

Research on the Principles and Actual Alternative Proposals for a Commercial Negotiation Approach

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Abstract:

Research Question: In supplier-customer relations, negotiations are pivotal for shaping collaboration and outcomes. This study has a dual focus: first, it explores modern techniques that favour creative reciprocity over traditional price talks; second, it details alternative approaches for reaching mutually beneficial agreements. The overarching questions guiding this study are: "What are the principles for obtaining alternative proposals to commercial approaches to negotiation?" and "What are concrete alternative proposals to the commercial negotiation approach?" The goal is to transition from conventional to more integrative negotiation methods that benefit both parties.

Purpose: The research aims to raise awareness of supplier-customer collaboration and the importance of mutual goals, particularly in joint development and tech-sharing contexts. It introduces a modern approach to commercial agreements that shifts focus from short-term price talks to long-term mutual benefits.

Method: The first part of the research defines the analytical tool for text interpretation, backed by literature review. The second part presents findings from semi-structured interviews and observations, analysed via thematic network analysis. This approach provides a thorough understanding of supplier-customer negotiation dynamics.

Results: The results of the qualitative research are presented using thematic network analysis, with in-depth analysis and explanation. Findings are summarized descriptively, offering principles for negotiators and specific alternative proposals to traditional negotiation methods. This approach provides nuanced insights for commercial negotiations.

Organization: The study raises awareness of the drawbacks of traditional price negotiations while providing guidelines for modern commercial deals. Negotiators can use these modern alternatives to achieve their goals, reducing organizational constraints and enhancing reputation.

Society: The entire society can benefit from mutual organizational understanding, resolving negotiation conflicts, and reaching agreements. This not only enhances individual organizational reputations but also contributes to overall social cohesion and economic stability.

Originality: The research suggests replacing traditional price negotiations with modern commercial agreements in the supplier-customer relationship, into more collaborative interactions.

Limitations / further research: The research is limited to the sources cited in the literature and interviews with four different profiles. The study is based on the mutual cooperation of the buyer and the supplier in a long-term partnership, thereby excluding the behaviours of the traditional commercial negotiation approach.

Keywords: organization, creativity, commercial negotiations, alternative proposals buyer, supplier.

1 Introduction

As creativity and communication skills become increasingly necessary in modern society to achieve outstanding results, negotiating, and creating appropriate agreements for all stakeholders is also essential to an organization's effectiveness and impact. There are employees in an organization who have a creative mindset and a talent for coming up with creative proposals. The creativity that an organization displays through its employees and their skills can be applied to a broader field (e.g., industry). Creativity in negotiation is an area that leads to agreement, progress, and achievement of the set goals of the organization. Negotiation is the interaction of at least two people seeking a common understanding. Therefore, we conclude that creativity is a defining characteristic of successful negotiators. We assume that there is a fine line between creative negotiation and mere negotiation. We also assume that the negotiating parties have related interests or even goals. We start from the recognition that today's organizations (in the customer-supplier relationship) need more cooperation in sharing innovation platforms, technology, development, and knowledge. Aware of the coexistence and shared power in the appearance in the global market, we assume that modern negotiation principles and modern alternative proposals for the commercial negotiation approach replace the classical commercial negotiation. Fisher, Ury and Patton (1998, p. 108–110) attribute people-centeredness and price to the classical negotiation approach and the principle-based negotiation approach in outcome orientation, i.e., separating people's problems from the issue.

Not all negotiations are successful, and some end in failure. Our final assumption is that modern and creative negotiators have an innovative and creative approach to negotiation that is different from classical negotiation. Here we establish the primary goal of the research, which is *to explore principles for obtaining alternative proposals for commercial negotiations*. While identifying principles for obtaining alternative negotiation proposals for commercial negotiations, we aim to identify specific proposals from creative negotiators that are present at key moments during negotiations. As such, we move to the second part of the research *to explore specific alternative proposals to the commercial negotiation approach*. To obtain concrete suggestions, in addition to reviewing the existing literature, we will conduct interviews with four negotiation experts who are responsible for the professional conduct of negotiations

on a daily basis. We present the qualitative research, based on semi-structured interviews and personal records, using thematic networks (Attrdie-Stirling, 2001, p. 390 ; Roblek, 2009, p. 58).

to analyse the data. A thematic network is a common form of analysis in qualitative research that explores patterns of meaning in qualitative data. We assumed for this study that negotiators creativity is positively related to negotiation success. Thus, we conclude that creativity contributes to more successful integration of the organization into the broader social environment. The literature review examined existing literature that discusses the meaning and interpretation of the research concepts described in online databases (ScienceDirect, ProQuest, Web of Science, and EBSCO) and commonly used books on negotiation.

2 Theoretical framework

Each person perceives life from one's perspective and thus offers the world one's unique imprint. Whether this imprint is creative for us is our subjective assessment. However, we know how to judge whether it works well for us or not. Some use their creative outlets and unleash them through challenges to succeed. When we tell or explain something to someone, we pass on knowledge and create new knowledge. This semantic connection reminds the interlocutor to consider the words communicated to them. Urbanc (1996, p. 105) stated that in addition to the innate ability to think, creativity and organization are necessary for effective outcomes. Our potentials are creation, knowledge, and skills that are always important in creating a personal brand. If we want to be noticed, we need to know our potentials well and develop them creatively. Often, potentials are hidden beneath a person's formally acquired knowledge and skills. If we want to achieve goals persistently, we must strive to make our creativity recognizable, helpful and at the same time encouraging. Možina and Kovač (2006, p. 84) wrote that knowledge transfer is successful when the actors involved have a genuine interest in it. When we show creativity, we are more responsive, efficient, distinguishable, and have an advantage with which to establish ourselves in a particular work environment, social setting, and organization. Urbanc (1996, p. 110) added that if you want to create something, you should do it; otherwise, creativity will fade and burn out because the effect of the enormous and unexpressed creativity of the creators will be erased. Informal knowledge is associated with creativity, and we use it when we approach new or unique tasks, such as negotiation. Grepperud and Pedersen (2020, p. 12) stated that negotiations are situations in which the parties involved are interested in cooperation but reject the terms of cooperation. Today's market situations require more creativity (Kim & Shin, 2019, p. 152). The global supply chain is becoming more complicated, and creative agreements between organizations are being forced.

