



Vantage Partners **2026**
Customer-Supplier
Negotiation Study

Capturing Value in Volatile Times



MISSION

Drive measurable business results by transforming the way individuals, teams, and organizations work together

FOCUS

We provide strategic advice, hands-on coaching, and training to help clients with their most critical negotiations, external business relationships, and internal collaboration challenges

EXPERIENCE

Over thirty years' consulting to, and creating learning experiences for, Global 2000 companies

COMMITMENT

Ongoing thought leadership, with ten articles published in *Harvard Business Review*, and adjunct faculty appointments at Harvard, Dartmouth, the US Military Academy at West Point, and Tufts University



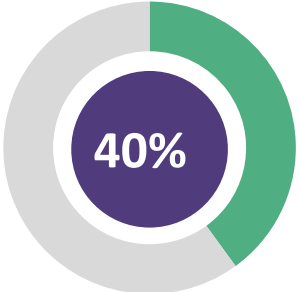
The state of negotiation today

Organizations are facing significant market disruptions, from tariffs to AI. To stay competitive in this environment, companies must protect both value *and* relationships.

Our study finds that top negotiators:

- Outperform their peers by a wide margin
- Limit value erosion during both negotiation and implementation
- Are more collaborative, not adversarial
- Benefit from formal negotiation tools and training

Tariff Uncertainties



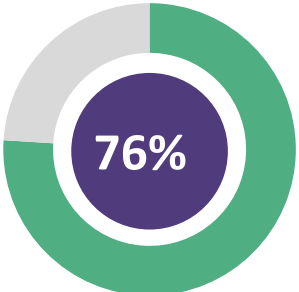
cost increase anticipated by buy-side and sell-side respondents on average due to U.S. tariff changes

Artificial Intelligence



of those surveyed use AI in their negotiations — from data analysis to strategy development

Reliance On External Partners



of respondents anticipate reliance on suppliers and external partners to increase in the next five years

Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study





Study purpose

- At Vantage Partners, we believe negotiation is a critical enabler of competitive advantage for organizations that build out their negotiation process, mindset, and skills across functions.
- **Building on our prior studies in 2009 and 2018, this study surveyed negotiators to:**
 - Compare how negotiation practices and outcomes have changed over time
 - Uncover the most pressing challenges faced by customers and suppliers
 - Analyze what the best negotiators do differently
 - Determine what organizations can do to enhance negotiation results

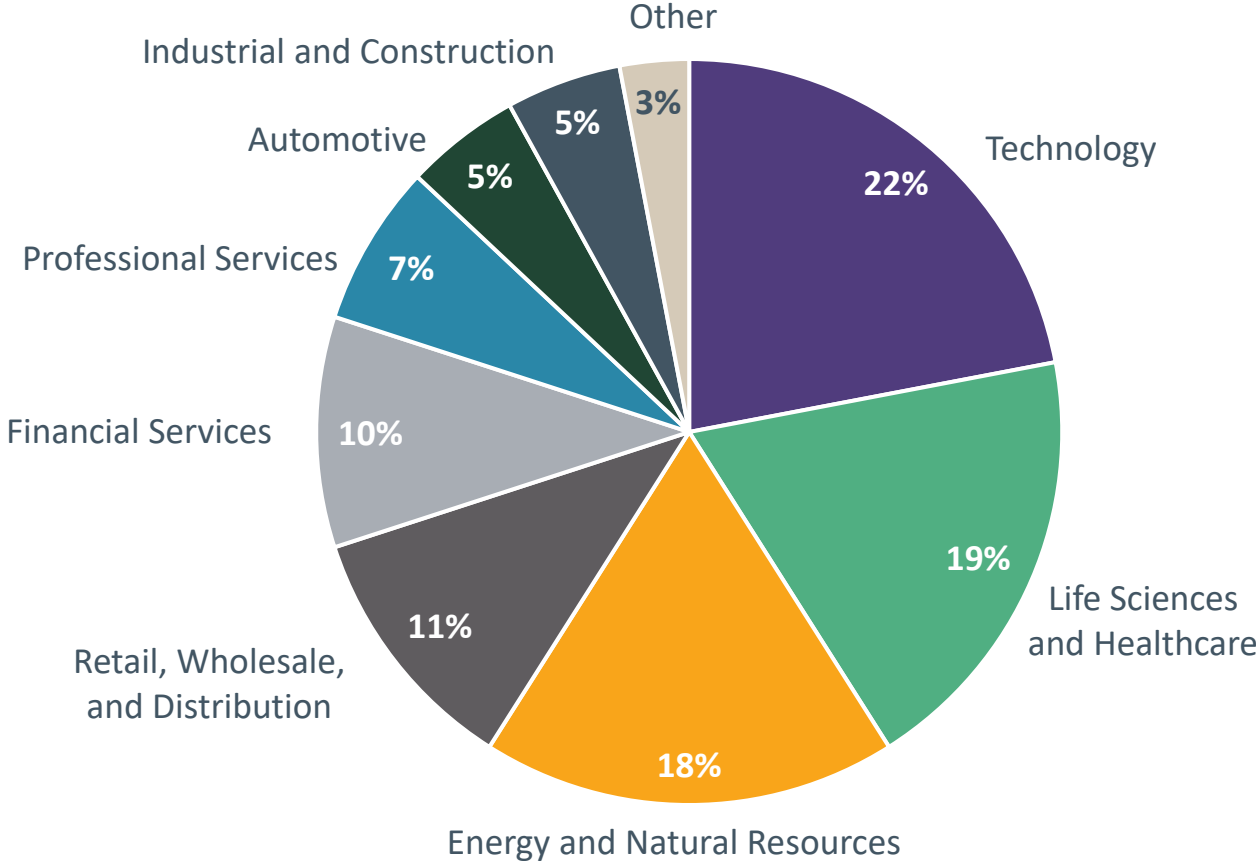
Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



