

ROBIN LINES ASSOCIATES



Fee Negotiation
for Accountants



ABOUT ROBIN LINES

Robin has a wealth of experience in designing and delivering Fee Negotiation programmes which immediately impact upon recoveries and margins.

Over the last few years he has delivered programmes for a number of firms including KPMG, CCW, Mazars, Grant Thornton, Baker McKenzie, and PWC as well as many smaller, regional partnerships.

He has a reputation for running highly interactive, practical and engaging workshops.

FEE NEGOTIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Robin Lines Associates understands that in today's business environment, negotiation skills can be as valuable to the business as the products or services on offer. Competition can be fierce, and to attract or retain customers, companies find themselves offering substantial discounts to clients. These rate cuts may make a client happy and help nurture loyalty, but they can result in significantly lower profit margins.

Further complications arise when projects extend beyond anticipated deadlines, and the provider absorbs the costs of hours' worth of effort rather than charging them back to the client, impact significantly upon recoveries and profits.

RLA offers a specific Fee Negotiation Skills training programmes for a range of Professional Services clients. We use proven strategies that aid you in communicating your fees to clients in a way that helps them understand and manage their expectations regarding the value they will receive together with project timeframes and costs.

Starting from the ground up, we will help you plan for negotiations, understand aspiration levels and the importance of aiming high.

Through this programme, we will help you achieve "Win-Win" outcomes by developing your skills so that you can more confidently deal with professional buyers, handle fee challenges, and most importantly, show and build the value in your proposition.

Additionally, we will teach you to use more creative negotiating variables so that when you must make a trading concession, you can do so without reducing the value of your product or service.

TESTIMONIALS

Practical advice delivered in a simple manner. Robin clearly is very experienced in both the delivery of the topic and has first hand experience. I would definitely recommend this course to other managers/partners.

Senior Partner, Big 4 Accounting Firm (NDA)

Ensors have used Robin several times to deliver sessions to our staff and partners alike on Fee Value Building and subsequent negotiation. We feel Robin combines pragmatic real-world experience with numerous hints and tips, to help give us the confidence to succeed. Robin also uses excellent examples which enables engagement and application to be more realistic.

James Francis, Partner, Ensors



THE FEE NEGOTIATION PROGRAMME

We use a five-stage structure to our Fee Negotiation programme.

Planning and Preparation. Knowing your client. Building a narrative around the work/effort that has been involved, together with the results we have achieved for the client. Where and how will we conduct the fee conversation?

Build Value in your proposal. Explain in detail exactly what the client is getting in terms of expertise, knowledge, advice and results. Sell the benefits.

Defend Your Quote by reminding them of that value.

Another Price? Another Package. If the client presses you for a discount, then reduce the scope accordingly.

Give Slowly and Reluctantly

We engage with your people by using real-world examples in practical scenarios so that they can quickly become adept at handling the price challenge and not giving in to the fee crumble. By following our structured approach to negotiations, we can ensure that your people have the necessary confidence to control discussions, ensuring better long-term results for you and your business.





OVER-RUNS & CHANGES TO PROJECT SCOPE

Professional Services often struggle to ensure they are adequately compensated for unforeseen extensions to projects or changes to the original project scope. Rather than have difficult conversations with clients, businesses often choose the easier approach of absorbing the associated costs and taking the hit on the bottom-line.

Our programme focuses on how to handle this issue. We emphasise regular communications with the customer to ensure they remain in-the-loop at all times. Ensuring a client is kept abreast of changing situations results in fewer difficulties in recouping fees. Our methodology is to always highlight the value in your services by remaining specific and concise and leaving little wiggle-room for a fee challenge.

LANGUAGE

The language you use when discussing fees sets the tone. A weak approach risks trivialising fees and leaving the door open to a fee challenge. For example, “we’ve come up with a price” implies there is room for the client to negotiate. Our programme stresses the importance of confidence and the elimination of vague, non-committing words.

We also teach your people to take into consideration whether you’re negotiating with a new or existing client. Increasing the fees for existing clients can be tricky but by setting the right tone, it is far from impossible. By emphasising what differentiates yourself from the competition and why the client has previously chosen you, your people can confidently approach these difficult conversations without fearing a price crumble.

Robin has become one of my key go to people for practically any learning challenge I may have. Over the past 4 years of working with him on a huge number of projects, I have come to rely on him because he understands from the word go what we need and I trust him to deliver exceptional impact each and every time.

Michaela Adams, Freelance Organisational Development Consultant

Robin takes time to understand the business and the context of the training requirement. He couples this with his extensive knowledge and experience and then delivers a truly bespoke experience.

Cheryl Ward, Learning and Development Manager, BGL Group

TESTIMONIALS

I learnt about valuing the services that we provide and what I have to offer as an individual member of the team. [The course] will definitely go a long way in helping us negotiate better fees and differentiate our firm from the rest.

