



Strategic Lessons from Built-to-Suit and Construction Negotiations in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates how two separate negotiations occur in Brazil for Built-to-Suit (BTS) lease agreements and construction administration contracts. Three organizations held separate talks that involved multiple changes to their projects, contract disputes, and interruptions from various stakeholders. The conflict between parties evolved into collaborative work through their combined efforts to establish trust, their commitment to transparency, and their use of integrative strategies. The project resulted in obtaining a BTS contract that included shared facilities and a construction administration agreement, achieved through the critical meeting. The research findings demonstrate that effective governance systems, along with flexible negotiation techniques and proper stakeholder management, are essential for successful high-pressure negotiations, providing valuable insights for business leaders and academics working in the real estate and construction sectors.

Keywords:

Negotiation; Built-to-Suit; Construction Contracts; Brazil; Stakeholder Management.

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1. Introduction

Organizations use negotiation as their primary decision-making method to establish agreements for business operations, real estate transactions, and construction management. The project foresees the construction of a building for commercial use with a total built area of 3,000 m², complying with all requirements and specifications imposed by the Clinical Institute, to meet the needs of the practice and the development of its commercial activities, consistent with the business as described in the contract and current legislation.

During contract negotiations, the client added a slab to the project for the exploration of commercial rooms, thereby increasing the built area to 4,500 m². The building is no longer exclusively used for mixed and shared operations, making it a commercial condominium, thereby changing some clauses agreed upon initially. The research applies Dias's (2020) Four-Type Negotiation Matrix as its theoretical framework to examine negotiations across four categories: distributive, integrative, mixed-motive, and adaptive. The framework shows that negotiations are flexible systems that shift between different types as parties modify their approaches and goals and respond to external factors. The BTS negotiation began with a collaborative, interest-based approach, but the construction administration negotiation evolved into a competitive, positional conflict. The negotiation types show how Dias's matrix works in real business environments that need to manage various stakeholders through complex organizational systems. In 2023, the company began negotiations to conduct a BTS with the same institute, with the contract signed in 2024 at another address. The good relationship between the companies led to a partnership to find and build a second unit in the city, in a location as good and busy as the current one. After a few months of searching and several options, the company approved the last site presented, along with the landowner's intention to execute the BTS.

This dual negotiation case underscores several themes central to negotiation theory. The first point demonstrates that negotiation types vary according to environmental factors and the power dynamics among the parties involved. The research indicates that clients express their actual requirements through their stated positions, which include their fundamental goals of maintaining control and minimizing potential threats. The project leader reached the final solution through his well-known reputation and dedication to work despite various project interruptions, demonstrating how trust and credibility work. The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix is depicted in Figure 1:



Figure 1 The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix

Source: Dias, 2020. Reprinted with permission

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine a dual negotiation process involving a Built-to-Suit (BTS) lease agreement and a construction administration contract in Brazil. Case studies are an ideal research method for studying complex negotiations because they allow scientists to examine both external conditions and the interactions among various parties. Organizations can determine their "how" and "why" questions through detailed investigations, as Yin (2018) argues that his methods provide more information than quantitative research methods. The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix from Dias (2020) serves as an analytical tool for studying negotiations because it divides negotiations into four categories: distributive, integrative, mixed-motive, and adaptive. The matrix shows how negotiation procedures change when parties modify their approaches due to evolving interests and positions, and when external factors affect the negotiation process. The BTS contract began with interest-based bargaining, which brought the parties together, but the construction administration contract evolved into a positional conflict. The negotiation matrix (Dias, 2020) enables users to follow a systematic method that helps them detect changes and their effects on achieving their desired results. The research data originated from contractual drafts, meeting records, and retrospective accounts, which demonstrated the development of the Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA) along with the associated concessions and mental elements that influenced the negotiation choices. The research used multiple sources for triangulation, which enhanced reliability, and thematic coding allowed researchers to group negotiation behaviors according to Dias's classification system. The research omitted all original company names and their full identities to comply with ethical standards and regulatory requirements.

3. Inside the Built-to-Suit negotiation

3.1. Background and Context

The Project Leader began negotiations with **Clinical Institute** in 2023 because the company operated as a construction and development business with over 30 years of experience. The two companies had previously worked together to complete a Built-to-Suit (BTS) project in another location, which strengthened their relationship. The Project Leader wanted to establish a new business model at his primary location because of his successful business partnership. The negotiations developed into a system that operated as two separate processes. Alongside the BTS lease agreement, a second contract was pursued: the construction of the building under an administration regime. The dual negotiation process revealed common interests among the parties but introduced opposing expectations, making the situation extremely difficult to manage.