Study overview

- Who: 411 buy-side and sell-side leaders
- When: June-August 2025
- How: Surveys and interviews

Cross-industry study



Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



Key findings



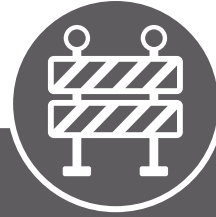
Environment

Negotiations are increasingly adversarial, with **42% of deals reported adversarial** in our survey, up from 29% in 2018.



Value

Organizations are **losing 60% of their deal value** through the negotiation and implementation, higher than many companies realize.



Barriers

Buy-side and sell-side see **similar barriers to value**: cumbersome negotiation processes, poor stakeholder alignment, and being overly focused on price.



Winning Behaviors

Top negotiators win **3X more value** for their organizations and are more likely to enhance relationships through the process.



Enablers

More top negotiators reported that their companies had **key negotiation enablers** in place — such as training and organizational infrastructure.

Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



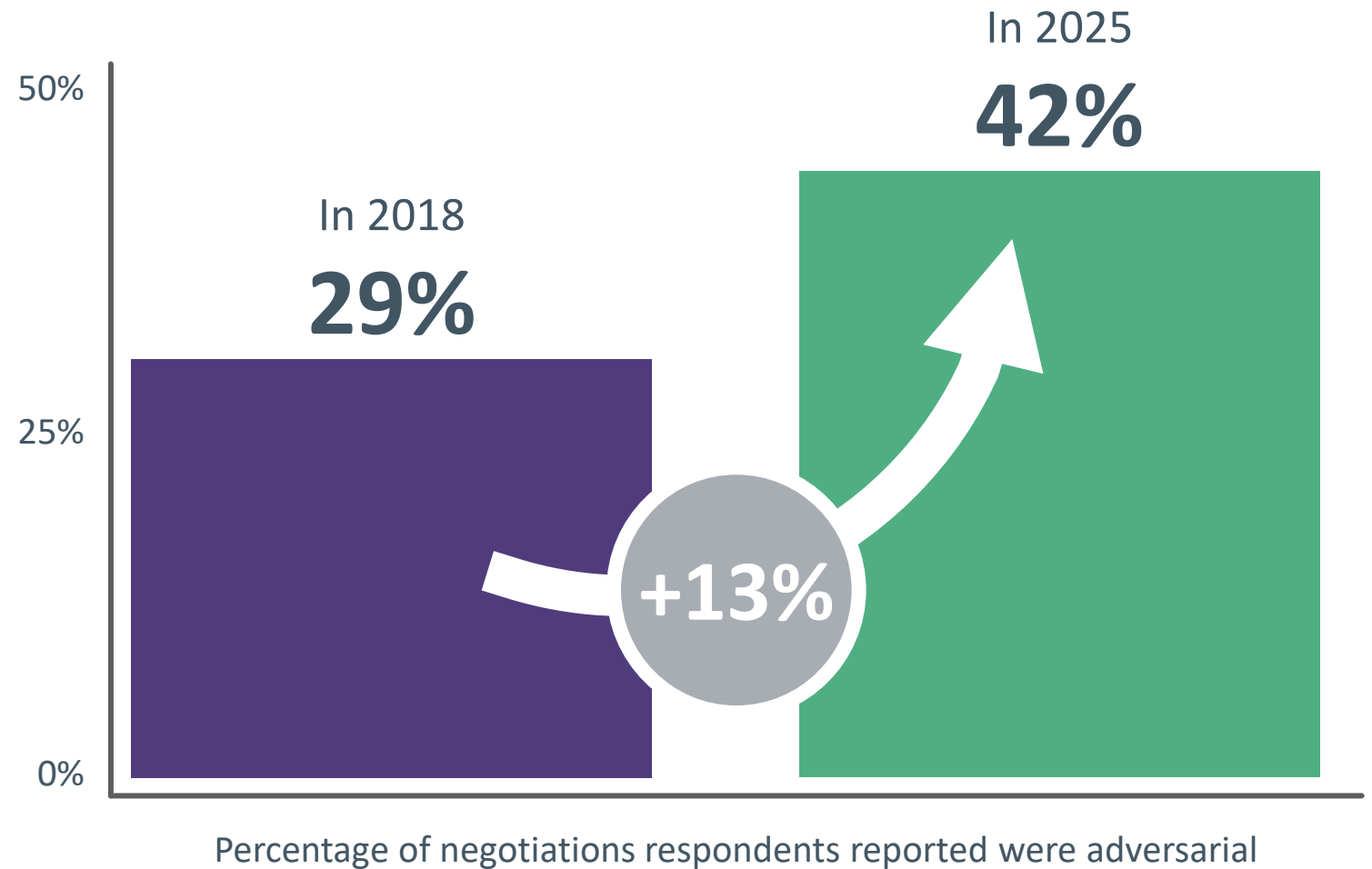
Negotiations are becoming more adversarial

“

I negotiate on both sides... The end-to-end supply chain continues to become more complicated, and uncertainties make people antsy, reserved, and combative — can't blame them.