Manager, Accounting Firm (NDA)

The presenter knew his stuff and connected with the audience. He also made it 'informal' by keeping us laughing and yet learning. Best presenter I have ever had.

Senior Tax Advisor, Accounting Firm (NDA)



DEFEND YOUR QUOTE

A buyer's job is to lower your aspirations. You need to lower theirs. We know the tactics and psychology buyers use to cut costs and our programme is designed to reverse the roles in negotiations.

The most common tactic, by far, is to challenge your fees. They will tell you they can get the same cheaper elsewhere, or they will complain that the price is not justified. Our programme emphasises your businesses uniqueness; that which differentiates you from others. Your buyer cannot get the same service elsewhere. We will also show you the best ways to justify your fees instead of caving on price when a fee is challenged.

ANOTHER PRICE MEANS ANOTHER PACKAGE

When buyers continue to try and negotiate downwards, you should try and change the scope of the project. Allowing a client the same package at a reduced price will encourage further negotiations in the future. We will show you the best way to communicate that if they want a reduced fee then they must either pay for less or trade concessions.

We highlight the importance of negotiable variables which can be utilised to achieve a 'win-win' outcome. You can make often make your proposition more attractive by offering something that is cheap to you but valuable to them or asking for something cheap to them but valuable to you.





GIVE SLOWLY AND RELUCTANTLY

When the desired outcome has not been reached, we will show you how to make the client work for concessions. Many organisations give too much, too quickly and offer generous incentives to the client. Our approach is to give slowly and in small amounts. There is a twofold rationale behind this:

Clients do not like protracted negotiations. The longer you can keep them talking, the higher the likelihood that they will blink first.

Making small, slow concessions gives the impression that the client has reached your bottom line. There is no room to manoeuvre further and they have to jump in or walk away.

Our programme is designed to ensure that you have the power, not the client. If you must give something, we will teach you how to make the buyer believe that even the smallest concession is a large one. We also understand the psychology behind calling their bluff because we know that if they are still negotiating, they are interested.

Robin's enthusiasm, energy and great sense of fun makes for an extremely effective training experience. His contribution to our business success over many years is very much appreciated by Elementus.

Paul Phillips, Director of Consultancy Services

Robin is one of the most energetic and inspiring trainers, consultants and coaches that I have ever met. His networking abilities are outstanding and I know that his clients, where ever they move to, will always stay in contact with Robin. His constant desire to ensure that he provides world class training and consultancy means that he challenges himself to be learning the most up to date and relevant ideas that he can then pass on to his clients to help them to achieve business success.

David Harman, Executive Coach, Trainer and Facilitator



CONNECT WITH ROBIN ON LINKEDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/robinlines>

TESTIMONIALS

He never fails to deliver always employing an infectious level of enthusiasm that rubs off on the people he is training.

Over this period Robin has built up a wealth of sales training techniques that he adapts to the requirements of delegates he trains.

David Newell, Change Management Consultant, Endress + Hauser

[Robin's] engaging style, knowledge and focused perspective have ensured that all of those within our business that have begun on this development journey have taken a great deal away from the sessions that they can make practical use of.

Lee Braham, Sales Director at Europa Components



PROFESSIONAL SELLING SKILLS

We have decades of experience in running sales programmes and seminars. Our methods are strongly linked to the psychology of a sales process. As part of our Fee Negotiation Programme, we also offer a specially designed version of one of our most popular sales programmes to compliment and support your negotiations.

- People Buy People First - Build Rapport.
- Position yourself as a Trusted Adviser/Problem Solver - Build Credibility
- Come in Knowledgeable - Research and Preparation
- Questions not Reasons. Understand their requirements, Listen and show you are listening, Confirm what they have told you.
- Sell Solutions. Don't present your solution until you have understood their problem
- Believe in your Value. Communicate the value with conviction.
- Build Value in your proposal
- Body Language – Do's and Don'ts





I would recommend Robin without hesitation. Robin provided several sales training and key account management courses for us and has a well proven methodology that I saw produce immediate results in the sales team in the following months.

**Nick Waldock, Senior Director, Sales
UK & I for CA Technologies**

Gained knowledge on how to address fee matters with clients, what not to say/do. How to lead the conversation... Remember that if you give something, you need to get something back... Excellent presenter. Lots of positive energy and knowledgeable.

**Manager, Big 4 Accounting Firm
(NDA)**

PROGRAMME FORMAT

Our programme is highly practical and includes real-world examples of various scenarios. We can offer group or individual sessions over half-day, full-day or multiple-day sessions.

Crucially, we will tailor the exact content of our programmes to your specific business. We pride ourselves on providing a bespoke service, therefore, we will listen to the unique needs of your business and prepare the programme accordingly.

If you're unsure as to whether now is the right time to take the plunge, we can also offer a two-hour taster session which will provide your people with tips to get them started on their Professional Fee Negotiation journey.

GET IN TOUCH

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