

6. A GUIDE TO NEGOTIATING

A practical guide for grassroots sports clubs in Tendring

Introduction

Many people talk about negotiations as being about “win win”.

In practice, this is often unhelpful. It puts pressure on the person selling to feel that both sides must visibly benefit in equal ways, or that compromise always means reducing the price.

In reality, there is only one thing that truly matters in a negotiation: *Does the sponsor feel like they are getting a win?*

If the sponsor believes the arrangement works well for them, feels fair, and meets their needs, the partnership is far more likely to go ahead and continue. That is literally all that matters.

This guide focuses on practical, realistic negotiation techniques that help clubs protect value, avoid unnecessary discounts, and build stronger long-term relationships.

Some of these tactics I have used for decades, and some I’ve used with the hardest negotiators of all: toddlers!!!

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What this guide is (and is not)

This guide is not about selling sponsorship from scratch.

It assumes that:

- the (potential) sponsor already sees value in supporting the club
- the sponsor has broadly agreed that it is a good thing to do
- the conversation has moved into price, value, and terms



This guide exists to help clubs and people selling sponsorships get deals over the line without giving away value unnecessarily.

The most common moment clubs avoidably lose value

Many sponsorship negotiations reach a similar point.

The sponsor says something like:

“I like it, but I need more value.”

Many would hear this as a request to reduce the price.

In reality, it is usually one of three things:

1. they need reassurance
2. they need justification internally
3. they want to test whether there is flexibility

Understanding this difference is critical to driving the best possible result for you, the club and the potential sponsor. Remember, we need to make them feel as though they have won.

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Always try to add value before you reduce price

Before changing price, explore whether value can be added in ways that:

- cost the club nothing
- do not increase workload significantly
- genuinely help the sponsor feel better about the deal

Examples include:

- additional mentions at key moments
- inclusion in club emails or newsletters
- social media recognition
- informal benefits such as event invites

These additions often feel valuable to the sponsor while costing the club very little.

Never reduce price without changing the deal

If a price reduction is necessary, it should never happen on its own.

Reducing price without adjusting the package sends a clear signal:
"The original price was not right."

Instead, any price movement should be linked to a change such as:

- fewer matchdays
- reduced duration, or a longer duration at the lower pro-rata rate
- removal of a specific asset
- lower frequency of exposure

This protects the perceived value of what the club offers.

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Use conditional language to stay in control

One of the simplest and most effective negotiation techniques is conditional language.

This means only giving something when something is received in return.

Examples:

- “We could do that if the agreement ran for two seasons.”
- “That would be possible if we reduced the number of matchdays.”
- “We can include that, but the price would need to stay as it is.”

This keeps the negotiation balanced and avoids one sided concessions.

If you are having the chat on a call or face to face, a very good tactic is that employed by some tradespeople and mechanics etc. when one asks what something will cost (cue a sharp intake of breath, a shake of the head, and the “oh I just don’t know”).

Using “unnatural steps” when adjusting price

If you do need to come down in price, how you do it matters.

Many people reduce prices in neat, logical steps, for example: £1,000 → £900 → £800. Psychologically, this suggests there is more room to move. Instead, use unnatural steps, for example: £1,000 → £878 → £843. This works because it signals you are approaching a real limit, it makes the movement feel considered, not automatic and it discourages repeated pressure for further discounts.

Unnatural steps suggest thought, not weakness.

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Negotiating confidence sends a signal

How a club handles negotiation sends a strong signal to sponsors.

Immediate discounts can:

- reduce confidence in anything else you try to sell them down the line
- create doubt
- undermine trust

Calm explanations, clear structure, and small conditional adjustments often increase credibility.

If a sponsor accepts an offer immediately with no discussion, this is useful feedback for future pricing, in that you priced it or negotiated it down too low.

What success looks like

A good negotiation outcome is one where:

- the sponsor feels positive about the deal
- the club protects its core value
- expectations are clear
- the relationship feels sustainable

Negotiation is not about winning.

It is about reaching an agreement both sides are comfortable standing behind.



Negotiation should, in time, become one of the most enjoyable bits of the sales process.

And remember, **every single pound negotiated is pure profit for the club.**