The Negotiation EDGE for BREAKING Bottlenecks

A practical guide to turning internal blockers into deal allies, without sacrificing what matters.

Aligned.

INTRODUCTION

Complex deals slow down when your organization isn't aligned.

If you're responsible for getting a complex agreement over the line, you already know the pattern: the external negotiation isn't what slows things down. It's the internal one happening in parallel.

Most deals drag because internal stakeholders aren't aligned on four basics:

1. What matters most
2. What can move (and what can't)
3. Who decides
4. Who owns the consequences if it goes wrong

When those points are unclear, everything becomes a late-stage debate. Legal becomes the default "no." Ops shows up with delivery constraints after you've already committed. Execs reopen the trade space at the approval moment. Committees spread risk until nobody can sign their name to a decision.

Your negotiation edge is simple:

Build internal alignment early enough that the external negotiation stays controlled.

FIRSTLY,

Meet the Aligned Strategic Framework

How we approach negotiation

The Aligned Strategic Framework (ASF) is the backbone of our training at Aligned. It's our way of making negotiation practical, repeatable, and easier to lead under pressure.

THE THREE PILLARS

The ASF is a structured approach to negotiation that ensures alignment across all critical dimensions of a deal. This proven methodology balances **Relationships, Process, and Goals:**

- Relationships build trust and open communication
- Process keeps the negotiation on track and ensures clarity
- Goals make sure both sides understand what success looks like

THE FOUR TYPES

Across four different types of negotiation:

- **Bargaining** – Competitive, zero-sum exchanges
- **Trading** – Balanced, multi-issue negotiation
- **Creating** – Collaborative, value-expanding mindset
- **Partnering** – Long-term, trust-based relationships

THE FOUR PHASES

And across four phases, which almost all negotiations move through. Skipping one causes friction later:

Prepare → Communicate → Propose → Align

The ASF in this edge

This guide is structured around five common negotiation bottlenecks. For each, you'll find ASF-based advice from our training team – providing a practical, methodology-supported approach to better negotiation and internal alignment.

BOTTLENECK #1

Legal

What it looks like

- Legal joins late and slows the pace to regain control.
- Redlines turn into a proxy fight about accountability.
- The business says, “Legal is blocking us.” Legal says, “You’re asking us to carry the risk.”

What’s really happening

Legal is paid (explicitly or implicitly) to prevent downside events. Deal teams are paid to move value and maintain momentum. When nobody else clearly owns residual risk, Legal becomes the risk owner by default.

Your edge

Make risk discussable, then make it owned. Your job isn’t to “win” an argument with Legal – it’s to clarify the trade space so Legal can say yes without feeling exposed.

IN PRACTICE

Stories from the workshop floor

A mid-market software company was repeatedly hitting a wall with their legal team during enterprise deals. Procurement contracts would arrive, Legal would redline aggressively, and the deal timeline would slip by three to four weeks. Both sides were frustrated.

The sales and legal leads proposed a simple change: a 60-minute "deal parameters" call with Legal at the start of every enterprise pursuit, well before the contract stage. Together, they built a one-page matrix listing which contract clauses were fixed (liability caps, data processing terms) and which had flex room (payment timing, SLA thresholds). Legal involvement began early enough to shape the deal rather than inherit it.

As a result, average contract cycle time dropped significantly and Legal started being invited to customer calls proactively.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Turn legal into an ally:

✓ A shared definition of non-negotiables vs tradables
✓ A clear exception path (what requires approval, from whom, and by when)
✓ Plain-English risk language the business can actually use

BOTTLENECK #2

Operations

What it looks like

- Ops stays quiet until late-stage, then says, “We can’t do that.”
- The deal is technically signable but operationally unrealistic.
- After signature, the organization pays the price in workarounds and blame.

What’s really happening

Ops inherits commitments they didn’t shape, and gets held accountable for delivery failure. “No” can be self-protection.

Your edge

Bring delivery truth into the deal before it becomes a crisis. Treat Ops like value protection, not cleanup.

IN PRACTICE

Stories from the workshop floor

A regional logistics provider landed a major retail client, but three months into delivery, the relationship was strained. The contract promised 48-hour fulfillment windows that Ops could only reliably hit during off-peak periods. Nobody had asked.

The next large bid looked similar. This time, the account lead scheduled a working session with the operations director before any proposal went out. Ops flagged two constraints: warehouse capacity between September and November, and a staffing ceiling for same-day routes.

The team turned those constraints into negotiating levers. Their proposal offered tiered SLAs with seasonal adjustment clauses including pricing variation. The client accepted. Eighteen months later, the contract renewed at a higher rate with no delivery disputes.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Turn ops into an ally:

✓ Ask early: “What’s the one commitment here that would make delivery painful?”
✓ Convert constraints into terms while you still have leverage and time.
✓ Make handoffs explicit: who does what, by when, with what dependencies.

