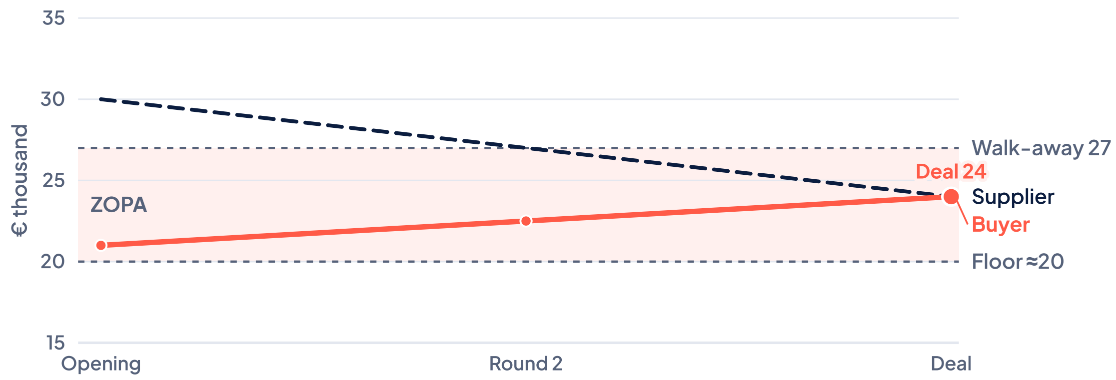
BATNA and ZOPA

Decide when to say yes and when to walk away, against your best alternative.



Illustrative offers by round, € thousand. The ZOPA runs from the supplier's floor to the buyer's walk-away point.

WHAT IT IS

Your **BATNA** is your real plan if the talks break down; Fisher and Ury's term, short for "best alternative to a negotiated agreement". Its value is your **walk-away point** (Raiffa, 1982: reservation price). The **zone of possible agreement (ZOPA)** is the range both limits allow. If there is none, each side takes its BATNA.

HOW IT WORKS

01 Price your best option without a deal.

02 Estimate their floor; label it an assumption.

03 Trade what is cheap for you, valuable to them.

04 Agree the mandate first. Write the deal down.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A supplier on a fixed price, with a €750 day rate for changes, quotes €30,000 (40 days) for renewal reminders. The city's own IT team could build them instead.

BATNA: the IT team, 40 days × €600 = €24,000, plus €3,000 to check it: a €27,000 walk-away point. The supplier's floor is perhaps €20,000. They agree 32 days: €24,000, inside the ZOPA.

In the exam: State your BATNA and walk-away point, estimate theirs, show the zone in numbers, and justify the deal with a yardstick.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months. Its project manager may commit up to €40,000 per decision; the board decides above that.

Before talks on a large change, she agrees with the board a target, a limit and who signs. She builds a real alternative and plans what happens with no deal.

In the exam: Show that you built the BATNA before the talks, set mandates and limits, and weighed the relationship, not only the price.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · *PMBOK® GUIDE* 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.4.9 Negotiation: a BATNA (4.4.9.2), used if no sustainable deal (4.4.9.4); mandate: 4.5.9.3	Guide: negotiation, p. 183 (led by someone who may sign). Exam outline: Domain II, task 5	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §4.2.3 Negotiation: bottom line, BATNA, ZOPA. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) 5b: ZOPA, BATNA, win-win

Sources: Fisher, Ury & Patton, Getting to Yes; Raiffa, The Art and Science of Negotiation (1982); IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)

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