

Writing for Impact

Template 6

Negotiations in Writing

Thank the other person at the beginning, and refer to earlier contact

Introduce your negotiation points

First negotiation point

Second negotiation point

Positive ending

Dear Brian

Thanks for sending the standard price list for your products. I was pleased to see that your prices are broadly in line with those of our current supplier, although you are far from the cheapest supplier on the market.

I have a few questions to discuss with you before we make a decision as to which supplier to choose.

1. Your price list covers orders of 100–999 units (standard price) and 1,000+ units (10% discount). As we are planning to order around 800 units this year, what level of discount would you be able to offer us?

2. In your last email, you mentioned that your standard lead time is seven weeks. This seems rather long to us. We were thinking more along the lines of 4 weeks.

Please let me know what you think. I hope we can make this work.

All the best

Jan

Make it clear that you see potential to reach an agreement before raising any general concerns.

Provide evidence that you have researched the market and that you are considering a range of options.

If you number your points, it's easier for the other person to respond, using the same numbers.

Start each point by saying which figures you want to discuss, and where you found those figures.

This is more assertive than simply asking 'Would you be able to offer us a discount?' but don't use it too aggressively.

When attacking the other side's position, be sensitive. Use words like 'seem' and 'rather'.

These reassurances are very important. Remember, you're trying to build a long-term business relationship, not to destroy the other side in a brutal negotiation.

Provide evidence for any positive claims about your company.

When you make a concession, make it clear whether it is permanent or temporary. Emphasise that you are making the concession for a reason, so it's clear you didn't simply set your prices too high in the first place.

Always try to get something in return for your concession.

Explain why some concessions are difficult.

If you're not ready to give an exact price (because it depends on other factors), write TBC (= to be confirmed).

Statements of what might be lost can be more persuasive than explaining what the other person might gain.

Thank the other person and respond to any general concerns

First negotiation point

Second negotiation point

Additional information on second point

Dear Jan

Thanks a lot for getting back to me so soon. I'm sure we'll be able to find a solution that meets your needs. We're aware that some companies in our market are offering much lower prices, but our customers tell us they prefer us because we are much more reliable.

Anyway, to answer your questions:

1. Yes, I think we could be flexible on this. As a goodwill gesture for your first order, we could offer a 5% discount on 800 units, or the full 10% on 900.

2. The lead time is trickier, as it would involve re-arranging our production schedules. A four-week lead time would be possible, but we would have to add a surcharge (around \$2,000, TBC) on the order to compensate for the disruption to our other orders. Let me know if you'd like me to look into this option more carefully.

We often do deliver within four weeks of an order, but we would not be able to guarantee that without the surcharge.

I feel as if we're very close to reaching an agreement that will be good for both of our companies.

Best regards

Anna