Sawa (2020, p. 1) wrote that negotiation is a key element of many situations in organizations, politics, and diplomacy that involve a degree of uncertainty about outcomes. It happens that negotiators get into a situation where there is no agreement. Lenarčič (2014, p. 47) discusses that negotiators contribute to a better image and more respect for the organizations they represent. In exploring the impact of negotiation, Lenarčič and Brčar (2014, p. 97) added that a negotiator represents the organization and its cultural environment. Stachoa et al. (2017, p. 310)

added that the desired organizational culture must perform individual human resource management activities. The buyer is willing to invest a certain amount for the purchase. Shalvi et al. (2013, p. 46) added that a buyer does not deviate from the framework of the purchase price and therefore is more inclined to withdraw from the negotiation than the supplier.

Difficulties or obstacles in the negotiation force negotiators to slow down the pace to get a holistic view. Förster, Friedman and Liberman (2004, p. 186) so wrote that in such a situation, we change our view of the situation, i.e., from a broader perspective, "the forest," to a more focused perspective, "the tree," which helps to solve problems analytically. Therefore, we can conclude that negotiation barriers are a significant challenge for negotiators and force them to be creative. Nikolic et al. (2015, p. 141) suggest using SWOT analysis to create strategies which is a widely used tool to reduce weaknesses and avoid threats. In negotiations where the strategy fails, negotiators acknowledge the failure and are forced to look for alternative proposals. The latter solution inhibits creativity as it usually does not achieve the initially planned goals. Ukil and Akkas (2017, p. 37) also suggested the involvement of middle managers to implement strategies more effectively. In a complicated negotiation situation, one of the negotiators should first have a simple conversation, maintaining optimism and asking challenging questions at the right time to not jeopardize the constructive negotiation. Dannals et al. (2021, p. 2) examined more than 2,500 pieces of data from individual negotiations to examine relationships in negotiations as a function of gender and power. They found that men seemed to have more authoritative power, while women seemed to have the strength of preparations and alternative scenarios. Negotiators may act emotionally in a desire for a better outcome. Molek, de Jagar, and Pucelj (2023) found that the individualistic nature of hero culture and silo mentality suggests issues such as lack of information sharing, poor collaboration and communication barriers across departments and teams. This could create challenges in negotiating effectively within an organization, as interests are not aligned, priorities compete, and perspectives remain narrow. However, we can say that this is also a tactic that is not always constructive or creative for either side. Negotiation experts advise us to manage our emotions and time. De Dreu et al. (2009, p. 543) recommended starting negotiations in short time intervals and gradually increasing the intervals. They add that a good start facilitates further cooperation. Vukovič and Završnik (2011) also noted that negotiations start with preparation. It is not important how much time is invested; what is important is the effect. Negotiators with less experience need more time to resolve conflict situations and achieve goals (Vukovič & Završnik, 2011, p. 134).

Lenarčič and Brčar (2012, p. 99) stated that a common interest in competitive advantage creates new ideas that can strengthen the relationship, interdependence, connection, and market position of buyers and suppliers. Most authors provide guidelines on how to work towards productive negotiations from a psychological perspective. For example, Lewicki, Saunders and Barry (2013) stated that there are cases where negotiation should be refrained from when:

- one is in a situation where one can lose everything. Then it is necessary to choose another option.
- The demands are unethical. For example, you are asked to do something illegal or morally inappropriate. If your reputation is affected, you lose in the long run.

- They do not care. This is the case when you are not motivated.
- you do not have the time. Time pressures are working against you, and you will make a mistake, so you settle for less than you would otherwise receive.
- You do not believe you will succeed, and you are not sure you will reach the goal.
- You are not ready. Avoid forced negotiations and postpone them. (p. 1)

By agreeing to negotiation, we show the interlocutor that we are interested in mutual interactions and future relations. Soliman and Antheaume (2017, p. 28) added that when the relationship is important, the strategy is not a choice but a necessity and that competitive negotiation behaviour destroys the relationship. De Dreu, Giacomantonio, Shalvi in Sligte (2009) wrote that obstacles in negotiation accelerate progress toward a constructive agreement. Their research showed that obstacles in negotiation also have a positive effect on reaching agreements for the common good. They also found that negotiation creativity is influenced by professional knowledge and daily stress, as well as tangible or intangible obstacles. A negotiator who focuses on the scope of one's observations prevents the inclusion of alternative agreements, leading to mistrust and unconstructive solutions. (p. 543–547)

We argue that we use extensive expertise to create a constructive atmosphere. Billikopf (chapter, 18) discussed that creative negotiation is about finding new agreements that meet the interests of each negotiating party. Schaerer, Loschelder and Swaab, (2016, p. 156) furthermore stated that the more alternative agreements we offer, the more leverage we have and the more options we can offer the other party in the conversation. Billikopf (2003) also advised negotiators to adopt the following principles for developing constructive proposals:

- Negotiate outside your position. Negotiators should not operate within boundaries. Proposals for agreements should complement the interests of all parties. By trying to meet the needs of the other party, we will also meet our own needs.
- Emotions should not play a role in negotiations. Nothing kills creativity faster than anger, pride, embarrassment, envy, greed or other negative emotions. Anger is often an expression of fear or lack of confidence in our abilities. Emotional outbursts tend to escalate and have no positive effect on conflict resolution. If we can control our emotions, we have taken a big step toward reaching a mutual agreement.
- Prepare all possible agreements thoroughly to satisfy all interests. It is necessary to examine the interests of all parties to find creative, all-inclusive agreements. (chapter, 18)

El-Ashmawi, Abd Elminaam, Nabil and Eldesouky (2020, p. 1165) stated that negotiations open up issues such as quality, execution time, and quantity, but price is the most recognized negotiation criterion. Negotiation is part of the purchasing process, and the purchasing function will be effective if it is involved in the initial stages of projects. In this way, the leverage that the purchasing function uses to manage costs effectively will be identified. Thus, the purchasing function identifies the best possible scenarios when formulating a strategy. The final price of the product consists of many parameters, but the basic ones are (1) design and development,

(2) technical definitions of materials, (3) quality requirements, (4) technological processes, (5) logistical factors, just to name a few. A similar view is taken by Wang, Heath in Fortunak (2020, p. 61) who wrote in a cost study for COVID -19 that the final price consists of drug manufacturing costs, packaging forms and profit margin.