3.2. The Built-to-Suit Negotiation – initial settings

Initial Proposal

The BTS contract required a 10-year leasing period, requiring R\$8.5 million in initial capital to deliver 0.7% monthly returns on the investment. The first project design included a 3,000 m² facility serving as the Clinical Institute's sole location, with 70 parking spots and complete management of all shared spaces.

Client Intervention

The Client, under a technically proficient yet extremely controlling leader, made changes that expanded the project area to 4,500 m² while transforming it into a commercial condominium with mixed-use development. The modification caused problems with the financial structure because the Clinical Institute had already received approval for its original capital expenditure (CAPEX) design. The required changes necessitated renegotiation of specific terms, including exclusivity provisions, parking access, elevator usage, and duties due. The Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA) became smaller because both parties presented their preferred options and their lowest acceptable terms, which often differed.

Negotiation Dynamics

The Project Development Company served as a mediator to unite diverse interests while managing the parties' opposing positions. The parties needed to manage more than 400 items, which they found in the "Responsibility Matrix," which contained both infrastructure and visual merchandising elements. The negotiation process for rent and penalty terms used distributive bargaining methods, but the parties also employed integrative methods to address their shared responsibility for the facilities. The team members experienced high levels of tension because they had to cancel or postpone their meetings whenever their discussions reached an impasse.

Resolution

The parties settled after 12 months of detailed negotiations, during which they made significant concessions. The BTS contract included shared facilities, 63 parking spaces, and a monthly rent of R\$80,000, with an equal penalty amount for both parties. The final result showed a

negotiation method that combined distributive concessions with integrative agreements.

3.3. The Built-to-Suit Negotiation: second round

All these events, combined with further commercial disagreements, nearly led to the termination of the contract. In the second round of negotiations, the client sought an administration contract with fees ranging from 8% to 12% of construction costs, excluding several items, such as earthworks, pre-molded structures, and foundations, while considering alternatives, such as hiring another company or executing the work himself. The leading company, on the other hand, aimed for fees between 10.5% and 12.5%, with partial exclusions and reduced rates (5%) for specific contracts such as pre-molded structures and foundations. Both sides faced limited options, ranging from abandoning the deal to pursuing legal action, narrowing the Zone of Possible Agreement but leaving it still viable.

3.4. Negotiation Outcome

Initial Agreement

In parallel with the BTS, the Project Development Company pursued a contract to execute the building under an administrative regime. The contract established a 10% fee to be deducted from all construction expenses at project commencement.

Client Resistance

The Client refused to pay administration fees for specific items, which included foundations, pre-molded structures, and air-conditioning systems, after nine months of preparation work. The Project Development Company saved the Client more than R\$200,000 through its supplier network, but it encountered situations in which suppliers made their own decisions. The Client maintained its independence when it hired contractors, but this approach caused project disruptions and led the organization to fail to follow its established reporting procedures.

Fee Negotiation

The discussion about payment amounts proved to be the primary source of disagreement between us. The Client wanted to work under an 8% fee contract that omitted various sections, but would accept a 12% fee contract that excluded only a few sections. The Project Development Company received a 12.5% fee that included all services, but would take a 10.5% fee with specific exclusions, including a 5% fee for foundations and pre-molded structures.

Breaking Point

The negotiation process had reached its critical point. The Project Development Company considered withdrawing from the project because it believed the situation had become unmanageable. The atmosphere became filled with distrust and client interference, leading to frustration and multiple interruptions.

The "Phoenix Meeting"

The team organized their "Phoenix Meeting," which proved to be the critical moment that led them toward a new path. The Project Development Company achieved project control, restoring its reputation and securing a 10.5% contract with restricted exclusions for foundations, pre-

molded structures, and air-conditioning equipment. The agreement needed survival through an adaptive negotiation process, which required participants to change their roles and duties.

4. Structured Negotiation Analysis

Interests

The Clinical Institute needed to establish operations through dedicated facilities that provide stable rental expenses and complete control of essential areas, including elevators and the building exterior, and sufficient parking, and binding contractual terms that protect against lease termination. The Client should pursue three main goals: achieving the maximum financial return from their investment while enabling the transformation of the building into a commercial condominium, minimizing exclusive obligations, and imposing equal financial penalties to prevent high costs. The Project Development Company needed to assess project feasibility to defend its reputation at the Clinical Institute and maintain contract terms that comply with current standards, preventing project development from stagnating.