— Chief Commercial Manager at a Leading Manufacturer

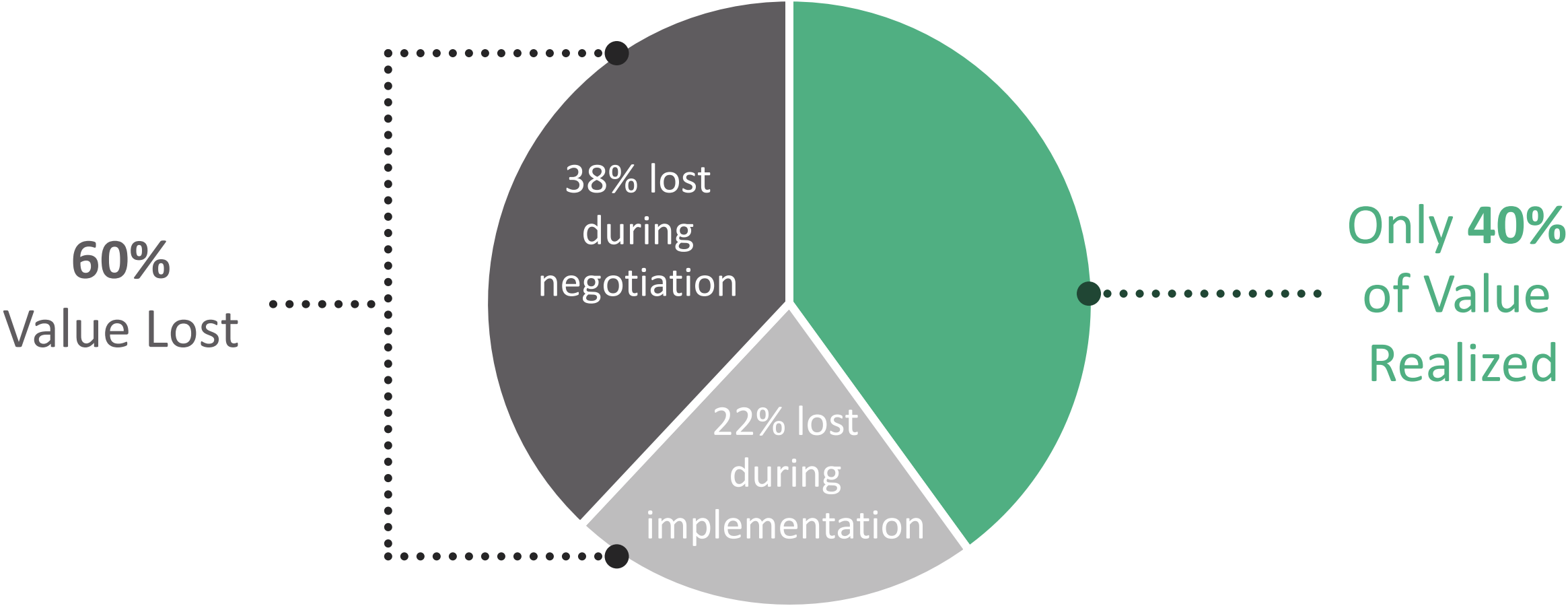
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Source: Vantage Partners Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study, 2026 and 2018



