. (2025). The Role of the Lawyer in Complex Negotiations: Lessons from a Business Case. *GPH-International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 8(05), 01-11. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15511234>



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Negotiation is critical to business operations, enabling companies to form partnerships, secure deals, and drive growth (Dias et al., 2023; Dias, 2023; Dias, 2023a; Dias, 2023b; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Kissinger, 1969; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Navarro & Dias, 2024; Santos & Dias, 2024). Effective negotiation requires a deep understanding of the parties involved, their interests, and the context in which the negotiation occurs (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Salacuse, 2003, 2006; Shell, 2006). In today's fast-paced and increasingly complex business environment, navigating negotiations successfully is more crucial than ever (Delgado & Dias, 2025; Gasparini et al., 2025; Oliveira, Souza & Dias, 2025; Scheuer & Dias, 2025; Smejoff et al., 2025; Soliva & Dias, 2025; Valle, Trindade & Dias, 2025). This case study explores the intricacies of negotiation in a business setting, highlighting the importance of strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication in a Type II negotiation (Dias, 2020).

Negotiation is a "process of communication by which two or more parties seek to advance their interests or those of the persons they represent through an agreement on the desired future action" (Salacuse, 2003, p. 11). BTS negotiation has attracted academic interest recently (Dias, 2023; Dias, 2023a; Dias, 2023b; Dias et al., 2023; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Kissinger, 1969; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Navarro & Dias, 2024; Pruitt, 1981; Raiffa, Richardson & Metcalfe, 2002; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Santos & Dias, 2024). The case describes a family-owned business in the food industry, which has been expanding rapidly across Brazil. The group's legal coordinator manages all contracts related to Build-to-Suit (BTS) leasing.

Research's subfields of negotiation comprise: (a) trade in a social setting (Dias, 2016; Schatzki & Coffey, 1981); (b) retail operations bargaining (Dias, 2023; Dias, Lafraia, Schmitz, et al., 2024; Dias, Leitão, Batista & Medeiros, 2022; Dias, Pereira, Teles & Lafraia, 2023; Dias, Pereira, Vieira, et al., 2023; Dias, Toledo, Silva, et al., 2022; Santos & Dias, 2024; Valente & Dias, 2023); (c) the procedure for dialog among parties (Acuff, 1993; Salacuse, 2003, 2006; Shell, 2006); (d) managing conflicts (Zartman, 1988); (e) procedure for making choices (Bazerman & Moore, 1994). As shown in Figure 1, this research represents the negotiating category using the Four Type Negotiation Matrix (Dias, 2020).



Figure 1 The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix

Source: Dias, 2020. Reprinted under permission.

BTS contracts are particularly complex, involving significant financial investments and long-term commitments. These contracts require careful negotiation to ensure that all parties' interests are aligned and potential risks are mitigated. In this case study, the experience in negotiating a BTS contract with a new investor is shared, highlighting the challenges that arose and the strategies employed to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. This experience has provided valuable lessons that can be applied to other business negotiations.

The negotiation process is often fraught with challenges, including conflicting interests, power imbalances, and cultural differences. However, with the right approach, negotiation can also be a powerful tool for building relationships, driving innovation, and creating value. Through this case study, the case aims to demonstrate the importance of effective negotiation in business and provide insights into the strategies and techniques that can be used to achieve successful outcomes.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study design to explore the complexities of negotiation in a business setting. Following Yin (2004), a case study approach is deemed suitable for investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, allowing for an in-depth examination of the negotiation process. This study employs an inductive rationale, where observations and insights from the case are used to derive broader themes and patterns. As an exploratory study, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the negotiation process rather than testing hypotheses or establishing causality. The research philosophy underpinning this study is interpretive, recognizing that reality is socially constructed and that meaning is derived from the experiences and perceptions of the individuals involved (Saunders et al., 2009). It includes the direct participation of one of the authors, which is acknowledged and reflected upon throughout the analysis. The case study approach allows for a rich and detailed narrative to emerge, providing insights into the negotiation process and the strategies employed to achieve a successful outcome. The data is examined and interpreted through thematic analysis,

revealing patterns and themes that shed light on the complexities of negotiation in a business setting.

### 3. BACKGROUND

The company's president held a meeting with the lawyer and the directors of the commercial and financial area, informing the lawyer that a new investor was looking to partner with us. However, unlike other *BTS* contracts already made, this investor had several unusual claims not covered by the standard we used, and some were even negative. On the other hand, the company had a massive interest in closing the partnership deal since expectations were high about the number of projects offered by the other party. Therefore, the president wanted the lawyer to participate in the final meeting with the investor to negotiate and align the proposed conditions and present favorable alternatives to the company. After a few days, the long-awaited meeting was held.

### 5. PLANNING THE NEGOTIATION

Regarding the preparation beforehand negotiations, several aspects were observed in this negotiation. First, it was a collaborative negotiation where the parties had a common interest in closing the partnership agreement. For this to happen, they needed to study the other party, present different proposals, make concessions, and eventually not give in to pressure and hide perspectives.

#### **Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA):**

The Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA) - we could be responsible for the payment of all fees equivalent to the acquisition of the property to be leased through the inclusion of this amount in the percentage equivalent to the investment; however, until the amount spent by the investor is reached; The IPTU tax would be due only from the inauguration of the establishment; the company would not be responsible for choosing the contractor that would do the work; The landlord could not request the property until the end of the lease.

#### **Options:**

The options that the company initially had were: the monthly rent payments would have to include all the fees equivalent to the acquisition of the property (deed, registration, tax) to be leased during the entire contractual period, thus running corrections and interest on these expenses; the company should pay the IPTU<sup>1</sup> tax from the moment the deal was closed, still at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which is a type of pre-contract, and not from the beginning of the lease; the company would be responsible for choosing the contractor that would do the work; The lessor could request the property subject to the lease from the third year of the contract, without the imposition of any penalty, including a fine.