Creative negotiation requires self-confidence or confidence in one's negotiation skills. Self-confidence helps to focus on problem-solving and thus reduces the likelihood of failure. Tuncel, Kong, Parks and van Kleef (2020) showed in their research that self-confidence, which is a fundamental characteristic of creative negotiators to achieve good results, has a significant meaning for the success of negotiators. However, on the other hand, it does not eliminate negative emotions during negotiations. (p. 226)

In summary, our extensive literature review revealed a research gap in specific alternative strategies for commercial negotiation approaches. This leads us to our research questions: What are the principles for obtaining alternative proposals to commercial negotiation approaches, and what are the concrete alternative proposals themselves?

3 Method

Our study introduces the research model (Figure 1) that combines literature review, qualitative interviews with experienced negotiators from various industries.

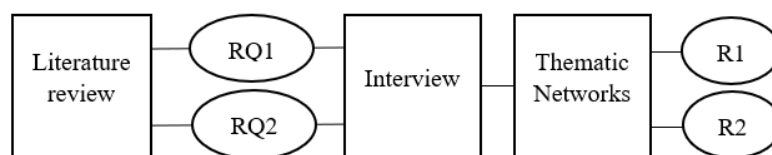


Figure 1. Research model

After reviewing the literature, we found that there are research studies in which one can identify different commercial and principled negotiations approaches. The latter aims in the direction of satisfying all interests and behaviours in different situations. Primarily, we have appreciated the principles specific to the customer's perception, which offer both situational and psychological advice. In the literature review, we identified the principles to provide alternative suggestions for a commercial negotiation approach, further comparing with qualitative research. Given the literature review findings, we have not identified specific suggestions for the second research question, which is to identify specific alternative suggestions for the commercial negotiation approach. Therefore, we will attempt to answer this research question in the qualitative part of the research by interviewing experienced negotiators with different profiles and from different industries. This study, therefore, addresses the following research questions:

1. RQ1: What are the principles for obtaining alternative proposals to commercial approaches to negotiation?
2. RQ2: What are concrete alternative proposals to the commercial negotiation approach?

In the qualitative part of the research, we interviewed four individuals responsible for negotiations in their field and industry. We found that the number of individuals showed data saturation and deemed it sufficient to proceed. We aimed to obtain a diverse range of alternative proposals to the price-commercial negotiation approach. In total, one female and four males participated in the interviews. A description of the interviewees follows:

- Interviewee (A) is an Executive Director of a Purchasing Department in southeastern Slovenia (automotive industry).
- Interviewee (B) is the head of the Strategic Purchasing Department in central Slovenia (petroleum industry).
- Interviewee (C) is a supplier in southeastern Slovenia (retail/wholesale).
- Interviewee (D) is the Purchasing Manager in a non-commercial organization in southeastern Slovenia (healthcare industry).

To determine the appropriateness of the questions, we asked six individuals employed in a purchasing department for feedback on the questions before the questions went live. Similarly, because the results showed data saturation, we did not seek out additional participants. Based on their feedback, we made minor corrections to the original questions for semantics and comprehension and formulated the following final interview questions:

- How would you relate the concept of creativity to negotiation?
- When do you use creativity in negotiation?
- How would you recognize a negotiator who is creatively oriented?
- What specific alternative suggestions do you use when using a commercial approach in negotiation?

The first question was used to establish the basic concepts of the keywords and to warm up the interview participant by introducing the topic. The second question aimed to put the interviewee in the time and space of negotiations that exclude price-based trade targets. With the third question, we aimed to put the interviewee in a negotiation situation where the interviewee activates his/her creativity and recognizes how the other party acts creatively and cooperatively. The last question is an essential part of this study, in which we wanted to identify concrete alternative proposals for a commercial negotiation approach used by creative negotiators to reach agreements.

Before the start of the interview, we emailed all (four) interview participants to explain the purpose of the interview. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- positive overall business performance in the last three years,
- under medium-sized and large companies according to the Companies Act of the Republic of Slovenia (ZGD-1), Article 55.

- from different industries (automotive, energy, retail or healthcare).

In the end, four gave their consent to participate in the interview, while others either did not respond, replied that they did not have enough time, or agreed to participate later. In November 2020, we conducted semi-structured individual interviews with 4 participants via Microsoft Teams (NB. Due to measures related to the COVID -19 epidemic, a video conference had to be used). The average length of the interview was 30 minutes. Two researchers took notes during the interview; the interview was not recorded at the interviewees' request. Before the interview, we prepared an introductory interview to "warm up the participants", followed by ad hoc sub-questions and specific questions from the questions above.

Transcripts were made of the interview notes and compared with both researchers. Both researchers are experts in negotiation and have experience in coding data. Inter-rater reliability was determined to be 99.72% (i.e., reliability = number of agreements / total number of agreements + disagreements; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The thematic networks analysis tool (Roblek, 2009, p. 56; Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390) was used to analyse and interpret the data. With the key coding process used to analyse the qualitative data and discover the meanings and patterns of interpersonal relationships, we followed the six-step process outlined by Attrdie-Stirling (2001 p. 390) and Roblek (2009, p. 58).