Organizations lose 60% of achievable deal value

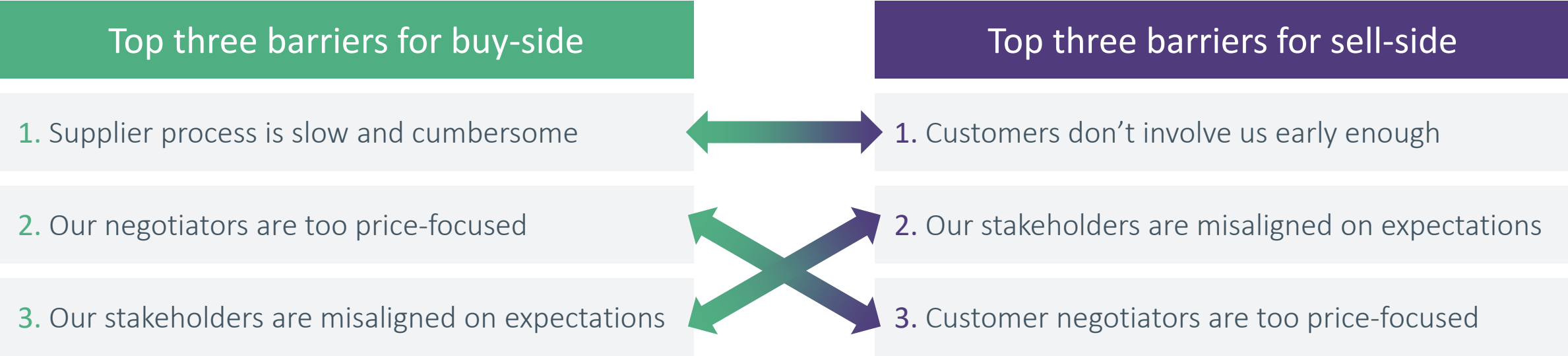


Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



Top buy- and sell-side barriers are process, alignment, and focus

We surveyed negotiators on a wide range of barriers to value across negotiator behavior, negotiation process, stakeholder alignment, and change management.



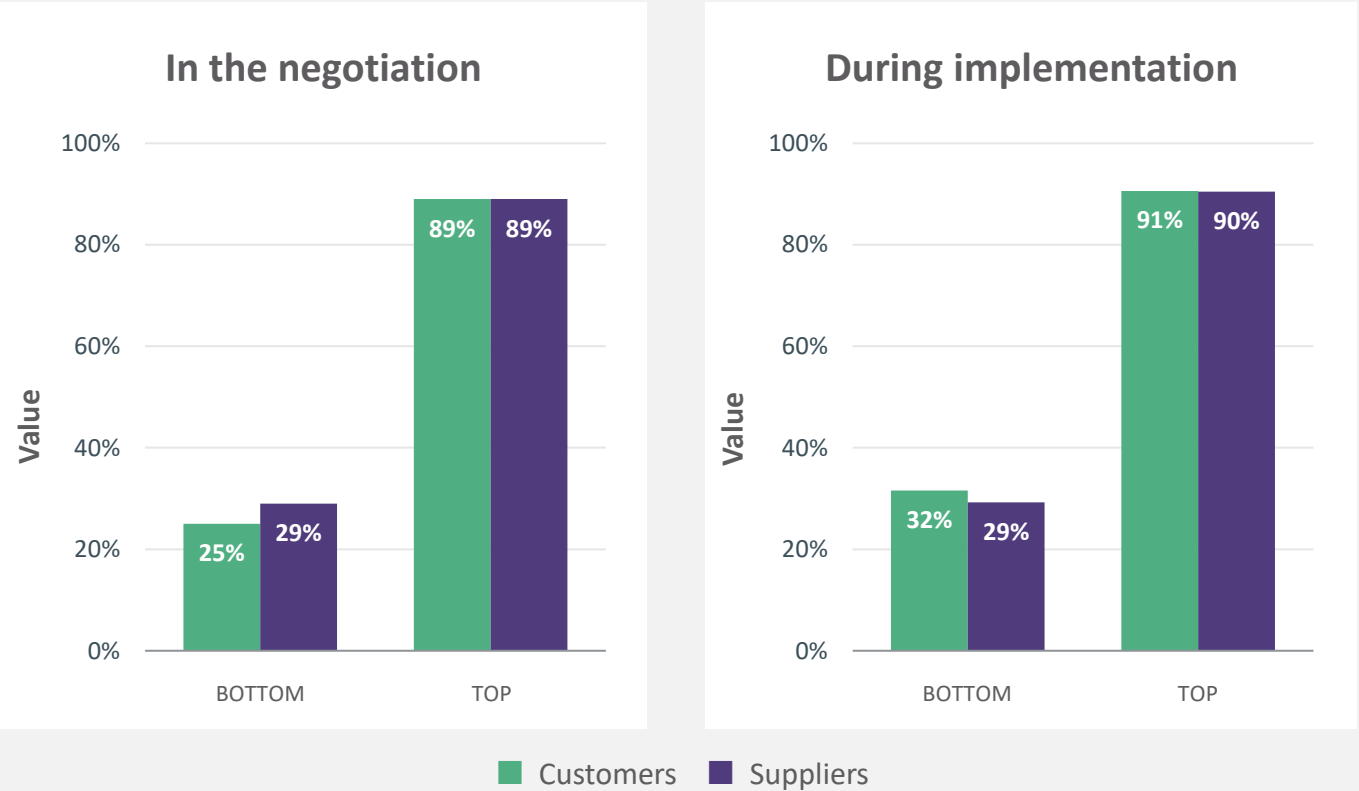
“ It is funny that I work at the cutting edge of technology, but the way we work can be archaic. It is all too easy to fall into a pricing battle, into old habits of doing things. In most cases, we are incentivized to. It takes incredible work and dedication to break out of that. ”
– Senior VP of Supply Chain at a Quantum Tech Company

Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



Top performing negotiators achieve 3X more value

Average deal value realization



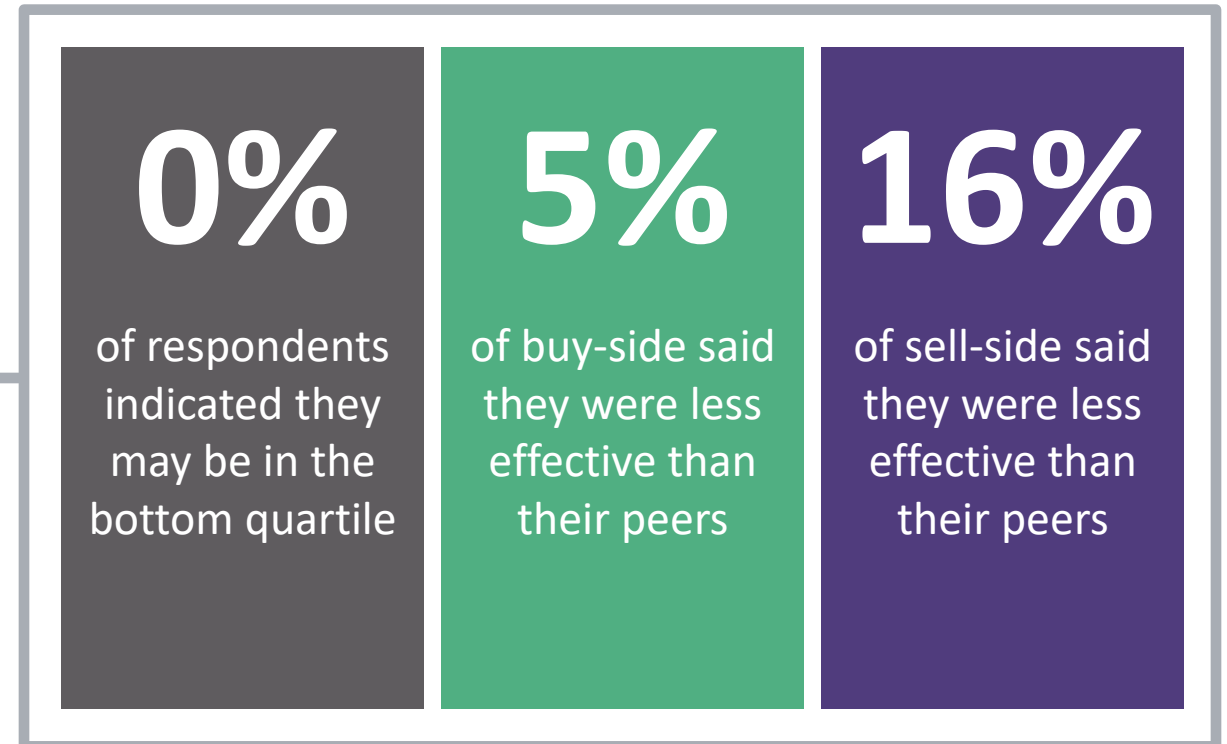
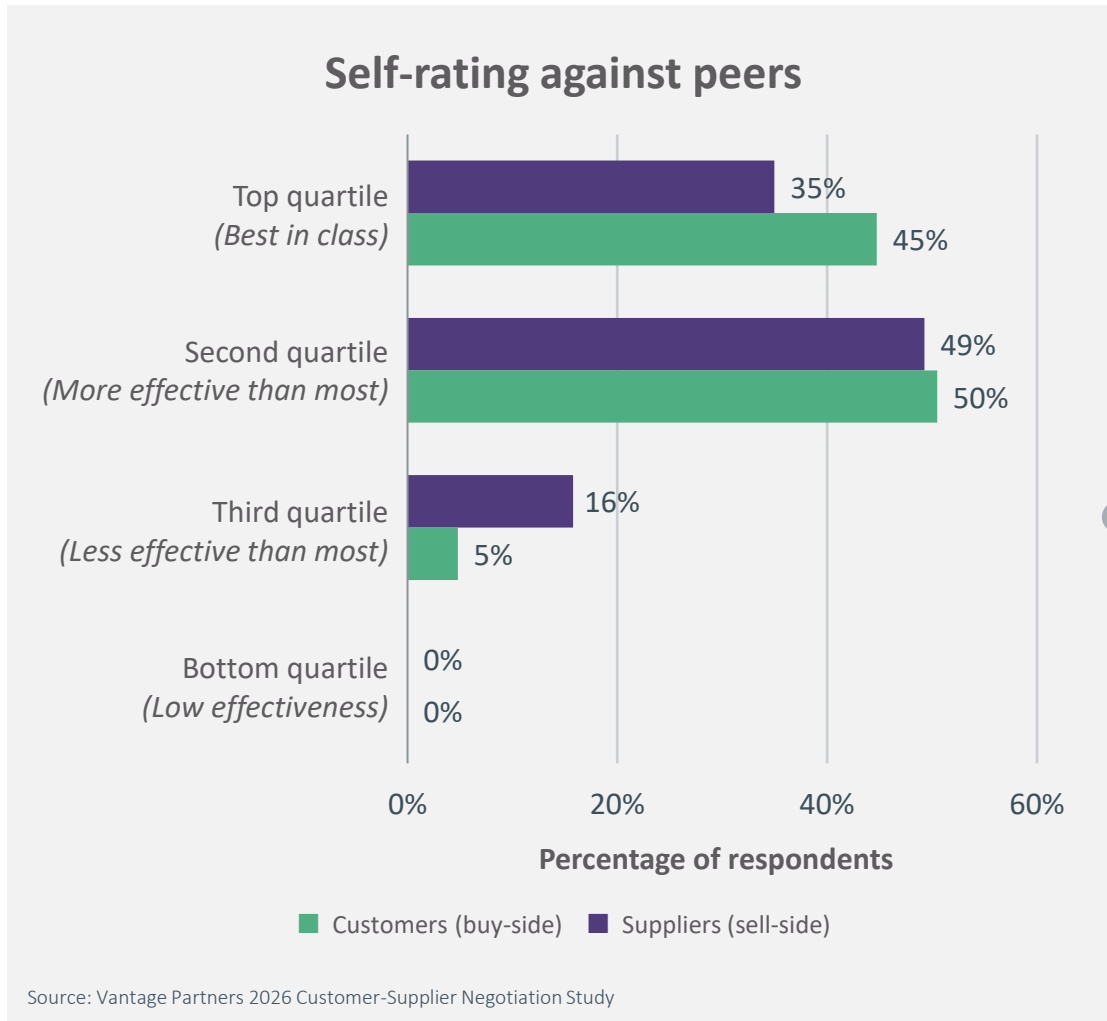
Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