BOTTLENECK #3

Senior Execs

What it looks like

- The deal seems fine until it reaches exec review.
- Execs ask for “better terms” without a shared view of trade-offs.
- The negotiation resets at the worst possible moment.

What’s really happening

Executives don’t want surprise accountability. Teams often escalate detail instead of decisions.

Your edge

Don’t escalate problems. Escalate decisions. Make it easy for a leader to approve a path without feeling like they’re guessing.

IN PRACTICE

Stories from the workshop floor

A corporate banking team was repeatedly losing momentum when deals hit the credit committee. Proposals would be sent back with requests for clarification, pricing adjustments, or additional collateral requirements that hadn't surfaced during structuring. Weeks were lost on each deal.

A senior relationship manager changed her approach. Two weeks before any committee submission, she held a 20-minute call with the committee chair. She'd walk through three versions of the key term (pricing, covenant, tenor) and ask which felt right.

By the time the formal submission arrived, the committee chair had already shaped it. Approvals that previously took three rounds began clearing in one.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Turn execs into an ally:

✓ Pre-wire what “good” looks like before the approval moment.
✓ Present options with consequences, not a single recommendation with hidden trade-offs:

- speed vs value
- risk vs relationship
- precedent vs one-time exception

BOTTLENECK #4

Bureaucracy

What it looks like

- People stall, defer, or insist on extra process.
- “We need more stakeholders” becomes a way to avoid accountability.
- Decisions get pushed into committees, and nothing moves.

What’s really happening

Career risk beats deal value. If saying yes feels personally risky, the safest move is delay.

Your edge

Reduce career risk and increase decision safety. Make it easier to support the deal than to avoid it.

IN PRACTICE

Stories from the workshop floor

A medical device manufacturer was trying to get a new supplier agreement approved across a large hospital network. The procurement lead was supportive in private but kept asking for more internal sign-offs. The deal drifted for four months.

The supplier's account manager finally asked directly: "What would make it safer for you to move forward?" The answer was revealing. The procurement lead had been burned before on a similar agreement and didn't want sole ownership of this one. The account manager proposed a 90-day pilot at two sites, with a written summary of the joint decision-making process that the procurement lead could share internally.

The pilot framing removed the "permanent commitment" risk. The agreement was signed within three weeks of that conversation.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Turn politics blockers into allies:

✓ Give someone a role that protects status: reviewer, advisor, final check.
✓ Document what was decided so support doesn’t become future liability.
✓ Offer reversible commitments where possible (pilot, limited scope, time-bound exceptions).

BOTTLENECK #5

External (their side)

What it looks like

- The counterparty goes quiet while they "check internally."
- New constraints appear midstream.
- You get renegotiated by proxy.

What's really happening

They're negotiating internally while you wait. Their position may be fine; their organization may not be.

Your edge

Help them align faster than you do. This is not altruism. It's control. When they're stuck, you lose momentum and options..

IN PRACTICE

Stories from the workshop floor

A consulting firm was finalizing a large transformation engagement with a global manufacturer. The day before signing, the client's CFO asked to reopen the pricing model. The engagement lead was blindsided. It turned out the CFO had only seen a high-level summary, not the phased investment rationale the sponsor had built. The engagement had been "sold up" in a way that lost the supporting logic.

The consulting team prepared a one-page CFO brief for the manufacturer. They did not change terms, but provided a clear articulation of the value case in financial terms the CFO could defend to their board.

The sponsor delivered it internally. The original pricing was approved the next week.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Turn their bottlenecks into your leverage:

✓ Ask early: "Who else needs to be comfortable with this?"
✓ Provide packages they can carry internally without distortion.
✓ Give them language that helps them sell the deal without overselling it.

THE TAKEAWAY

Time to get Aligned.

What this work looks like in real organizations

Breaking bottlenecks is leadership work.
Deals move faster when the team has alignment before the pressure hits:

- clear decision rights
- known constraints and non-negotiables
- trade-offs packaged into choices people can approve
- approvals documented so the deal doesn't get re-traded late
- enough structure to help the other side align, too

Fewer surprises, shorter cycle time, and agreements your organization can execute with confidence.

HOW ALIGNED HELPS

Aligned works with leaders and teams to build negotiation capability that holds up in complex, cross-functional environments. We train you across the ASF to strengthen:

- Relationships so trust stays intact when stakes rise
- Process so negotiations run with structure, not improvisation
- Goals so trade-offs connect to outcomes that matter

If your organization is seeing the same internal bottlenecks across deals, we can help you create a negotiation operating rhythm your teams can repeat.

