

Foreword

Rules are made to be broken. We've heard this expression a thousand times. And yet, in the world of business, it is difficult not only to understand but to execute against this age-old adage. When is it OK to break the rules? When should we bend them? How often do we need to be assertive enough to change, clarify or even amend the rules? Who makes these rules we are supposed to break? Who has the right to ignore them? And, what rules are we talking about, anyway?

In my many years in business—all spent with value-leading organizations—one thing is most certainly clear: We do not have the luxury of simply following the rules and doing what procurement teams expect us to do, or we will lose time and time again.

But, if rules are really meant to be broken, why is it so difficult to break them in the world of sales?

With all of the attention the procurement function is receiving today, one could easily—and falsely—believe they have all of the power in purchasing decisions. This simply isn't the case. Procurement teams want you to think they have all of the control and decision-making authority, but they do not. There are still executive decision makers who are more focused on creating value than cutting costs.

Sometimes, breaking the rules is the only way to guarantee even a chance at winning the business.

Let's take a traditional Request for Proposal (RFP) as an example. How many of us—as sales leaders, salespeople or executive leaders within our businesses—agree to respond to RFPs thinking and hoping that our solution, our pricing, our proposal, our company's reputation will be enough for us to advance to the next round or even win the business? Even in situations

where we've been told we aren't "allowed" to talk with the customer at all—to clarify their needs, better understand their business drivers or discuss the impetus for a needed change.

So we respond to the RFP and hope we advance. Well, ladies and gentlemen, it is simply ludicrous to think we can win business by hoping. It just doesn't work that way. As Mark and Dan's first book, Beyond Selling Value, so artfully pointed out: We must avoid the vendor trap at all costs, and we are fools if we think hoping is a viable strategy when trying to do so. We must build coach relationships, gain access to the actual decision makers, and present the business fit that can and will exist between the two companies. Said another way, we have to get credit for the value we bring to the table and create competitive advantage accordingly.

What made Beyond Selling Value so powerful was the balance between their proven process of selling value and the myriad of tactics they offered. I know the power of Mark and Dan's process and tactics because my teams around the world have implemented them to great success.

In their next book, Shonka and Kosch challenge us even more by focusing on all of these rules and sharing with us how to go about breaking them: artfully, ethically and respectfully. Done well, we can even make allies of procurement leaders along the way.

After collaborating with IMPAX for more than seven years, I know with certainty that I don't want our teams playing by the rules. We can't afford to. At senior levels, our customers expect us to be thought leaders and innovators; they want us to develop new solutions for their supply chains; and they want us to help them take their businesses to the next level, locally and globally.

They want and need us to help drive value to the bottom line. They do not want us stuck in endless processes designed to make every supplier compete on price. They need us to aspire to "trusted advisor" status within

their organizations. Companies that strive to achieve this trusted advisor status must answer the following questions:

How do we gain a powerful understanding of our customer's business?

Why do we merit a premium for our services?

How do we build a relationship beyond Procurement?

How do we sell value to people who can buy it?

How do we demonstrate the value we deliver?

It is nearly impossible to answer these questions while following rules designed to drive apples-to-apples comparisons.

When we understand our customers well enough to have strategic conversations with them about their business needs and objectives, we gain the confidence to drastically shift our thinking about procurement rules and processes. Sure, there is a place and a time for those procurement rules. But not for our teams—not in today's markets.

We're working with our customers to bring them transformational supply chain concepts, and to become true business resources they can count on. This strategic approach to selling is completely at odds with procurement rules and processes that almost certainly guarantee us to lose. And, we have already determined that we want to and have to win.

In [Breaking the Rules](#), Shonka and Kosch do it again: offering a proven process and a series of tactics you can start implementing immediately. This is not theory. You can use it right now to sell your value in this brutal age of commoditization. I know because our team uses these ideas every day.

Break the rules. You will be glad you did.

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DHL**