Options and ZOPA

The Clinical Institute agreed to take between 1,300–1,500 m² of space, requiring 50–70 parking spots, and to rent at R\$60,000–85,000 (ZOPA), with more severe penalty terms. The Client showed readiness to take 1,300–1,500 m² of space with 50–70 parking spaces and to rent between R\$70,000–75,000, and accepted average penalty rates. The two properties were merged into a single development, which included 1,500 m² of space, 63 parking spaces, and R\$80,000 in rent, as well as equalized penalty terms.

BATNA

The Clinical Institute had to choose between buying an additional property or partnering with a new investor. Still, this strategy would lead to increased costs and reduced suitability of the property. The client operates as a commercial space lessee that rents its property to other business tenants but lacks the enduring clinical institute stability. The Project Development Company should stop working on this project to focus on other initiatives, as doing so would result in wasted time and damage its reputation.

4.1. Insights from ZOPA, BATNA, and Interests

The ZOPA in both negotiations was limited, requiring substantial compromises from all parties. The BATNAs of each party were unattractive, increasing pressure to reach an agreement. The Clinical Institute fought to maintain its authority and absolute control over the system, but the Client sought to cut costs while preserving its current position of power. The Project Development Company functioned as a mediator, confirming project viability while protecting it through its management of stakeholder positions to achieve flexible solutions.

5. Discussion

The negotiation process shows how different negotiation strategies develop as interests change and external factors affect the situation. The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix (Dias, 2020) enables users to identify negotiation types based on parties and issues, helping them determine the level of complexity and expected changes in the process. The Built-to-Suit negotiation began with integrative bargaining, as described by Raiffa et al. (2002), to align Clinical Institute needs with Client goals. The Responsibility Matrix, together with shared facilities, enabled the team to create collective value that exceeded the results of conventional rent assessment procedures. The Client initiated its facility expansion and exclusivity-reduction process, which shifted to distributive bargaining, as per Raiffa et al. (2002). Negotiations over rent, parking, and penalty fees narrowed the range of available concessions. The final agreement included both distributive trade-offs and integrative solutions, which produced a mixed-motive outcome. The Construction Administration negotiation followed a different path. The Client stopped work while refusing to pay fees, but the Project Development Company created supplier networks to boost operational efficiency. The Phoenix Meeting resolved deadlocks by building new power structures, thereby restoring party trust through its flexible negotiation approach (Dias, 2020).

The negotiation process started as a Type II process involving multiple parties seeking to resolve a single issue, but it evolved into a Type IV process. The research findings from Raiffa et al. (2002) distinguish between distributive bargaining, which addresses isolated issues, and integrative bargaining, which enables value creation by trading across matters. The results depended on psychological factors, which, when combined with how people related to one another, influenced the outcomes. The Client needed complete control over all operations, which prevented any forward progress. At the same time, the Clinical Institute required operational stability to maintain its trust in the relationship, which encountered various obstacles. The Project Development Company needed to support its excellent work and professional standing, as this commitment enabled the organization to succeed through strong relationships and experienced leadership. Structured tools and strong management were critical. The Responsibility Matrix resolved all confusion points, and the Phoenix Meeting successfully finished all required work tasks. The program teaches students to move between teamwork and individual competition while maintaining their organizational structure and adapting their leadership approach when external factors threaten their success. The different negotiation types exist as flexible systems. Effective negotiators determine which negotiation approach to use between integrative strategies and distributive tactics and when they should develop adaptive solutions.

6. Implications

The case demonstrated that negotiations conducted in Brazil have shown that project scope growth leads to higher project complexity, requiring organizations to develop flexible approaches (Cunha & Dias, 2021; Delgado & Dias, 2025; Dias & Navarro, 2020). The research evidence shows that the distributive–integrative distinction (Raiffa et al., 2002). The process of distributive bargaining handled individual disputes one issue at a time, whereas integrative bargaining allowed parties to generate new value through negotiations across multiple topics. The two opposing forces align with the principles described in negotiation theory (Fisher & Ury,

1981; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Shell, 2006; Pruitt, 1981) and in decision-making research on judgment under uncertainty (Bazerman & Moore, 1994). Third, the way people relate to one another and their mental states proved to be the most critical factors. The situation shows how structured tools, when combined with practical learning activities, achieve their goals. The Responsibility Matrix and Phoenix Meeting follow educational methods that include role-play simulations (Dias et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2022), which, according to these studies, focus on adaptive methods and environmental perception. The research findings about B2B negotiation tactics (Dias, 2020a; Dias, 2020b) and negotiation analysis components (Zartman, 1988) support this discovery. The results have consequences that reach beyond the construction industry and real estate sector. Users can manage different negotiation situations through multiple models which help them control corporate training operations through serious games (Carvalho & Dias, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Carvalho, Dias, & Schmitz, 2025) and energy sector mergers and acquisitions (Vidaletti et al., 2025) and supply chain improvement (Valle et al., 2025) and consumer protection cases (Tanabe & Dias, 2025). This demonstrates the broad applicability of negotiation theory across industries and reinforces its operational relevance.

