



CONTRACT NEGOTIATION: WHEN THE DETAIL SAVED THE DAY

Newman Cynthia M. Cunha¹, Murillo de Oliveira Dias²

¹Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil

²Coordinator of DBA Programs at Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil

²Corresponding e-mail: murillo.dias@fgv.br //
agenda.murillo@gmail.com

²Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil - Praia de Botafogo 190, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, ZIP Code 22250900

ABSTRACT

This paper addressed a buyer-seller contract renewal negotiation case, regarding a service provider and a power transmission company, on the provision of cleaning, conservation, and bush cutting services for approximately 120 electrical substations, the unit of analysis. Key findings pointed out compliance issues crucial to prevent the contract signature with the main competitor. The article provides scholars, decision-makers, negotiators, and other practitioners with a new perspective on contract negotiation and corporate governance. The discussion of implications and future research recommendations compile the present work.

Keywords: Contract negotiation, corporate governance, compliance, Type III Negotiation

INTRODUCTION: -

Companies sign contracts designed to be long-lasting and mutually beneficial. Despite the good quality of services provided, difficulties do arise once contracts are underway. In this case, the difficulties appeared by the time of the contract renewal. This article addressed a successful case of contract renewal negotiation involving two parties and multiple issues negotiated, or a Type III negotiation (Dias, 2020), as the unit of analysis (Yin, 2003).

We aimed at throwing more light on the contract renewal negotiation and corporate governance under investigation. The subject under review is sensitive and has attracted scholar attention recently ((Sartori, S.; Jantsch, M. Dias, M. Navarro, R., 2020; Dias & Navarro, 2017; Dias, 2020, 2019; Dias, M.; Andrade, S.; Silva, M. R.; Teles, G.; Mello, B.; Moura, R.; Salazar, A.; Sotoriva, L.M.; Mariotti, A; Filho, C., 2021; Dias, Lopes, Teles, Pereira, and Castro, 2020; Dias & Lopes, 2019; Dias & Teles, 2018; Dias and Duzert, 2017; Sotoriva, L.M.; Leitão, R.; Dias, M.; Marques, R.; Araújo, P.; Machado, F., 2021; Leitão, R; Rosales Jr, O; Machado, F; Corrêa, J.V; Dias, M., Costa, D., 2021; Dias, M. et al., 2021). This is a case involving the private electric Power

Transmission Company, hereafter PTC, and a cleaning services contract, hereafter Contractor. The real names were altered for compliance issues and to preserve the real identity of the participants. Nevertheless, the case is real and took place between Pernambuco and São Paulo state, respectively, northeast and southeastern regions in Brazil, in 2019. The Power Transmission Company (PTC) is headquartered in São Paulo state, and the Service Provider (Contractor) is located at Recife, Pernambuco state), with an office at São Paulo state. Both parties were renegotiating a third contract on the same issue. The previous ones were successfully concluded, and the PTC was satisfied with the services provided by the contractor.

Negotiation is a Latin word meaning nego = deny, and otium = leisure. Negotiation is defined as “a process in which individuals work together to formulate agreements about the issues in dispute. This process assumes that the parties involved are willing to communicate and to generate offers, counteroffers, or both.” (Rubin and Brown, 1975, p.461), even as, a “form of decision making in which two or more parties talk with one another to resolve their opposing interests (Pruitt, 1981, p. xi). The field of research has been extensively studied over the past century (Dias, 2020, 2020b, 2019; Lax and Sebenius, 1986; Raiffa, Richardson and Metcalfe, 2002; Moore and Woodrow, 2010; Fisher Ury and Patton, 1981; Salacuse, 2008). The process of Negotiation has also been investigated under distinct approaches. In this article, we followed the Four-Type Negotiation Matrix (Dias 2020), as depicted in Figure 1:



Figure 1: The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix. Source: Dias, 2020. Reprinted under permission.