Table 1. The thematic network analysis process

Step 1: Textual data

a) Creating a coding framework

b) Dissecting the text into meaningful text segments using a coding framework

Step 2: Identifying themes

a) Themes are abstracted from the coded text segments

b) Refining themes

Step 3: Building the networks

a) Arranging themes

b) Selecting basic themes

c) Rearranging themes into organizing themes

d) Deducing global themes in light of the basic themes

e) Illustrating a thematic network

f) Verifying and refining the network

Step 4: Describing and exploring the thematic networks

a) Describing the network

b) Exploring the network

Step 5: Summarizing the thematic network

Step 6: Interpreting patterns

Source: Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385–405. p. 391

Throughout the research and data analysis process (see Table 1), and to achieve the goal of the research and coding process, the researchers considered the following questions when coding, according to Saldaña (2015):

- What do people do?
- Why did we include them?
- What are they trying to achieve?
- How exactly did they do this?
- What specific means or strategies do they use?
- How did members talk about and understand what was going on?
- What assumptions did they make?
- What did I see going on?
- What did we learn? (p. 20–21)

4 Results

The results of our study are presented in two parts. The first research question (RQ1) was to examine the principles for soliciting alternative proposals for commercial negotiations. As such, the results of the thematic network process are presented in the first part of the findings. The second part relates to the second research question (RQ2): to investigate specific alternative proposals for the commercial negotiation approach. The results of the second part are presented in a similar way to the first research question. The results illustrate the thematic network process on the principles of obtaining alternative proposals for commercial negotiation.

The first part of the research (see Table 2), which refers to the principles for obtaining alternative proposals for the commercial nature of the negotiation, sets out the process of thematic issues based on the literature reviewed and the semi-structured interviews. Considering the research topic and the findings through the research, we defined meaningful codes (Step 1). The codes were grouped and linked by a specific meaning and brought to a common denominator. Thus, we formed groups (discussion points) and linked them to the emerging themes that were identified (Step 2). In this part of the process, "identification of themes" we summarized in descriptive form the principles for obtaining alternative proposals for commercial negotiations.

Table 2. Research on the principles for obtaining alternative proposals for commercial negotiations:
 Identifying themes (RQ1)

Codes (step 1)	Issues discussed	Themes identified (step 2)
Reality	Concluding agreements	Not taking positions
Understanding	Positions	Sense of reality and patience
	Understanding	
	Common problem	
	Patience	
Measuring	Interests	Proposals fulfil mutual interests
Interest	Proposals of agreements	Evaluating proposals
Evaluation	Mutual interests	
Analyses	Analyses	
Relationships	Emotions	Objective approach to negotiation
Emotions	Encouraging creativity	Emotions inhibit creativity
Cancellation	Respect	Understanding the interlocutor
	No agreement	
Negotiations	Forming proposals	Proposing several possible agreements
Agreement	Common interaction	Creativity increases the possibility of agreement
Proposals	More opportunities	Several proposals increase the possibility of agreement
Opportunities	Agreement	
	Creativity	
Self-confidence	Trust	Self-confidence increases the possibility of success
Knowledge	Knowledge	Trust in knowledge, ability
Experiences	Self-confidence	Involvement of the profession in the initial phases
Profession	Purchasing department	
Success	Involvement of the profession	
	Capability	
Strategy	Strategies	Win-win strategy
Victory	Win-win strategy	Creating small victories
Goal	Small victories	

Expanding upon the findings, Table 3 serves as an integral analytical tool for the research. It meticulously organizes previously identified themes into new, meaningful groupings, resulting in a total of 11 distinct themes. These were subsequently refined and condensed into two key overarching common themes, namely "Team Building" and "Innovative Professional Approach," which comprehensively encompass all of the identified thematic elements. The table is methodically divided into three interconnected columns: "Themes Identified," "Theme," and "Common Themes," thereby facilitating an analytical framework. Particularly noteworthy overarching themes such as "Objective Understanding," "Realistic Expectations," and "Emotional Self-Control" are intricately connected to these common themes. This offers a comprehensive and structured guide for understanding the nuanced and multi-layered dynamics that are essential for achieving successful commercial negotiations. By presenting these insights in an integrated manner, the table not only categorizes but also enriches our understanding of the complexities involved in effective negotiation strategies.

Table 3. Research on the principles for obtaining proposals for commercial negotiations: Constructing the thematic network (RQ1)

Themes identified (Step 2)	Theme	Common themes (Step 3)
Not taking positions	Objective understanding	Team building
Sense of reality and patience	Realistic expectations	
Proposals satisfy mutual interests	Satisfying the interests	
Evaluating proposals	Analytical verification	
Objective approach to negotiation	Emotional self-control	
Emotions inhibit creativity	Relationship building	
Understanding the interlocutor		
Respecting the opposite side		
Proposing several possible agreements	Forming several proposals	Innovative professional approach
Creativity increases the possibility of agreement	Encouraging creativity	
Several proposals increase the possibility of agreement	Gaining experience	
Self-confidence increases the possibility of success	Confidence in the professionalism	
Trust in knowledge, ability	Strategic planning	
Involvement of the profession in the initial phases		
Win-win strategy		
Creating small victories		

Continuing with the thematic network process (step 4), we outlined theme development, identifying two common themes: Team Building (see Figure 2) and Innovative Professional Approach (see Figure 3). These themes show the evolution of thematic networks. The team-building theme represents six themes linked to eight identified themes.