There is approximately a **60% difference** in deal value realization between the top and bottom quartiles — for customers and suppliers.



Most negotiators overestimate their negotiating skills



What are top negotiators doing differently?

In one word, how would you describe your recent negotiations?

Most common answers for each group

Top 25% Performing Negotiators

“Collaborative”



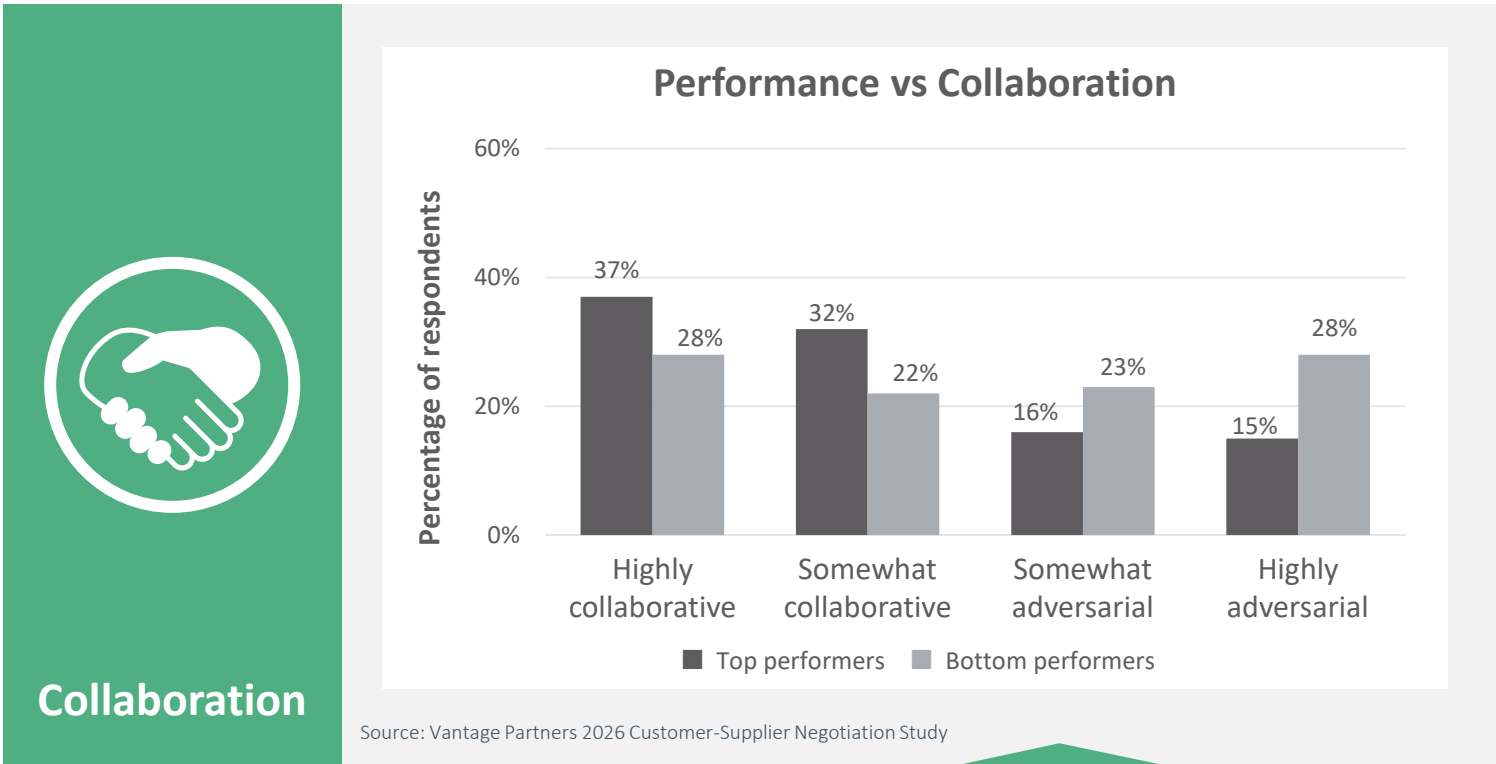
Bottom 25% Performing Negotiators

“Challenging”



Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study


Top negotiators are more collaborative



Companies that report collaborative negotiations continue to report better outcomes than those that report engaging in adversarial negotiations, matching findings in 2009 and 2018.*



Collaboration is **correlated with higher deal value realization** as well as the feeling of having more leverage.



