



Heritage

PLATFORM GROUP



# The Owner's Field Guide to Not Getting Squeezed

Every pressure play you will face when you sell your  
business, the tell for each, and the moves that answer them.

## THE WHOLE METHOD

Eight patterns the buyer runs · Seven moves that answer them  
The Named Floor and the Table Sheet to carry in · Where to practice it live

*You will sell your business once.  
The person across the table buys businesses every week.*



READ THIS FIRST

# Why this guide exists

Every disadvantage an owner carries into a sale is trainable. This guide trains the two that matter most: recognition, and answer. The eight patterns in these pages are run on sellers of established businesses every day, not because buyers are villains, but because pressure works on the unprepared.

Read the eight patterns and learn the tell for each. Learn the seven moves that answer them. Then complete the Named Floor, with a pen, in calm, long before any buyer exists. What you cannot do from a page is run these moves under pressure. That is practiced, not read, and the last page tells you where.

ONE RULE, PRINTED HERE BECAUSE WE MEAN IT

*We teach the patterns so you can see them coming, never so you can run them. The moves are yours to use in the open. A deal you would both sign again in a year is the only deal worth closing.*

*Once you can name a pattern out loud, it mostly stops working on you.*

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BOARD ONE

# The Fox

EIGHT PATTERNS TO RECOGNIZE

These are the pressure plays run on owners who sell once, by people who buy every week. None require a villain. Each one works only until you can name it. Read them to see them coming.

*We teach these so you see them coming, never so you run them.*



## PATTERN ONE

## Frame Seizure

Taking control of what the conversation is even about, before you have settled the frame yourself. They choose the topic, the terms, the order, and you spend the meeting answering instead of asking.

- THE TELL** You are reacting, never setting. Every point is a response to theirs. Notice who chose what you are discussing.
- THE COUNTER** **The Mirror.** Repeat their frame back as a question, then set your own. The frame belongs to whoever names it out loud first.
- SAY THIS** *"Before we price it, can we agree on what we are actually deciding today?"*

## PATTERN TWO

## The Cold Anchor

A first number, early, low, delivered with total confidence and no reasoning. It is not an offer; it is gravity, bending your sense of worth before the real conversation begins.

- THE TELL** Certainty without a basis. Ask how they reached it: a real number has homework behind it, a cold anchor has a shrug.
- THE COUNTER** **The Honest Anchor.** Do not counter the number; question its basis, then return to the range you prepared before they ever called.
- SAY THIS** *"How did you arrive at that number?"*



## PATTERN THREE

## The Scarcity Play

Implying other buyers, other offers, other options, to force urgency. The room fills with rivals you cannot see.

## THE TELL

The competition is always just offstage, never named, never checkable. Pressure rises exactly when you slow down.

## THE COUNTER

**The Read.** Test the claim with an open question before you react to it. A real alternative survives a calm question; a bluff goes vague.

## SAY THIS

*“That is fair, and I want the right owner too. What are you comparing this to?”*

## PATTERN FOUR

## The Leverage Map

Probing for your personal pressures, a health worry, a tired partner, a timeline, to find the lever they can pull later.

## THE TELL

Warm questions about your life that have nothing to do with the business, quietly filed away for use.

## THE COUNTER

**The Named Floor.** Decide in advance what is not theirs to move. A boundary set in calm does not bend to a lever found in the room.

## SAY THIS

*“I keep the personal and the deal separate, if that works for you.”*

PATTERN FIVE

## The Ratchet

The deal that gets worse after you say yes. A handshake, a signed letter, then diligence, and the small asks arrive. Each one is easy to swallow. The sum is not.

**THE TELL** Every adjustment is individually reasonable, and the total only ever moves in one direction. Yours.

**THE COUNTER** The Close that Holds. Keep a written running record from the day the letter is signed, and set a tripwire before diligence starts.

**SAY THIS** *"I keep a running record of what we agreed. Let me read back where we are."*

PATTERN SIX

## The Manufactured Clock

A deadline that appears exactly when you start thinking clearly. The committee meets Friday. The offer expires Monday. A rushed seller stops asking questions.

**THE TELL** The urgency intensifies when you ask questions. Real deadlines survive scrutiny; manufactured ones get flexible under polite pressure.

**THE COUNTER** The Open Question. Test it warmly, then decide on your own clock. A buyer who walks over a weekend was never buying.

**SAY THIS** *"Help me understand what drives the date."*

## PATTERN SEVEN

# The Split Role

Good-cop, bad-cop with an absent decision-maker. The person across from you is warm; the one who must approve everything is never in the room.

**THE TELL** Every concession you win has to clear someone you never meet, who only ever says no.

**THE COUNTER** The Bridge. Negotiate only with the person who can actually agree. An answer you cannot get in the room is not an answer.

**SAY THIS** *"Let us get the person who signs into the next conversation."*

## PATTERN EIGHT

# The Fairness Card

Invoking fairness without a ruler. "Be fair" used as pressure rather than as a measure, so any push-back sounds unreasonable.