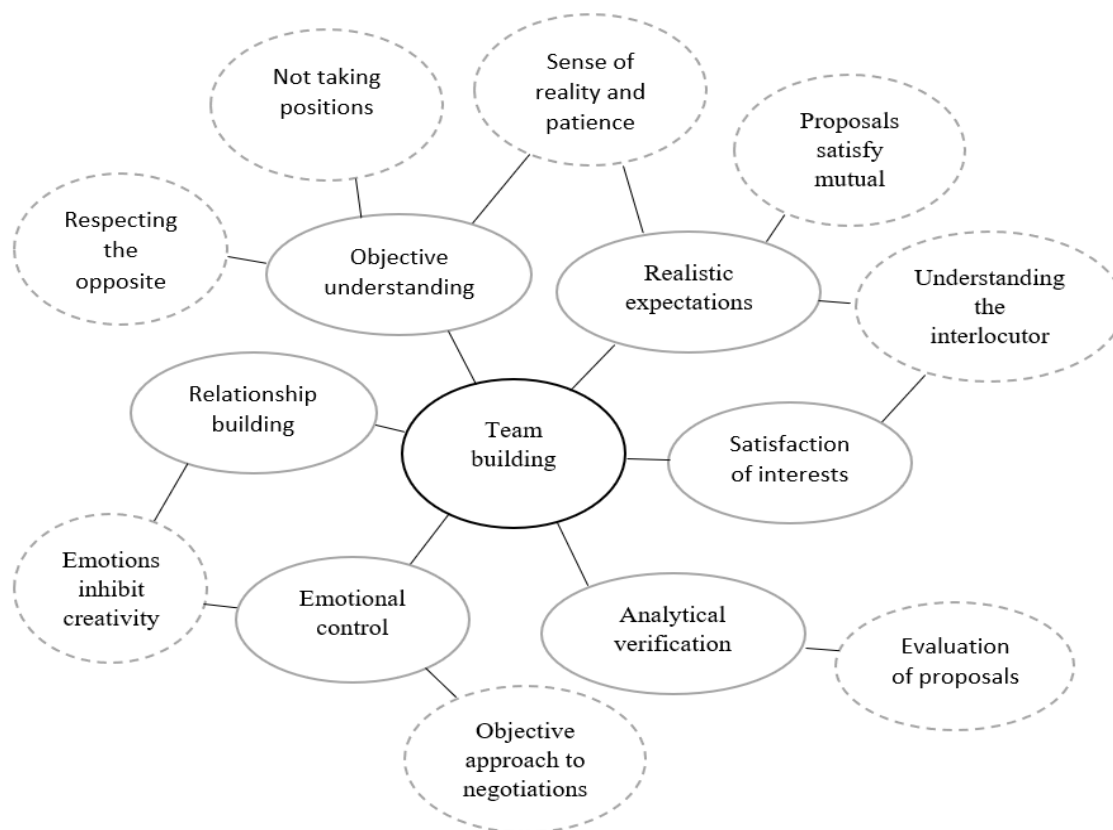


Figure 2. Thematic network (Step 4): Team building (RQ1)

The common themes Innovative Professional Approach (see Figure 2) are five first-level themes and eight second-level networks. We found that some of the identified themes are connected (related) to other themes.

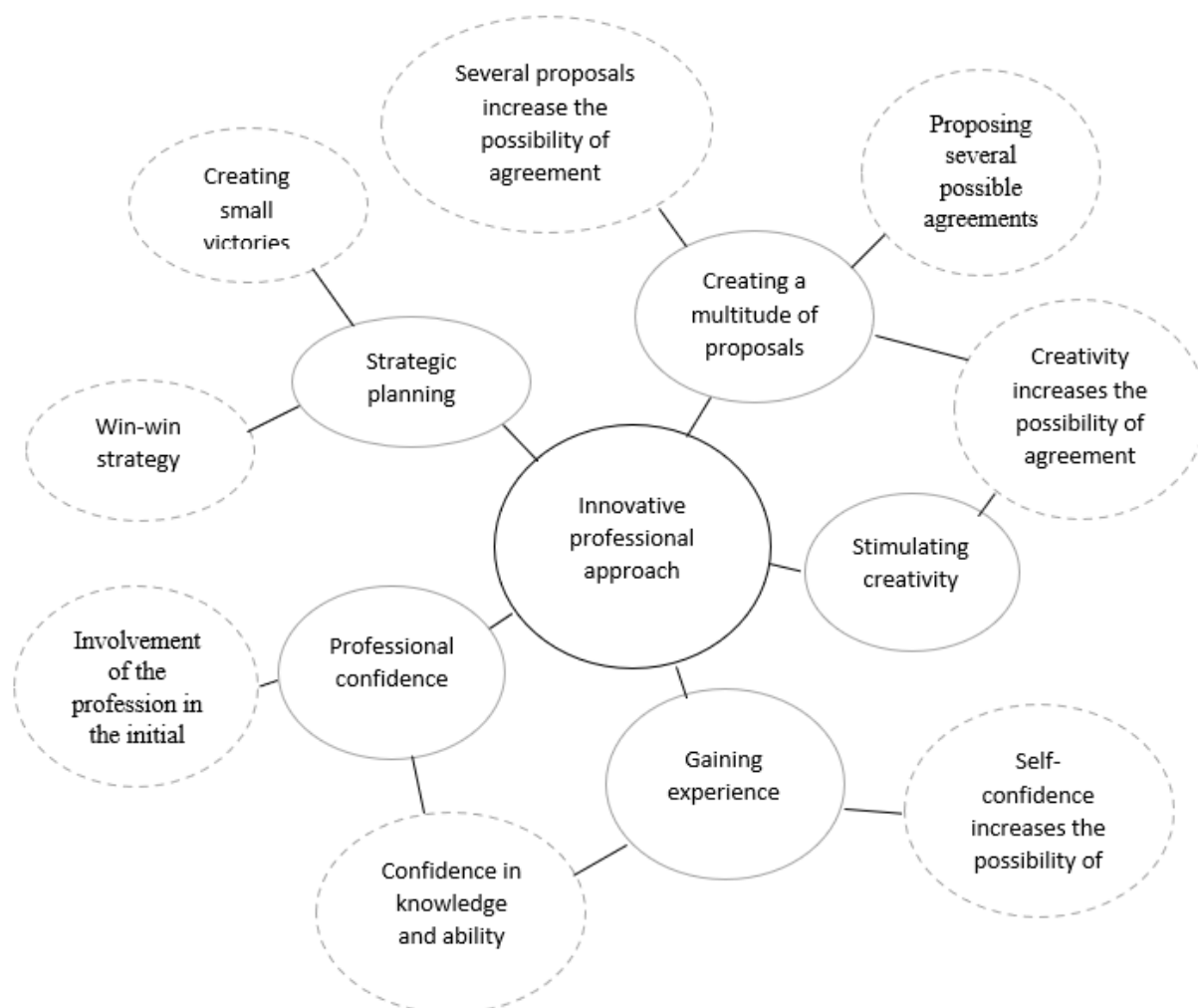


Figure 3. Thematic network (Step 4): Innovative professional approach (R1)

