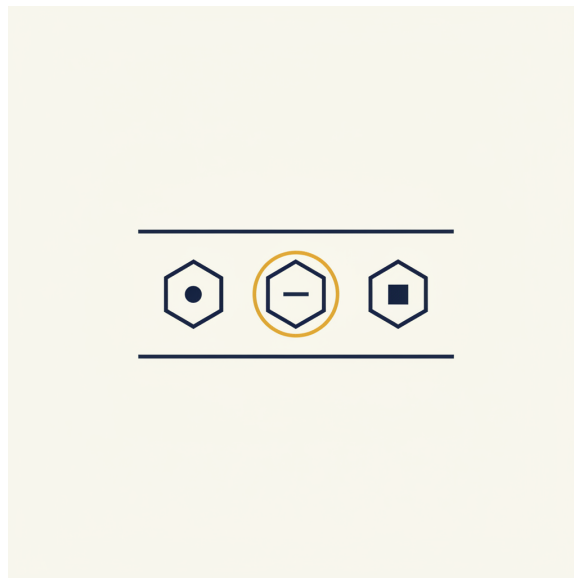




TIER 2 - WORK APPLICATION * V1.0 -- MAY 2026

OR VENDOR RESEARCH AND NEGOTIA

Side-by-side vendor comparison frameworks. RFP drafting that gets useful responses. The negotiation prep workflow. And the honest limit -- AI doesn't know your local supplier landscape, and confident pricing claims from AI are usually wrong.



BY

Alex Jahn / Agent Logic

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Small-business operators and procurement-of-one people picking suppliers, comparing vendors, drafting RFPs, and trying to negotiate without getting outmaneuvered

15-20 minutes

Free. Forever.

EDITION

AUDIENCE

READ TIME

COST

Prepared by Agent Logic / alexanderjahn79@icloud.com / theaiguywi.com

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Four more modules in Tier 2:

SECTION 1

You against the sales process

The asymmetry of the buyer side

Vendors do this every day. You do it occasionally. They know their pricing model, their typical concessions, the standard objections, the questions you should be asking but won't. You're walking in with whatever you can piece together from their website, a 30-minute discovery call, and a gut sense of "is this fair."

The asymmetry is the entire problem. Used well, AI levels the playing field -- not by replacing your judgment about which vendor to pick, but by giving you the question list, the comparison structure, and the negotiation prep that puts you on closer-to-even footing.

What you'll have by page 12

By the end of this primer:

- **The comparison framework workflow** -- turning two or three vendor quotes into an apples-to-apples comparison.
- **The RFP drafting pattern** -- how to write a request that gets useful responses, not boilerplate.
- **The negotiation prep workflow** -- questions to ask, levers you can pull, signals to watch for.
- **The honest limit** -- AI doesn't know your local market or their internal margins.

The vendor knows their price floor, their standard concessions, and the questions you should ask but won't. AI gives you the question list. The judgment stays yours.

SECTION 2

The comparison framework workflow

You have 2-3 quotes for the same service or product. Each is structured differently. Each has its own opaque "value" framing.

The comparison-build prompt:

"Below are 2-3 vendor quotes for [service/product]. Walk me through:

- 1. An apples-to-apples comparison table -- same line items across all quotes. Where one quote includes something the others don't, surface it explicitly.*
- 2. The 5-7 questions I should ask EACH vendor to make the comparison fair (questions about what's included, what's not, what happens if X, etc.)*
- 3. The differences between quotes that look small but are actually big -- long-term cost implications, lock-in periods, exit costs, scope gaps.*
- 4. What's typical vs unusual in this industry for [service type].*

[Paste all quotes]"

Output is a real comparison table + a clarifying-questions list. Send the questions to each vendor. Their answers reveal which one is being straightforward vs which one is hiding the ball.

What this catches that gut-comparison doesn't

- **Bundled vs unbundled pricing.** One vendor's "all-inclusive \$X" vs another's "\$Y + add-ons."
- **Hidden multi-year escalators.** Year-1 price looks competitive; year-3 is much higher.
- **Different scope definitions for the same product name.** "Implementation" means 4 days for one vendor, 12 days for another.
- **Different SLA / response-time commitments.** Buried in fine print, but cost-relevant.

These are the differences that make a "cheaper" quote actually more expensive, or a "premium" quote actually a better deal. AI's structuring help surfaces them within minutes.

SECTION 3

The RFP drafting pattern

For larger procurement, you're drafting an RFP (request for proposal) rather than just collecting quotes.

The RFP draft prompt:

"I need to draft an RFP for [service/product]. My situation: [size of business, current state, what's driving the need]. The 5 things that matter most in this purchase: [list]. The 2-3 things I want to make non-negotiable: [list]. Help me draft a 2-page RFP that:

1. Describes my situation clearly.
2. Lists the 5-10 specific questions vendors must answer (not generic -- questions that surface real differentiation).
3. Specifies the format I want responses in (so I can compare apples to apples).
4. Sets a clear timeline and decision process.

Use my voice. Direct, no corporate fluff."

The output is a usable RFP. The questions section is the load-bearing part -- vendors who can answer specifically demonstrate real fit; vendors who answer in generic marketing-speak self-select out.

The questions that work

Generic question: "Describe your customer support." Better question: "Walk me through what happens when our primary point-of-contact at your company leaves. Who picks us up? What's the handoff process? Provide an example from the last 12 months."