Collaboration doesn't mean giving in. You can be **“soft on the people and hard on the problem.”**

*Vantage Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study 2009 and 2018



Top negotiators make fewer concessions

Bottom performers are **1.5–2x** more likely to accept unfavorable terms and conditions for the sake of the customer-supplier relationship compared to top negotiators.

Discounts have **little to no impact** on speed of deal closing or customer retention. They **erode product and service value**.*

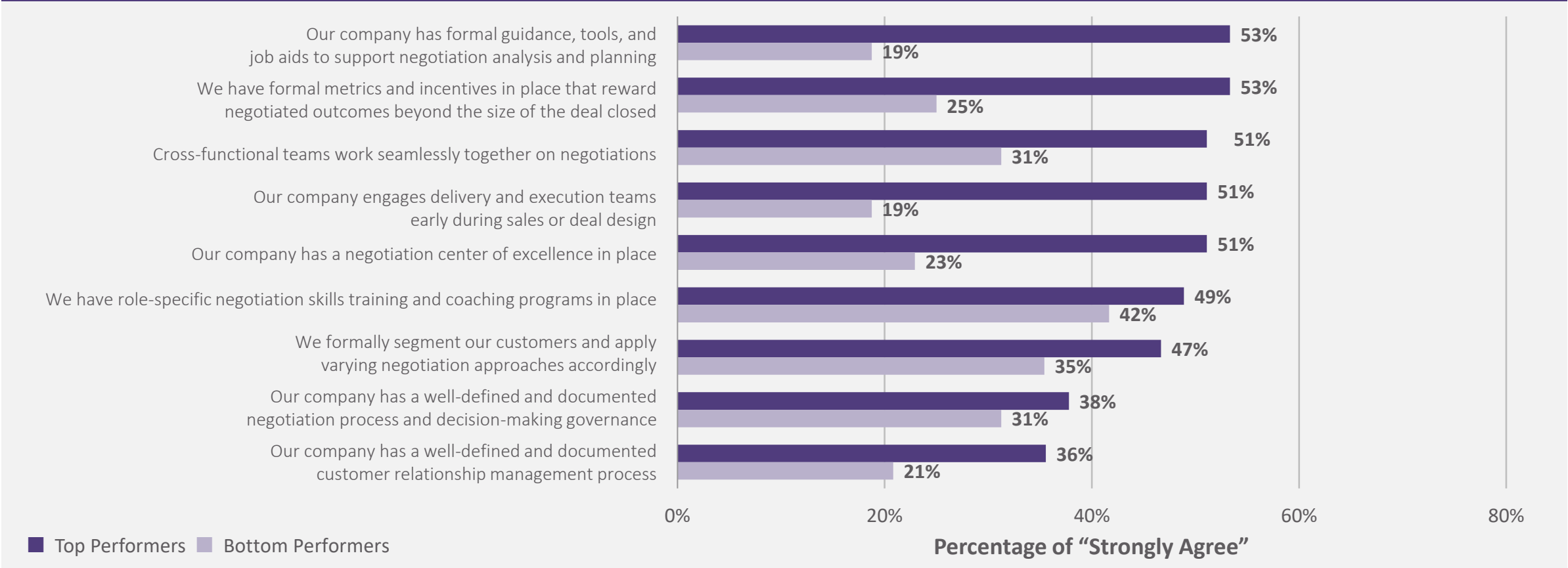
Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study

*The Value of Pricing Discipline Sales Study, Vantage Partners 2019



Top sell-side negotiators are supported by negotiation infrastructure...

To what extent do **sell-side negotiators** agree with the following statements?