The second research question (RQ2) on concrete alternative proposals to the commercial negotiation approach is presented, and the process of creating the thematic networks from step 1 - coding to step 4 - constructing the thematic network is shown.

In examining concrete alternative proposals to commercial negotiations (see Table 4), we conducted thematic networks using the literature reviewed and the semi-structured transcripts. In this process, we also defined meaningful codes (step 1). The codes were categorized into groups that were connected by a specific meaning. Thus, we formed groups (discussion points) and connected them into an identified theme (step 2). The identified themes descriptively summarize concrete alternative proposals for the commercial negotiation approach.

Table 4. Concrete alternative proposals for a commercial negotiation approach: Identifying themes (RQ2)

Codes (Step 1)	Issues discussed	Themes identified (Step 2)
Sponsorship	Marketing	Establishing sponsorship
Market research	"Branding"	Allocating marketing costs
Marketing	Market platforms	Adding value to the product
	Marketing and sales costs	
	Adding value	
Compensation	Obtaining discounts	Implementing compensation
Discounts	Implementing compensation	Prepayment discount "cassa sconto"
Bonuses	Compensation possibilities	Durability bonus
Contract	Commercial bonuses	Turnover bonus
Advance payments	Payment conditions	Current contract extension
	Contractual relationship	Management of prepayments and payment deadline
Development	Technical discipline	Taking responsibility for complaints
Technique	Joint development	Lifetime warranty management
Maintenance	Exchange of funds	Sharing development costs
Complaints	Technical content	Sharing technical means
Liability	Taking responsibility	Technical data management
	Warranty management	Sharing maintenance costs
Quantities	Purchase order	Optimization of order intakes
Packaging	Minimum quantities	Managing packaging costs
Packing	Packing costs, logistic	

Table 5 shows the three steps in designing thematic networks in four groups, based on conceptually related content (step 2: Themes identified). These topics are grouped into organized themes in terms of semantic sameness (theme), and in the next step, step 3, they are unified into a common theme based on content meanings (step 3: Common Theme).

Table 5. Creative suggestions for reaching an agreement during price negotiation:
Constructing the thematic network (R2)

Themes identified (Step 2)	Theme	Common theme (Step 3)
Establishing sponsorship	Activities in the sales and marketing sector	
Sharing marketing costs		
Adding value to the product		
Implementing compensation	Analytical negotiation preparation	Alternative proposals for a commercial negotiation approach
Prepayment discount "casa sconto"		
Durability bonus		
Turnover bonus		
Current contract extension	Technical means and costs analyses	
Managing prepayments and payment deadline		
Taking responsibility for complaints		
Managing lifetime warranty		
Sharing development costs		
Sharing technical means	Stock management	
Technical data management		
Sharing maintenance costs		
Optimization of order intakes		
Managing packaging costs		

In the fourth step of the thematic network process (step 4), we schematize the development of the topic. In our case, we have formulated the topic Alternative Proposals on Commercial Negotiation Approach (see Figure 4).

