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DEALMAKER SOFT SKILLS

EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT:

STAYING RATIONAL WHEN THE SELLER GETS EMOTIONAL

Jonathan Jay's DEALCLUB

Dealmakers Soft Skills Report – February Edition

Emotional Detachment: Staying Rational When the Seller Gets Emotional

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Introduction: Welcome to the Emotional Endgame

Most deals don't fall apart over numbers. They fall apart over emotion.

The seller gets nervous.

Or angry.

Or nostalgic.

Or indecisive.

And suddenly, you're no longer negotiating the deal — you're negotiating their feelings.

This report is about staying calm, objective and strategic **when the other side is losing perspective**.

Because the more emotional they get… the more rational you need to be.

1. Why Sellers Get Emotional

You're buying a business.

They're selling their identity.

For many sellers, this isn't just a transaction:

- It's their life's work
- Their retirement plan
- Their social status
- Their proof they "made it"

So when talks progress:

- They might panic ("Am I really doing this?")
- They might stall ("Maybe I'll wait another year")

- They might lash out ("You're trying to steal my business!")

It's not rational. But it's real.

2. Common Emotional Behaviours (and What They Mean)

a) Sudden Price Changes

- One day: "£1 million minimum"
- Next day: "Maybe £750k would work"
- Next day: "Actually I think I'll hold onto it"

What it signals: internal conflict — part of them wants to sell, the other part doesn't.

b) Over-Explaining

- Endless stories, justifications, diversions

What it signals: a need to be validated, not just understood

c) Aggression or Blame

- "You're wasting my time!"
- "You're clearly not serious!"

What it signals: fear masked as anger

d) Stonewalling or Disappearing

- Ghosting calls, avoiding decisions, cancelling meetings

What it signals: indecision, possibly outside influence (spouse, accountant, family)

Your job isn't to fix their emotion. It's to **see it for what it is** — and not absorb it.

3. How to Stay Rational Under Pressure

a) Remember Why You're There

You're not there to:

- Be liked
- Rescue them
- Win an argument

You're there to buy a business that makes commercial sense.

b) Don't Match Their Energy

If they go high-energy, stay calm.

If they go aggressive, stay firm.

Matching emotion only escalates the dynamic.

c) Buy Time, Not Drama

When tension rises:

- "Let's take a break and come back to this."
- "I'll reflect on that and get back to you tomorrow."
- "Let me check something with my team."

Never decide under emotional pressure.

d) Use Written Comms Strategically

If verbal meetings are getting too heated or circular, switch to email:

- It slows the tempo
- It creates clarity
- It limits posturing

4. Spotting Seller Games: Testing, Stalling, Posturing

Not every seller behaviour is pure emotion — some is tactical.

Testing:

- Saying something outrageous to see how you react
- “I want £2 million or I’m walking”

Stay steady. Don’t react. Ask neutral questions: “How did you arrive at that figure?”

Stalling:

- Repeated delays
- “We’ll get back to you next week” …for five weeks straight

Call it gently: “If now isn’t the right time to move forward, that’s completely fine — just let me know.”

Posturing:

- Bringing in imaginary interest (“We’ve had three other offers”)
- Pretending disinterest (“We don’t need to sell”)

Focus on facts: “That’s helpful context. From my side, I’m interested in a deal that looks like X.”

5. Resetting When Talks Go Off Track

Sometimes, things spiral.

Someone says something defensive. Or emotional. Or just wrong.

How to reset:

- Don’t argue
- Don’t correct in the moment
- Let silence do the work

Later, say:

- “It feels like we went a bit off track last time — can we reset and refocus?”
- “Let’s park the emotion and come back to the numbers.”

And if it stays difficult:

- Reframe the timeline
- Use intermediaries
- Or walk away (with the door open)

6. When to Walk Away (Without Burning Bridges)

Sometimes, the seller isn't emotionally ready.

And nothing you say will change that.

Rather than push, try:

- "It feels like the timing might not be quite right — happy to revisit in a few months."
- "I respect how much this business means to you. I'm here if you'd like to re-engage later."

You protect your credibility. And they may come back.

7. The Buyer Who Stays Calm, Wins

- Emotion clouds judgement.
- Calm increases influence.
- The one who keeps perspective controls the room.

If you can remain measured, professional and respectful — especially when the seller can't — you win by default.

You become the safe pair of hands.

You gain trust.

You move the deal forward — while others would get derailed.

Final Thought: Detachment Isn't Cold — It's Commercial

This isn't about being unfeeling.

It's about being focused.

When a seller brings emotion to the table, they're doing what's natural.

When you bring detachment, you're doing what's necessary.

Stay clear.

Stay calm.

Stay commercial.

And you’ll be the one who gets the deal over the line.

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Soft Skills Series