Generic question: "Describe your pricing." Better question: "List every cost we'd incur in years 1, 2, and 3 assuming our usage stays the same. Then list every cost that could escalate, and the typical magnitude of those escalations."

AI helps you write the "better" version by default -- if you prompt for "questions that surface real differentiation" not "questions about customer support and pricing."

SECTION 4

The negotiation prep workflow

Before any negotiation conversation, AI helps you walk in prepared.

The negotiation-prep prompt:

"I'm negotiating with [vendor name] for [product/service], proposed contract value [\$X]. Walk me through:

1. *The typical concessions vendors give in this category (terms, pricing, scope, lock-in).*
2. *The leverage points I should reference -- competitive quotes, my market position, the deal timing.*
3. *The 3-5 things they're likely to push back on, and the most-common counters to my likely asks.*
4. *The 'walk away' point I should establish before the conversation -- the deal I'd reject.*
5. *The questions to ask during the conversation that reveal whether they have room to move."*

Output: a real negotiation prep doc. Take it into the call. The vendor's salesperson has been trained on the same material from their side; this puts you on closer-to-even footing.

The honest limit on negotiation prep

AI's negotiation advice is averaged across industries. Some of it won't match your specific market.

The fix:

- For your INDUSTRY-specific negotiation patterns, talk to one or two peers who've done similar deals
- For your COMPANY-SIZE specific patterns, talk to someone who's negotiated at your scale (not someone who runs a 500-person procurement function -- different dynamics)
- For the actual conversation, you read the room -- AI doesn't know how the salesperson is responding moment-to-moment

AI is the structuring helper. The conversation is yours.

SECTION 5

The honest limit

Three things AI can't do for vendor research:

- **Recommend specific local vendors.** AI's recommendations are pattern-matched from internet content. Your real options come from local networks, peer referrals, the trade-association directory in your area. A friend who's used the vendor will give you better signal in 5 minutes than AI in 50.
- **Know vendor internal margins.** "Their list price has 30% margin built in" -- AI will guess but can't actually know. Industry rumors, peer conversations, and former-employee LinkedIn searches give better signal than AI here.

- **Decide who to pick.** Once the comparison is clean and the questions are answered, the decision is judgment. AI can summarize the data; it can't tell you whether vendor B's slightly-higher price is worth their better reputation in your specific trade.

Within those limits, AI for vendor research is one of the most-under-used workplace applications. Most operators wing it; the structured version produces measurably better deals.

SECTION 6

Three worked sessions

Worked session 1 -- Three quotes for the same service

You're picking a new accounting software for your small business. Three vendors quoted. You can't tell which is best.

- **Run the comparison framework prompt** (5 min) -> apples-to-apples table + 5 clarifying questions per vendor.
- **Send the questions** to each vendor; wait for responses (1-3 days).
- **Re-run the comparison** with their answers added -> clear picture of which one fits.
- **Decision** is yours; the data is clean.

Total time: 20 minutes of your attention + 1-3 days waiting for vendor responses.

Worked session 2 -- A formal RFP

Switching insurance brokers. You want a real RFP, not just three calls.

- **Draft the RFP** via the prompt in Section 3 (20 min).
- **Refine the questions** based on what specifically matters for your business (15 min -- judgment work).
- **Send to 4-5 brokers** with a 2-week response window.
- **Compare responses** when they come back; the structure surfaces real differences.

Saves you 4-6 hours of redundant conversations during the procurement phase.

Worked session 3 -- Negotiating a renewal

Your software vendor is up for renewal. They've quoted a 15% increase. You want to push back.

- **Run the negotiation-prep prompt** (10 min) -> concessions list, leverage points, walk-away.
- **One competitive quote** from a peer vendor for leverage (1 hour of research).
- **The actual call** (30 min) with the prep doc open in another tab.

Outcome: renewal at 5% increase + an extra month free + an SLA improvement. Beats 15% increase + nothing.

SECTION 7

When NOT to use AI for vendor work

- **High-stakes legal contracts** -- anything that goes to a lawyer eventually. AI prep is fine; the actual contract analysis is your attorney's job.
- **Strategic partnerships** -- when the vendor relationship is more than just a transaction (a real partnership, equity discussion, multi-year integration). Talk to advisors, not chat tools.
- **Anyone you've worked with for 10+ years** -- the relationship knowledge supersedes the generic-AI framework. Use AI to verify market norms; don't let it replace what you already know about that vendor's behavior.

SECTION 8

Where to go from here

Four more modules in Tier 2:

- **AI for sales calls and prospect research** -- pre-call prep, post-call follow-up. Live-listening anti-pattern flagged.

Get the next module the day it drops: theaiguywi.com/training

If you want this vendor-research workflow installed across a small business -- the comparison framework adopted, the RFP template built out, the negotiation-prep pattern trained in -- that's the consulting offer.

Reach out: alexanderjahn79@icloud.com

Closing -- the lock-in line

The buyer-side asymmetry is real. Vendors negotiate every day; you do it occasionally. AI levels the field -- comparison frameworks, RFP drafting, negotiation prep -- by giving you the structure their salespeople already have. Your judgment stays yours. The position gets better.

5

Five clarifying questions

per vendor turn "three quotes that look similar" into "three quotes I can actually compare." The cumulative deal-quality improvement compounds across every procurement decision you make.

-- Alex

Agent Logic --

Lac, WI. This is module 14 of 18 in Tier 2 (Professional).

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theaiguyw