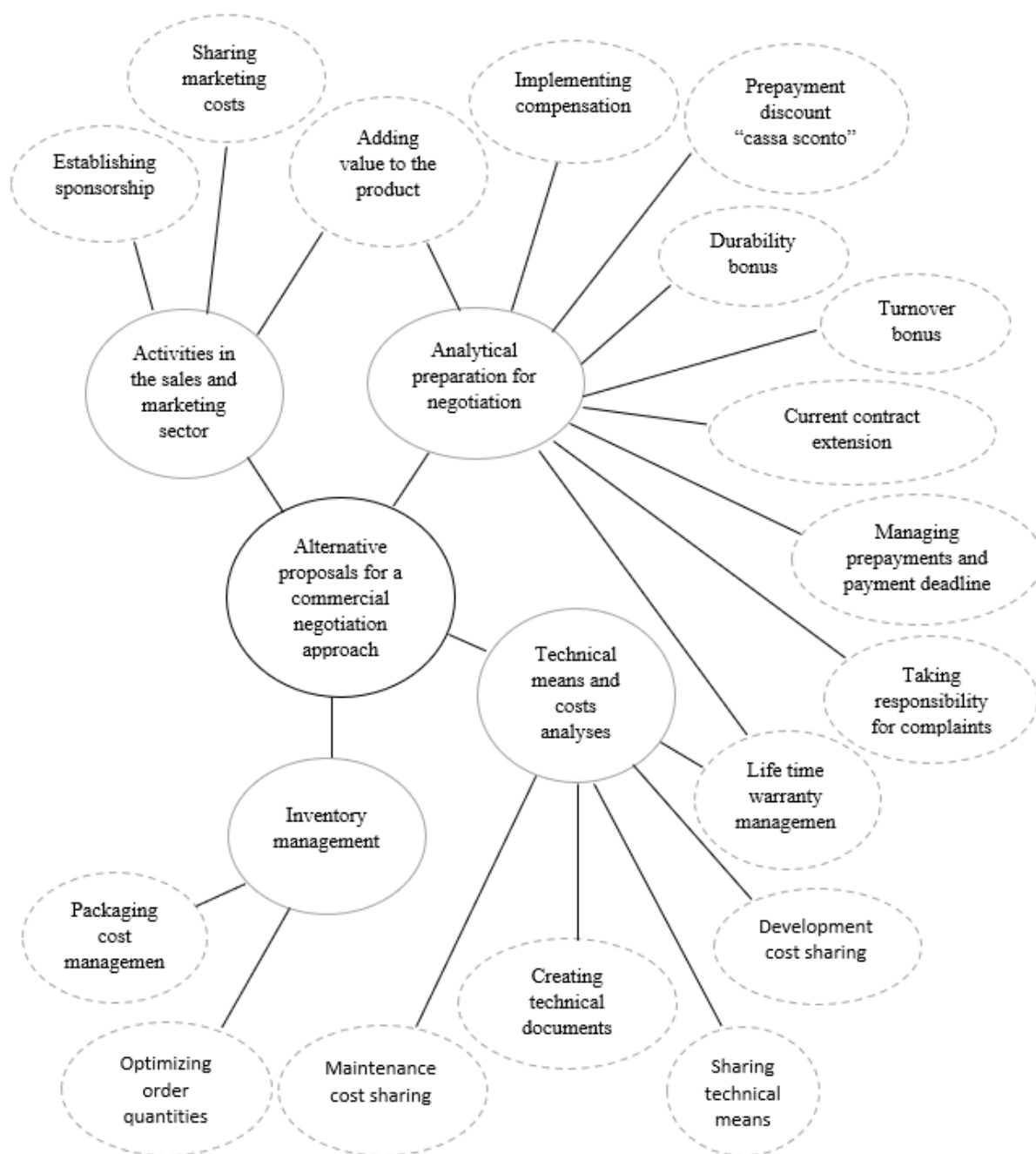


Figure 4. Thematic network (Step 4): Alternative proposals for a commercial negotiation approach (R2)

In the thematic network structure presented, the overarching common theme labelled as 'Alternative Proposals for a Commercial Negotiation Approach' encapsulates a total of four distinct but interrelated thematic categories. These four themes, in turn, are intricately connected with a broader set of seventeen identified sub-themes. Importantly, it is worth mentioning that certain identified sub-themes demonstrate versatile associations, as they may be linked to more than one of the primary themes presented.

5 Discussion

In reviewing the literature, we found more studies on the psychological aspect of negotiation and less on the creativity of negotiators, which is a gap in the research. Based on the findings of our participants, we can support the claim already made by Billikopf (2003, chapter 18) and later by De Dreu, Giacomantonio, Shalvi and Sligte (2009, p. 547) that negotiators should not take positions in negotiations but should be open to new proposals. The respondents in our study also reinforced this. We believe that innovative, creative agreements increase the confidence of all parties. The advantage of creative negotiators is that they can effectively respond to the situation by making suggestions to reach negotiation agreements. In the results of our study, we can see a degree of relationship between the findings from the literature review and our interviews. In summary, we can say that the principles for obtaining alternative proposals for a commercial negotiation approach are to create multiple possible agreements, manage strategies, understand each other, manage emotions, trust oneself, develop creative proposals to reach an agreement, meet each other's interests, be realistic and patient, and create small victories.

While developing the thematic network of principles (step 5) in exploring principles for obtaining alternative proposals to commercial negotiation approaches, we developed two common themes. In the first common theme of team building, we recognized the alignment of principles with a thoughtful, long-term partnership that objectively measures all interests. In the second common theme, Professionally Innovative Approach, we recognized the alignment of principles to the professional to reach an agreement. When we combine these two principles, we can focus on a shared principle (buyer and supplier) in a strategic alliance.

The second research question aimed to explore concrete alternative proposals to the commercial negotiation approach. Here we developed a common code that included four themes. In Table 4 and Table 5, at Themes Identified, seventeen concrete alternative proposals to the commercial negotiation approach were uncovered. The reader will recognize the parallelism of the themes with functions in an organization, including sales, purchasing, development, and logistics. In negotiation, the negotiator can develop suggestions for negotiation to achieve the objectives according to the organization's affiliation. When comparing the literature review and the interviews, a more significant proportion of the overall results were obtained from the interviews.

6 Conclusion

We believe that creativity in negotiation is challenged depending on the situation. An individual and an organization with a higher level of creative capacity works adaptively and grows in their environment. Peleckis (2014, p. 72) held a similar opinion and argued that the personal qualities of an individual's skills are essential to the final outcome. Similar findings were presented in our study. Achievement is associated with creativity and can be measured quantitatively through the achievement of goals. Individuals or organizations that engage in creativity can

work more confidently, and for this reason, tasks are completed within expectations. This means fewer mistakes, fewer complaints, and overall satisfaction, in other words, a win-win strategy. Creativity builds confidence and enables the goals of the employees and the organization's goals to be achieved. In conclusion, if one wants to live life creatively, i.e., actively, responsibly, consciously, and qualitatively, it is necessary to acquire knowledge and skills for overall success continuously. An additional characteristic of a creative negotiator is a wide range of knowledge, breadth, and active research.

We have found that it is the obstacles that challenge the negotiator and force them to be creative. However, De Dreu, Giacomantonio, Shalvi and Sligte (2009, p. 547) claimed that obstacles in negotiations generally impede progress towards reaching constructive agreements. We argue that obstacles in negotiations are the moment that separates creative negotiators from negotiators. Interview participants provided various creative suggestions and ways to reach agreements, which is the very goal of negotiation. In our study, seven principles were found when examining alternative proposals for commercial negotiations in the literature review, and nine principles were found in parallel during the interviews. Principles found in the literature review were also reinforced in the interviews. As a result of the research (step 6), we identified the following principles:

1. Presenting more proposals increases the chance of reaching an agreement.
2. We do not take positions but pursue a "win-win" strategy.
3. Proposals meet the interests of all parties.
4. We do not allow emotions to enter negotiations.
5. We have a sense of reality and patience.
6. Self-confidence and a certain degree of creativity increase the possibility of agreements.
7. It is involving the purchasing department in the initial phase of cooperation.
8. It is creating small victories.