**THE TELL** The word fair arrives with no standard attached. You are asked to concede to a feeling, not a benchmark.

**THE COUNTER** The Honest Anchor. Offer the standard first. Fair is a number with a reason, not a mood.

**SAY THIS** *"I want fair too. Whose comparable are we using?"*



BOARD TWO

# The Steward

SEVEN MOVES THAT ANSWER

These are yours to use in the open, in daylight, with your name on them. They do not trick anyone. They keep you clear, keep the other side honest, and keep the deal one you would both sign again in a year.

*Knowing them is not running them. That gap closes with reps.*



## MOVE ONE

## The Named Floor

The boundary you decide in calm, before the room gets warm: the number, and the conditions beneath which this business is not for sale.

## SOUNDS LIKE

*Write it with a pen, long before a buyer exists. It defends against all eight patterns at once, and every one you have not met yet.*

## ON PAPER

Complete the page near the back of this guide.

## MOVE TWO

## The Read

Their real interests and fears beneath the stated position. The deal lives in their world, so map it before you move.

## SOUNDS LIKE

*"It sounds like continuity for your team matters more than the headline number."*

## TECHNIQUE

Say Their Doubts First. Voice their objection before they do. "You are probably wondering whether I will actually stay through the transition." Named out loud, it loses its charge.



## MOVE THREE

## The Mirror

When they say something loaded, repeat their last few words back as a question, then go quiet. The silence is the move, not the repetition.

## SOUNDS LIKE

*"The price is the price." "...the price is the price?" Then nothing. Count to five.*

## PRACTICE

Try it this week on a vendor, a landlord, a teenager. Watch what the silence produces.

## MOVE FOUR

## The Open Question

How and what, never why. Questions that make them work on your problem instead of defending a position.

## SOUNDS LIKE

*"What does this deal need to do for you?"*

## TECHNIQUE

**The Safe No.** Frame the ask so that no is a costless answer. "Would it be unreasonable to hold price and move on terms?" A safe no gets you a real yes.



## MOVE FIVE

## The Honest Anchor

A deliberate, precise, reason-backed number, placed first when you are prepared. Precise over round, \$783,400 rather than \$800,000. An anchor without a rationale is a bluff.

## SOUNDS LIKE

*“Based on the comparable set, the number is \$783,400, and here is the reasoning.”*

## MOVE SIX

## The Bridge

Most price gaps are structure gaps wearing a price costume. Expand across dimensions, note, earnout, transition, terms, before dividing anything.

## SOUNDS LIKE

*“The headline is close. Let us solve the structure, and the number tends to follow.”*



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MOVE SEVEN

# The Close that Holds

They summarize the deal back to you, in their own words. The goal is an agreement both sides would sign again in a year: the one-year test.

SOUNDS LIKE

*“Walk me through the deal as you understand it, so we are certain we are agreeing to the same thing.”*

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*Seven moves. One table. The work is yours now.*

 RECORD OF DECISION

# The Named Floor

Decided in calm, before the room gets warm. Complete with a pen.

Recorded this day by the undersigned owner, of sound judgment and unhurried mind, being the boundary beneath which this business shall not be sold. It answers the Leverage Map, and every pattern that tries to move you.

## MY NUMBER

Precise beats round. A precise number signals homework.

## THE THREE CONDITIONS THAT OUTRANK IT

- 1 What happens to my people \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Minimum cash at close \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 The longest transition I will give \_\_\_\_\_

*Below this line is not mine to give.*

## THE CALM TEST

If an offer 10% below this line arrived tomorrow, would I redraw the line? If yes, begin again.

## OWNER, SIGNED AND DATED

## ACCOUNTABILITY HOLDER

Their one job: hold me to this when the room gets warm.



BEFORE ANY MEETING

# The Table Sheet

One page, filled in before you sit down. Glance at it, not your phone.

## MY GOAL

The specific best case, written down.

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## SAY · THE READ

Name what you see in them, out loud, before they do.

*“It sounds like the timing matters to you more than the headline number.”*

## ASK · THE OPEN QUESTION

Questions that make them work on your problem.

*“What does this deal need to do for you?” · “How did you arrive at that number?”*

## TRADE · THE BRIDGE

What moves besides price.

I CAN GIVE

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I WANT BACK

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Facing a live deal? The Heritage Deal Navigator drafts this page for your specific situation, in about ten minutes: [heritageplatformgroup.com/deal-navigator.html](https://heritageplatformgroup.com/deal-navigator.html)



WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

# You have the method. Knowing it is not running it.

This guide put the whole method in your hands: eight patterns to recognize, seven moves to answer them, two pages to carry in. Reading them is done. Running them, calmly, when your life's work is on the table and the person across from you does this every week, is a different thing. That gap closes one way. Reps.

IT STARTS WITH A LIVE SESSION

## Negotiate the Sale of Your Life's Work

*A live room where owners run these moves under pressure, with feedback, before it counts.*

[heritageplatformgroup.com/programs.html](https://heritageplatformgroup.com/programs.html)

Waitlist members get first seats and shape the schedule. Between sessions, the Sparring Room is where you drill.



*Heritage Platform Group advises on and acquires established businesses. We teach the method we use ourselves, and we disclose where we sit at the table.*