Results our clients see

→ Stronger outcomes with measurable cost avoidance

→ Better cross-functional alignment

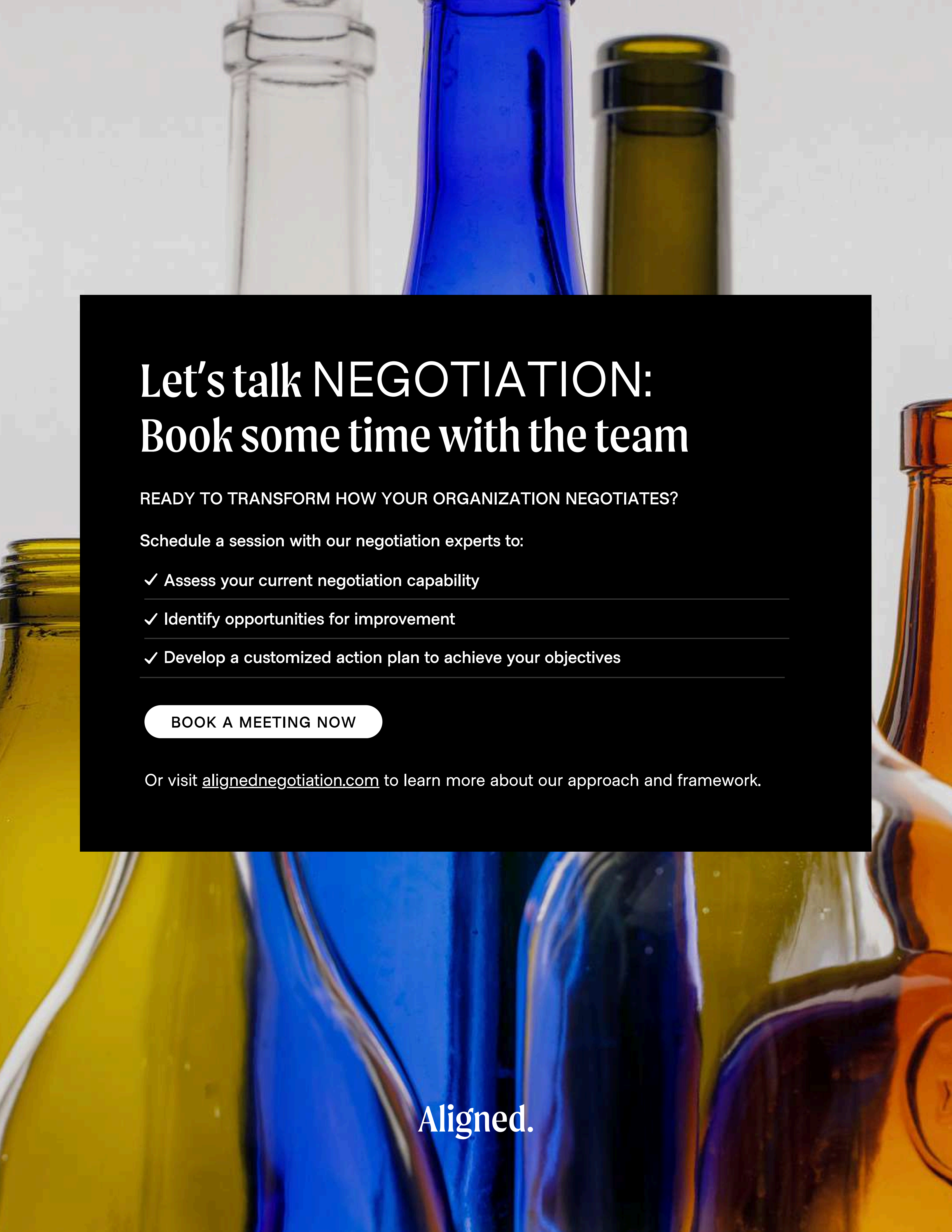
→ Reduced dependency on adversarial tactics

→ Increased confidence in communication & negotiation

"Aligned negotiation training was phenomenal. We are getting immediate ROI at all levels of the organization."

ALEX WORLEY | CEO | HAPPY EGG

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR TRAINING



Let’s talk NEGOTIATION: Book some time with the team

READY TO TRANSFORM HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION NEGOTIATES?

Schedule a session with our negotiation experts to:

- ✓ Assess your current negotiation capability
- ✓ Identify opportunities for improvement
- ✓ Develop a customized action plan to achieve your objectives

BOOK A MEETING NOW

Or visit alignednegotiation.com to learn more about our approach and framework.

Aligned.