7. Limitations

The research investigates a specific negotiation event in the real estate and construction industry, yet its findings cannot be applied to other business sectors or cultural environments (Yin, 2004; Salacuse, 2003). The research uses historical interpretations of past events to develop its findings, which could introduce biases when studying strategic choices and motivational factors. The Four-Type Negotiation Matrix developed by Dias (2020) and the distributive–integrative distinction by Raiffa et al. (2002) provide helpful guidance, but their method does not solve the intricate business problems that occur when organizations implement various strategies while their trust-based connections evolve (Dias & Lopes, 2021; Santos & Dias, 2024). The research investigated trust, empathy, and nonverbal communication, but it did not apply proven assessment methods to measure these variables (Dias, 2021; Dias, Pereira, Teles, & Lafraia, 2023; Rubin & Brown, 1975). Research should move forward by studying multiple business sectors, using numerical assessment methods, and investigating new training environments that include serious games for corporate education (Carvalho & Dias, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c).

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the article showed that negotiation depends on changing priorities and interpersonal connections. The research by Raiffa et al. (2002) demonstrates that negotiators need to manage their competitive concessions while working together to solve problems, in accordance with the negotiation principles established by Fisher and Ury (1981), Lax and Sebenius (1986), Shell (2006), and Pruitt (1981). The combination of trust and credibility, along with persistent effort, proved essential for negotiation success, as solution-based methods, relationship-based assets, and strong leadership were vital, according to Dias & Lopes (2021), Santos & Dias (2024), and Salacuse (2006). The Responsibility Matrix and Phoenix Meeting serve as structured tools that enable process management to control negotiations during essential situations, according to Geiger (2017) and Zartman (1988), who studied issue-based tactics and negotiation process analysis. The research results provide value across multiple fields beyond

construction and real estate development. The negotiation models operate in different settings, including corporate training through serious games (Carvalho & Dias, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Carvalho, Dias, & Schmitz, 2025) and supply chain optimization and energy-sector M&A (Vidaletti et al., 2025). The research shows that negotiation theory provides valuable insights that help both academics and professionals develop their negotiation skills.

The successful negotiation of complex multi-stakeholder environments depends on flexible approaches, structured methods, and effective leadership to maintain agreements. The study advances negotiation theory by showing that negotiations succeed when parties expand their potential agreement range, become aware of their mental distortions, and create rules to govern their contractual terms. Decision-makers need to show patience and flexibility, as they must build trust with others who hold deep emotional significance in this process. The research provides operational knowledge that helps business managers and negotiators manage intricate commercial negotiations. The study shows that sustainable agreements are impossible to achieve through distributive bargaining, as organizations need to use integrative methods that generate value and bring together different stakeholder groups. The continuous nature of negotiation enables professionals to develop agreements that remain effective amid changes and deliver benefits to all participants. The case shows that negotiation success depends on more than financial contracts; it requires a functioning system that enables parties to build trust and achieve sustainable outcomes. The research demonstrates that negotiation theory remains essential for solving modern business problems and resolving conflicts worldwide.

Future research

Future research can benefit from quantitative methods to help scientists evaluate how trust, empathy, and nonverbal communication affect negotiation outcomes (Dias, 2021; Dias & Lopes, 2021; Dias, Pereira, Teles, & Lafraia, 2023; Rubin & Brown, 1975). The research integrates behavioral data with established models, including the Four-Type Negotiation Matrix (Dias, 2020) and the distributive–integrative distinction (Raiffa et al., 2002). The research needs to investigate emerging fields. Scientists study human digital interactions through research, which Carvalho and Dias (2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Carvalho, Dias, & Schmitz, 2025) conducted to understand digital spaces that generate value and establish trust (Santos & Dias, 2024). Scientists can analyze nonmarket negotiations among governments, NGOs, and communities using the research by Navarro & Dias (2024) and Sartori et al. (2020). Research spanning different time periods would show how people adjust their negotiation methods across time (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Zartman, 1988). The research study would establish new theoretical knowledge to guide practitioners in stakeholder negotiation management during times of instability.

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