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<sup>1</sup>IPTU (Urban Property and Land Tax) is a municipal tax regulated by the ordinary law of each Municipality and the law of the Federal District. This tax plays an important role in the municipal budget, often appearing as municipalities' primary revenue source.

### **Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA):**

On the other hand, the company's alternatives if the contract was not closed were either looking for a new investor with purchasing power equivalent to this one—which was quite complicated—or the company itself "financing" the new ventures, which would require extensive use of our group's financial reserve and result in an uninteresting return in a short time.

## **6. CLOSING THE DEAL**

The commercial agreement was closed under the following conditions: The company would reimburse the investor within 10 (ten) days from the payment of the property acquisition fees and upon presentation of equivalent proofs so that the respective fees would not be included in the rental amounts; The IPTU would be the responsibility of the company from the emission of its possession on the site; the company could, by mere liberality, appoint a contractor for the execution and construction of the work, but without any responsibility for such indication or the service provided; and the landlord could request the property only from the 9th. (ninth) year of the lease, upon payment of the company's revenue for the contract's last 12 (twelve) months.

## **7. LESSONS LEARNED**

There were many lessons learned, but, for sure, among the most significant are perceiving *the timing*, studying the strategies that will be exposed or hidden during a negotiation, never giving up on our goals, and, at the same time, knowing how to weigh the existing pros and cons; discerning what is important to our client; managing unfavorable situations; not being afraid to "compete" and of course, always respect the underlying principles, interests, and the other party involved in the process. Finally, differently, and already with the experience acquired throughout my career and particularly in this company I currently work for, I would demand less from the parties, be less anxious, sometimes be a little less conflicting, and listen to the other party with greater empathy.

## **9. IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

This case study highlights the complexities of negotiation in a business setting, emphasizing the importance of strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication. The experience of negotiating a Build-to-Suit (BTS) contract demonstrates the value of understanding the other party's interests, identifying creative solutions, and building strong relationships. The study's findings have implications for business professionals, negotiation training programs, and business strategy, underscoring the need for a collaborative approach to negotiation that drives growth and success. By adopting a nuanced and adaptable approach to negotiation, businesses can achieve mutually beneficial agreements and build strong partnerships.

The findings of this study have significant implications for business professionals engaged in complex negotiations. The importance of strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication cannot be overstated. Professionals must be able to navigate complex situations, identify creative solutions, and build strong relationships with their counterparts.

By adopting a collaborative approach, professionals can create value for all parties involved and achieve mutually beneficial agreements. The study also highlights the importance of understanding the other party's interests and needs. By taking a nuanced approach to negotiation, professionals can better anticipate and respond to the needs of their counterparts, ultimately leading to more successful outcomes. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the value of flexibility and adaptability in negotiation. Professionals must be willing to adjust their approach as circumstances change and be open to creative solutions that meet the needs of all parties.

The implications of this study also extend to the development of negotiation training programs. By incorporating the lessons learned from this study, training programs can better equip professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate complex negotiations. Specifically, training programs should focus on developing strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication skills. Additionally, programs should provide professionals with the opportunity to practice and apply these skills in real-world scenarios. Ultimately, the findings of this study can inform business strategy and decision-making. By understanding the complexities of negotiation and the importance of strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication, businesses can develop more effective negotiation strategies that drive growth and success. By adopting a collaborative approach to negotiation, businesses can build strong relationships with their partners, suppliers, and customers, ultimately leading to increased revenue, profitability, and competitiveness. There are implications in other settings, such as buyer-seller negotiations (Dias, Waltz & Oliveira, 2021; Dias, 2020a; Dias, 2020b; Dias, 2020c; Dias, Duzert & Lopes, 2021); family business settings (Dias & Lopes, 2020; Dias & Lopes, 2021; Dias, 2021; Dias & Navarro, 2020; Dias, Lopes & Teles, 2020; Dias, Lopes & Duzert, 2020; Dias, Lopes, Cavalcanti & Golfetto, 2020; Dias & Silva, 2021; Dias, Netto, Oliveira et al., 2021; Dias, Andrade, Sotoriva, et al., 2021; Dias & Lopes, 2021; Sartori et al., 2020).

## 10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the end of the story is that, currently, this investor is the company's largest partner, is present in 04 (four) projects already in operation and more, and has signed the negotiation of another 07 (seven) new BTS contracts. Moreover, both sides expect this partnership to prosper more and more, given the parties' mutual satisfaction. This case study highlighted the complexities of negotiation in a business setting, emphasizing the importance of strategic thinking, collaboration, and effective communication. The experience of negotiating a Build-to-Suit (BTS) contract demonstrates the value of understanding the other party's interests, identifying creative solutions, and building strong relationships. The study provides valuable insights into the negotiation process, which is helpful to business negotiators, lawyers, scholars, and other practitioners, offering practical lessons for professionals engaged in complex business negotiations. By adopting a collaborative approach and understanding the nuances of negotiation, businesses can achieve mutually beneficial agreements and drive growth and success.

## 11. FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

This research is limited to specific scenarios, which would restrict its generalizability to other situations. Furthermore, the study is based on the experience of one attorney, which can add prejudice and restrict the extent of conclusions. Moreover, the research mainly emphasizes cooperative negotiation and does not thoroughly evaluate all negotiating techniques.

Future studies might investigate the efficacy of many negotiating techniques in diverse settings, including the influence of technology on negotiation results and procedures. In addition, insight would be looking at the significance of mental and physical readiness for negotiators and how this affects the results of their negotiations. Furthermore, interesting study topics may include learning about cross-cultural negotiation and creating consistent models to assist negotiations in companies and organizations.

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