Here we conclude the first part of the study with eight principles listed above, to which we add the conclusion that the creativity of the negotiator allows for broad applicability and adaptability to different situations, as the creative negotiator expresses one's creativity with creative proposals at crucial moments.

In the second part of the research question, we interviewed four negotiators and examined specific alternative proposals for commercial negotiation approaches. We found that participation in developing creative proposals must be reciprocal, and the proposal must satisfy all interests, as all participants have a common goal and agreement. Our results yielded seventeen concrete proposals (see Figure 4) that the negotiator can use to reach an agreement without using the classic commercial negotiation, which we assumed will not help raise the level of relationships.

We argue that both a negotiator and an organization need to improve and expand their general knowledge to collaborate with other organizations successfully. By constantly updating knowledge, having a growth mindset, and gaining experience in developing creative

agreements, an organization can successfully respond to the environment in which it operates, which also increases growth and competitiveness. At the same time, we should not forget that human creativity is infinite and has no limits in its breadth. Ahmad and Idrus, (2019, p. 613) developed an automated alternative approach to a classical negotiation that suggests the most favourable scenarios based on specific criteria. Kumar and Jaisankar (2020, p. 34) presented the concept of an automated negotiation process (similar to an e-auction) to replace the classical negotiation for ranking the best cloud service providers. Given the current research understanding, we can add that there are opportunities to automate negotiation in certain industries under certain conditions; however, it is still difficult to imagine automated relationships in the customer-supplier relationship.

The results of this study add to the current literature on conflict resolution and reaching agreements in negotiations. We found that negotiation varies from case to case and believe that this concept of obtaining creative proposals has a subjective approach to making proposals and evaluating agreements. The research is limited to the references considered for this study and the participants in the qualitative study. Qualitative studies are not designed to generalize but to explore issues in depth. Therefore, there is a degree of subjectivity in the chosen thematic networks instrument and its influence on the outcome. However, this has been balanced by triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of the data. We propose to continue research in supplier perceptions with a broader range of respondents - negotiators (including non-profit organizations). We propose to conduct further research with a more general scope in the literature review and increase the number of respondents.

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Povzetek:

Raziskava načel in alternativnih predlogov za pristop v sodobna komercialna pogajanja

Raziskovalno vprašanje (RV): V odnosu med dobaviteljem in kupcem so pogajanja ključna za oblikovanje sodelovanja in rezultatov. Ta študija ima dvojni fokus: najprej raziskuje sodobne pogajalske tehnike, ki dajejo prednost kreativni vzajemnosti pred tradicionalnimi cenovnimi pristopi; drugič, podrobno opisuje alternativne pristope za doseganje obojestransko koristnih dogovorov. Vodilni vprašanji, ki usmerjata to študijo, sta: "Kakšna so načela za pridobivanje alternativnih predlogov za komercialne pristope k pogajanjem?" in "Kakšni so konkretni alternativni predlogi za komercialni pristop k pogajanjem?" Cilj je prehod iz konvencionalnih k bolj celostnim metodam pogajanj, ki koristijo obema stranema.

Namen: Primarni namen je raziskovalnega dela je dvig stopnje zavedanje sodelovanja v razmerju kupec - dobavitelj. Bralec raziskave, ki nastopa kot kupce prepozna pomembnost sodelovanja z dobaviteljem in ustvarjanje skupnih ciljev, še posebno kjer je skupno razvojno sodelovanje, izmenjava platform in deljenje tehnologije, itd. Namen in cilj naloge je predstaviti sodoben kooperativen način konstruktivnih komercialnih dogovorov med organizacijami, ki izključujejo klasična cenovna pogajanja.

Metoda: V prvem delu kvalitativne raziskave se osredotočimo na teoretično opredelitev analitičnega orodja značilnosti in interpretacije besedil s pregledom obstoječe literature. V drugem delu kvalitativne raziskave je prikazan na osnovi pregleda pol strukturiranih intervjujev, osebnih zapisov, in opazanj obnašanja razvoja tematskih mrež prikažemo interpretirane rezultate raziskave in dobljenih podatkov z uporabo analitičnega orodja tematske mreže.

Rezultati: Rezultati kvalitativne raziskave prikazujemo v skupini nestrukturiranih podatkov, po korakih procesa postopka orodja tematskih mreže z v poglobljeno analizo in razlago. Rezultate povzemamo v opisni obliki, ki so opis načel izvajalcem pogajanj z konkretni alternativni predlogi komercialnemu pristopu pogajanj.

Organizacija: Raziskava spodbuja zavedanje negativnega pristopa klasično cenovnega pogajanja ter hkrati podaja usmeritve sodobna komercialna dogovarjanja. Akterji pogajanj lahko sodobne alternativne predloge uporabijo za doseganje pogajalskih ciljev, kar znižuje stopnjo organizacijskih omejitev in pripomore k organizacijskem ugledu

Družba: Celotna družba lahko pridobi na medsebojnem organizacijskem razumevanju, reševanju pogajalskih konfliktov in doseganju dogovorov.

Originalnost: Raziskovalna naloga predlaga izključevanje klasično cenovna pogajanja in vključuje sodobna komercialna dogovarjanja v organizacijsko okolje na relaciji kupec – dobavitelj.

Omejitve/nadaljnje raziskovanje: Raziskava je omejena na vire, ki so navedeni v literaturi in intervjuvanjem štirih različnih profilov. Percepcija raziskave temelji na vzajemnem sodelovanju kupca in dobavitelja v dolgoročno partnersko sodelovanje, zato izključuje vedenja klasičnega komercialnega pristopa pogajanj.

Ključne besede: organizacija, ustvarjalnost, alternativni predlogi, komercialna pogajanja, kupec, dobavitelj.

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