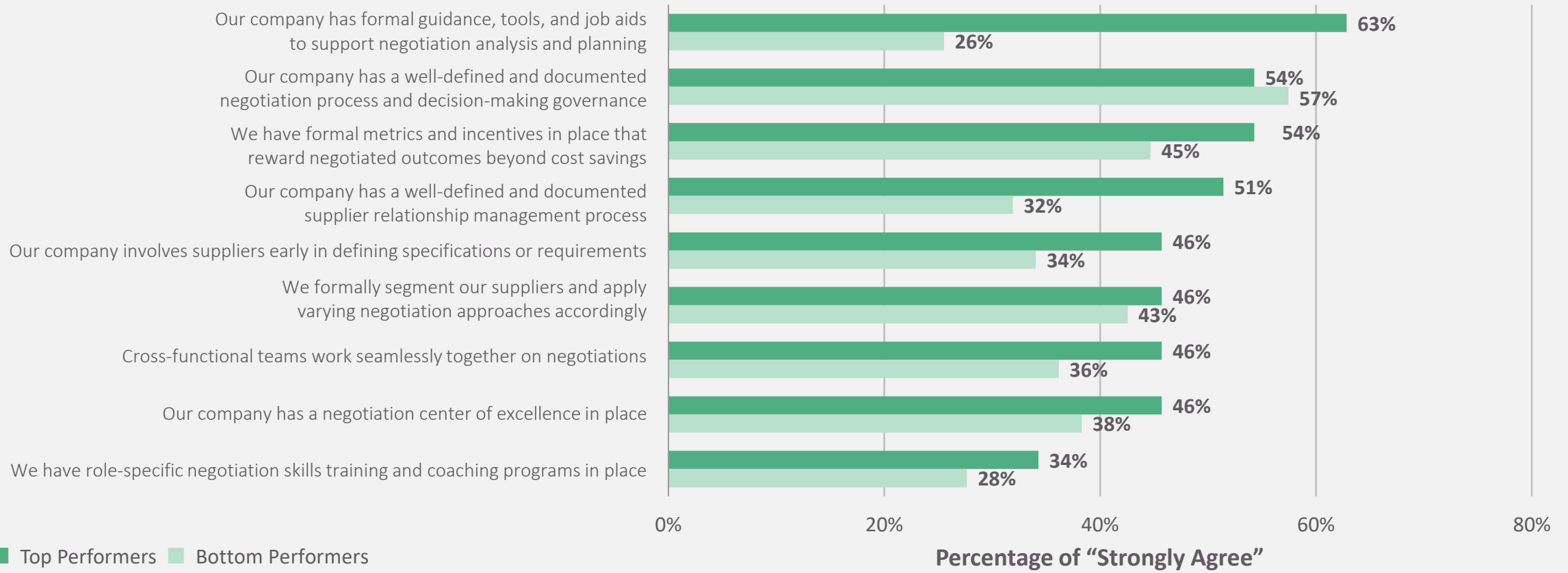


Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



...and so are top buy-side negotiators

To what extent do **buy-side negotiators** agree with the following statements?



Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



Future-proof your organization

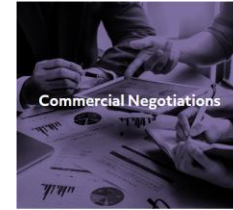


2x

Top performers take action!

Top performers are twice as likely to proactively scenario plan than bottom performers, who prefer taking a more reactive “tightening spend and bracing for impact” approach.

Source: Vantage Partners 2026 Customer-Supplier Negotiation Study



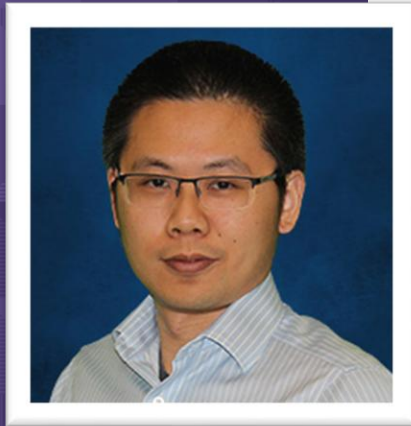
As pressures rise, even top negotiators are being tested. Those who prepare most effectively will realize far more deal value and help secure a market leadership position for their organizations.

Vantage has advised on high-stakes negotiations for nearly 30 years

[See how we can help](#)

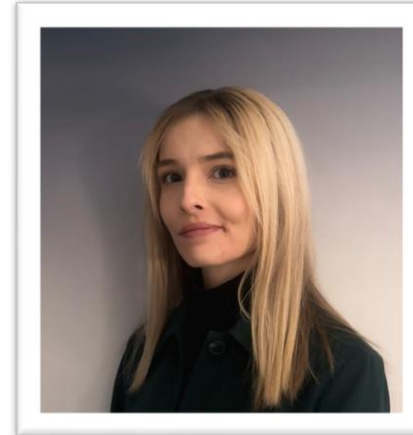


About the Editors



Jack Gao

Jack Gao is a Principal at Vantage Partners, focused on developing and operationalizing business strategies, with a concentration in high-tech and life science sectors. He also works closely with supply management organizations, including advising on high-stakes negotiations, elevating talent, and enhancing supplier management.



Tess McGrory

Tess is a Consultant at Vantage Partners, where she manages large-scale training programs focused on building negotiation and collaboration skills. She has a background in international business and logistics, along with experience in project management, client engagement, and research on training effectiveness.



Elizabeth Miclau

Elizabeth is an Associate at Vantage Partners. She has contributed to more than 25 research projects on decision-making, influence, and group dynamics, drawing on her background in neuroscience, psychology, and organizational behavior. She now applies this expertise to negotiation-focused consulting and training initiatives.



Ben Siddall

Ben is a Partner at Vantage Partners, where he helps pharmaceutical, medical device, and healthcare organizations build and execute strategies to manage the evolving healthcare ecosystem. Ben also works with sales organizations to achieve breakthrough results, with a particular emphasis on life sciences and IT sectors.





www.vantagepartners.com