The single case addressed a Type III negotiation, where the three parties, the (i) lawyer and the (ii) CEO of the service provider, negotiated with (iii) the private company director, involving one issue, the contract renewal. Given the third successive contract signed between the parties, the object is the provision of cleaning, conservation, and cutting of bush services in about 120 electrical substations. The current power transmission line is illustrated in Figure 2, as follows:



Fig.2: - Power transmission line. Source: Otte (2021). Reprinted under permission

Observe the power transmission line in Figure 2, whereas the descriptions of services provided by the contractor are illustrated in Table 1, as follows:

Table 1
Description of the services provided by the contractor

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES	
Internal areas – carpeted floors	Maintenance and conservation of lawn/bushes in the flat area - visible areas
Indoor areas - cleaning of cold floors	Maintenance and conservation of lawn/bushes in a land area - visible areas
Indoor areas - cleaning workshops/warehouses and microwave	Aceiro up close
Energized areas - meeting halls, workshops, and other buildings	Maintenance and conservation of gardens
Outdoor areas - sweeping of sidewalks and patios	Maintenance and conservation of lawn/bushes in the flat area - areas not visible
Cleaning of external glasses	Maintenance and conservation of lawn/bushes - areas not visible
Wolf mouth cleaning, passage boxes, drain, channels, and rainwater	Crushed area (energized area)

Observe in Figures 2 and Table 1 the contract scope regarding the cleaning of extensive areas surrounding the power line transmission. First, in the upcoming sections, the contract renewal negotiation is presented, analyzed, and discussed. Next, methods and research limitations are discussed.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND METHODS: -

We adopted a qualitative research design based on multiple methods approach through single case study analysis and direct participation of one of the coauthors. We followed an inductive rationale and an interpretive approach. We followed Dias (2020) qualitative framework on classifying the negotiations. This case is limited by Goffman's dramaturgical theory (1959, 1961). Finally, the case is limited to the Brazilian corporative governance normative. Other countries and their specific norms should be investigated separately.

BACKGROUND:-

In 2016, the Service Provider – a private company with about 3,000 customers operating for 40 years with 10,000 direct employees, distributed in the commercial, educational, health, industrial, and electrical segments, decided to hire an executive with fixed residence in São Paulo to negotiate the contract with the PTC. The strategy to approach its primary client in the southeast region: PTC. His current contract was on the eve of an end, and a new competitive process would be carried out. Therefore, the possibility of having an executive acting exclusively and dedicated became fundamental to ensure the continuity of the contract.

After ten years and three contractual renewals, PTC had communicated to Service Provider that the hiring of the company responsible for the services would take place only through three requirements: (i) price (lower global commercial condition); (ii) technical (best operational plan for service) and (iii) innovation (the use of new ideas or work tools aimed at increasing productivity, management/control of the operation and work safety).

The first challenge faced regarded the lack of contract negotiation experience of the new executive in price formation and cost composition regarding the contract specifics.

The contract involved BRL 41.5 million (approximately eight million dollars contract), for a three-year contract (36 months), encompassing 120 substations in operation, with voltage up to 550 kV, connecting the transmission system to different localities/municipalities from Southeastern Brazil. Furthermore, 90 (ninety) days were necessary to open the event until the selection of the winning company of the bidding process, open to new companies to promote the competition between different service providers. The Service Provider had invested a lot over the ten years of providing training, labor development, and acquisition of heavy machinery. Therefore, losing the contract would imply a financial loss equivalent to BRL 1.245,000.00 (approximately \$ 250,000).

Then, the executive from São Paulo reported several times to the Service Provider's Board of Directors that the situation was under control, when it was not, because there was a competitor from Rio de Janeiro with harsh commercial conditions to compete against the Service provider. The competitor proposed a service innovation through services automatization. In sum, the competitor has imported a robot from Slovakia, designed to operate with more productivity and safety. However, the robot would not be approved because it did not attend all the projects prerequisites. In sum, the main competitor

would be disqualified from the bidding process, without the necessity of target price reduction, by the Service Provider, regarding the new contract. The new robot is illustrated in the following Figure 3:



Fig. 3: - The Robogreen. Source: Robogreen (2021)

Observe in Figure 3 the Robogreen, a remote-control machine that could transport up to 23 types of tools and perform jobs regardless of the environment or season, able to conquer almost all sorts of terrains. "Robust cabling, sophisticated technologies, and variability of work usage make it the absolute world leader in the field of work supports." (Robogreen, 2021, p.1)

THE COMPETITOR WINS THE NEGOTIATION:-

After ninety days of the bidding process start, the Service Provider's CEO received a call from the PTC's Supply Board, informing that the main competitor from Rio de Janeiro won the contest and would become the new contractor. Immediately after receiving the information, the executives from the Service Provider requested a face-to-face meeting with the CEO of the PTC, even without having communicated the result of the process to the President of the Private Company and without knowing how they would revert to the decision.

