

# Consulting Proposal Negotiation Readiness Scorecard

20 checks to know whether you are ready to negotiate – or about to leave value on the table.

Before negotiating a consulting proposal, make sure you are not walking in with a vague scope, weak alternatives, internal misalignment, or an arbitrary discount target.

A strong negotiation is not about asking for “5% off.” It is about knowing what should change, why it should change, what trade-offs are acceptable, and where your leverage really sits.

Tick each statement that is true before entering final discussions with the consulting firm.

## Your readiness score

- 0–7 Checks:** Do not negotiate yet. You are likely negotiating from assumption, not facts.
- 8–14 Checks:** You can negotiate, but you have gaps. Fix the weak areas before pushing on price or scope.
- 15–20 Checks:** You are ready for a structured negotiation. You know what matters, where your leverage is, and what you can trade.

### 1. Clarify what you are really negotiating

Tick these before discussing price, scope, or terms.

- We have identified the proposal elements that fall below expectations.**  
These are the real negotiation targets. Do not negotiate everything. Focus on the parts that affect value, risk, quality, timeline, or cost.

Notes

- We have identified the proposal elements that are strong and should remain untouched.**  
Reopening strong parts of the proposal creates unnecessary friction and can weaken the relationship before the work even starts.

Notes

- We have mapped the proposal across three linked dimensions: scope, delivery model, and cost.**  
These three elements move together. A change in scope should affect the team, timeline, workload, or price. Treating price in isolation is amateur hour with a procurement badge.

Notes

- We have checked whether the scope has shifted since the RFP or initial brief.**  
If the brief has become broader, narrower, or materially different, say so before negotiation starts. Misaligned scope is one of the most common causes of overruns and disputes during consulting projects.

Notes

### 2. Understand the value at stake

Tick these before deciding how hard to push.

- We have estimated the business value a successful project should create.**  
A €200K project that can unlock €1M in value should not be negotiated the same way as a routine diagnostic with modest impact.

Notes

- We have estimated the cost of delay.**  
One extra week of back-and-forth may cost more than the discount you are trying to win. Negotiation has a cost. Pretending otherwise is how projects quietly bleed value.

Notes

- We have defined a realistic savings or improvement target based on project context.**  
The target should reflect project size, urgency, market conditions, supplier appetite, and value at stake — not a blanket percentage pulled from the sacred hat of procurement folklore.

Notes

- We have identified what we are willing to trade.**  
Possible trade-offs include scope phasing, team composition, seniority mix, governance intensity, timeline, payment terms, optional modules, and success-based components.

Notes

### 3. Test your leverage before entering the room

Tick these before assuming the firm will move.

- We have at least one credible alternative.**  
This could be another strong proposal, an incumbent option, an internal team, a phased approach, a benchmark, or the ability to delay. Without alternatives, leverage becomes theatre.

Notes

- We have enough price intelligence to challenge the fee constructively.**  
This may come from competing bids, benchmarks, historical engagements, rate-card analysis, team pyramid review, or workload estimates.

Notes

- The preferred firm knows they are still in a competitive or performance-based decision process.**  
Firms rarely offer their best commercial position if they believe the deal is already theirs.

Notes

- We have assessed current market conditions for this type of consulting work.**  
A low-demand period gives you more room to negotiate team seniority, fee levels, discounts, delivery model, and availability. A hot market limits leverage. Reality is rude but useful.

Notes

### 4. Align your internal negotiation team

Tick these before speaking with the firm.

- We have defined who owns the negotiation.**  
One person should lead the commercial discussion. Multiple uncoordinated voices give the firm free intelligence and create openings for divide-and-conquer tactics.

Notes

- The project sponsor, procurement lead, and project manager are aligned.**  
Each sees a different risk: business value, commercial discipline, and delivery feasibility. Missing one creates blind spots.

Notes

- For a large or strategic project, finance or strategy has been involved before negotiation.**  
A deal agreed in the room can still die later if a senior stakeholder challenges the economics or the strategic fit.

Notes

- We have separated personal relationships from negotiation roles.**  
If it must be a close relationship with the consulting partner, that is not automatically a problem. But it should be acknowledged. Warmth is pleasant; blurred judgment is expensive.

Notes

### 5. Define your negotiation strategy before the meeting

Tick these before entering final discussions.

- We know our opening position.**  
This includes the first message, the tone, the commercial ask, and the rationale behind it.

Notes

- We know our walk-away point.**  
Define your minimum acceptable position before the meeting. Do not discover your limits while a polished partner explains why their pyramid is “non-negotiable.”

Notes

- We know which concessions are acceptable.**  
Good concessions are deliberate and conditional. Bad concessions happen under pressure and are later renamed “relationship management” to save face.

Notes

- We have confirmed that the person across the table has authority to commit.**  
Negotiating with someone who cannot decide may be useful for exploration, but it is not a closing conversation.

Notes

- We have reviewed prior history with this consulting firm.**  
Past negotiations, delivery quality, pricing behaviour, flexibility, overruns, and stakeholder satisfaction all provide useful clues.

Notes