



## "I've looked at life from both sides now, from win and lose, and still somehow..."

Joni Mitchell

Fans of the music of the 60's will immediately recognise this couplet. It comes from one of Joni Mitchell's most durable songs, 'Both sides now', covered by a host of folk and country stars over the years since.

One interpretation of the lyric (one of the many!) is that examining matters from different angles doesn't guarantee certainty. Perceptions are what we are left with, as the line that follows tells us:

### "It's life's illusions I recall..."

We'd agree with the point. Absolute certainty, particularly in the fast-moving and complex environment that is a major sale or purchase, is unattainable. In our studies of skilled versus average negotiators, this was one of the first major differences we identified. Average negotiators spent too much time crunching numbers and gathering facts in a relentless pursuit of certainty. As a result, they had little time left to plan their approach. The skilled group seemed better able to handle ambiguity. They focused more on how they could use and deploy the information they had.

However, going back to Joni's lyric, we also saw that skilled negotiators made sure they looked at things from both sides, as they went through their preparation and planning cycle. In other words, they spent time 'in the other party's shoes', trying to think as they think and see the world through their eyes. Of course this is not easy, especially when you're unsure – or even suspicious – of the motivations of the other side.

For example, if you're a seller, how do you feel about the growing involvement of procurement professionals – either internal departments or external consultants? Do you think that they are simply there to refute perceptions of value in order to drive down the price? What do you really know about their aims, motivations and operations?

Well, you have a golden chance to find out. In November our latest conference, 'Winning with Procurement', will feature a world-class panel of major account players from Global 2000 organisations such as Clifford Chance, AXA, BP, SKF, Vodaphone and Xerox. Some will be sales leaders who will share the strategies they have developed to resist commoditisation and restrictive bid response rules in order to improve their win rates. But other panel members will be senior procurement professionals who will provide insights into their world and some of the metrics that matter to them, beyond price.

Other topics for the conference include how procurement determines supplier selection criteria and highlights from our latest research on real-world bid winning strategies. One of its insights is that early engagement with procurement is vital. The title of the event is deliberate: winning with procurement, not against them. This is your chance to find out how.

For further details [click here](#). There's even an 'early bird' discount if you book your place(s) by this Friday, 28 August and places are going

### Winning with procurement conference

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quickly. After all, to quote from another of Joni's insightful songs, 'Big Yellow Taxi':

**"Don't it always seem to go  
that you don't know what you've got till it's gone."**

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