Next, the Service Provider President and the company lawyer decided to turn the table and save the contract, taking the first flight to São Paulo. The PTC CEO promptly welcomed them. They knew each other for a long time, and the conversation went in a friendly mood. The CEO explained that the competitor presented a better proposal than the Service Provider.

While the Supply Manager was talking with the President of CORTE E GRAMA LTDA, Executive Recife realized that the contract signed with the winning company of the event was on the table of this Manager and tried to enter the number of the National Registry of Legal Entities - CNPJ of the Company on Google through his mobile phone, to quickly expedite the winner.

Executive Recife made a query to the number of the Register of Individuals - CPF¹ of the Company's partners and thus concluded that one of them had several other companies in his name and that one of these companies was included in Operation Lava Jato² for alleged payments of bribes to Petrobras

¹ CPF is the personal government record equivalent to the social security register in the USA.

² Note (3): a set of investigations, carried out by the Brazilian Federal Police, which has served more than 1,000 search and seizure mandates, temporary arrest, pretrial detention and coercive driving, in order to investigate money laundering scheme that moved billions of reais in bribes. The operation began on March 17, 2014 and ended on February 1, 2021 and had 80 operational phases.

executives (Petróleo Brasileiro S/A) for the provision of services of engineering works and that for this reason, this partner was in custody in a preventive manner.

WHEN THE DETAIL SAVED THE DAY:-

Considering that the PTC is a publicly-traded company, and one of the largest energy companies in Latin America, and abiding by the corporate governance best practices, the PTC President decided to put the situation on hold to investigate the fact mentioned by the Service Provider lawyer. Ultimately, a few days later, the PTC President announced the disqualification of the former winning company and declared the Service Provider winner of the bidding contest. The contract was renewed for 36 months, from 2019 to 2022, for BRL 41.5 million (approximately \$ 8,000,000). Again, the detail saved the day.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS:-

The case study reported a real Type III negotiation occurred between a power transmission company and a service provider (Dias, 2020), and has implications on the following business segments: (i) retail business (Dias, M. et al., 2015; Dias, M. et al., 2015, 2014; Dias M., 2012); (ii) streaming video industry negotiating with the government (Dias, M., & Navarro, 2018); (iii) civil construction projects (Dias, M., 2016); (iv) Non-governmental organizations dealing with governments (Paradela, V.; Dias, M.; Assis; Oliveira, J.; Fonseca, R. (2019)); (v) negotiations with the government (Dias & Navarro, 2018; Cruz and Dias, 2020, 2020b); (vi) mining industry (Dias, M., & Davila, 2018); (vii) debt collection negotiations (Dias, M., 2019, 2019b; Dias, M. and Albergarias, 2019); (viii) Cooperative societies (Dias, M., 2018, 2019); (ix) public transportation (Dias, M., 2018b, 2019; Dias M., 2019; Dias M., 2019f, Dias M., 2019g, Dias M., 2019h, Dias M., 2019i, Dias M., 2019j, Dias M., 2019k, Dias M., 2019l); (x) buyer-seller contract negotiations (Dias, M.; Andrade, S.; Silva, M. R.; Teles, G.; Mello, B.; Moura, R.; Salazar, A.; Sotoriva, L.M.; Mariotti, A; Filho, C. (2021)); (xi) cooperative's contract negotiation (Dias, 2018); (xii) industry negotiations (Dias, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e, 2019; Dias 2019b, 2019c, 2019d), (xiii) civil construction negotiations (Dias, M. 2016; Dias, M. 2020b; Dias, M. 2020c; Dias, M., 2020d), among others.

Since the negotiation came to a successful end in 2019, the Recife team directly carried out the subsequent negotiations. A new process will be carried out in 2022. The expectation is to succeed for the new term, for both Executive Recife and all team has been doing studies and performing testes de pro viable minimum ducts, but, well, this is a story to be told later.

About the lessons learned, first, the negotiation is over when it is over. Persistence and desire to reverse the situation made the impossible possible. One lesson learned regards the following of one's instincts: if the lawyer did not believe that the situation could be reverted and did not react promptly, the contract would most likely be lost. Gathering information proved to be crucial in this case. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to persist until the deal is irreversibly lost. Who knows when a detail can save the day?

FUTURE RESEARCH:-

For future research, we encourage investigating other Types of negotiation (Dias, 2020), such as Types I, II, and IV, not investigated here (see Figure 1). We also research cases in other countries and business segments, once this case is limited to the Brazilian business scenario on the power transmission sector.

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