

PITCH ANYTHING

CHAPTER TWO

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Chapter 2

Frame Control

It was July 2001, and I stood in front of a towering office in the heart of Beverly Hills. This was a corridor of power, both in Hollywood and the financial world, a place where careers were made, a place where deals got done.

And here I was, headed to the office of a guy who controlled close to \$1 billion in assets. It's not every day you pitch someone with this level of influence. If you think I was nervous, think again. For once, I wasn't pitching. Instead, a colleague, Tom Davis, would be pitching to this icon of corporate finance, Bill Belzberg, one of the three billionaire Belzberg brothers.

You might have heard of the Belzbergs if you follow the business press. They rose to prominence as corporate raiders in the 1980s. Merely observing one of them in the boardroom was a master class in finance, so I was looking forward to what would materialize in the next hour.

Tom was 31, charismatic, a likeable CEO type. He had a nice company in place, but he lacked the money to grow. To get that money, he was willing to try the impossible—impress Belzberg.

I smiled to myself. This was going to be interesting. I'd watched Tom rehearse his presentation, and he had good instincts.

“My pitch is totally bulletproof, I have nerves of steel, and I'm bringing my A-game,” he had said while we were waiting in Belzberg's lobby. His confidence was inspiring.

“We'll see,” I said. “Just relax.”

Soon after that, we were moved to the conference room. After more than 30 minutes of waiting, we watched as the double doors swung open. Bill Belzberg strode through as if entering a saloon. At 69 years old, he was tall and lanky. He waved his arm at Tom, motioning him to get started. Tom looked at me, and I nodded the go-ahead. Belzberg remained standing and almost immediately cut Tom off, “Look, I only want to know two things from you. What are monthly expenses, and how much are you paying yourself?”

Not what Tom wanted to hear. He had a different pitch planned, and now he was looking foolish, searching his bag to find expense charts. Where were the confidence and nerves of hardened titanium? He dropped his papers and stuttered a bit. He was lost.

Belzberg had said only 20 words. As you will see, it's possible for a 20-word disruption to control the fate of any deal. Why is that? An analogy, like the one below, might help explain all this.

Imagine for a moment that there is some kind of powerful energy field that surrounds all of us, silently transmitting from the depths of our subconscious. This invisible defense shield is genetically designed to protect our conscious minds from sudden intrusion by ideas and perspectives that are not our own.

When that energy field is overwhelmed, however, it collapses. Our mental defenses fail, and we become subject to another person's ideas, desires, and commands. That person can impose his will.

No one really knows whether there are human energy fields or not, but perhaps this is the best way to think about the mental structures that shape the way we see the world, which I call *frames*. And in a moment, you will begin to understand what happened when Tom's frame came into contact with—and collapsed under—Bill Belzberg's power frame.

Imagine looking at the world through a window frame that you hold in your hands. As you move the frame around, the sounds and images you encounter are interpreted by your brain in ways that are consistent with your intelligence, values, and ethics. This is your *point of view*.

Another person can look at the same thing through his own frame, and what he hears and sees may differ—by a little or a lot.

The common label given to this is *perspective*. I might perceive and interpret things differently than you do—which is a good thing. Another perspective is often what we need as we nurture our ideas and values.

Yet, as we interpret the world through our frames, something else happens. Our brains process what our senses tell us and quickly react with a series of questions: Is it dangerous? Should I eat it or mate with it? This is the croc brain at work, doing what it does best—detecting frames, protecting us from threats, and using dominance and aggression to deflect attacking ideas and information.

There are millions of people in the business world, and each brings a frame to his or her social encounters. Whenever two or more people come together to communicate in a business setting, their frames square off and then come into contact, but not in a

cooperative or friendly manner. Frames are extremely competitive—remember, they are rooted in our survival instincts—and they seek to sustain dominance.

When frames come together, the first thing they do is collide. And this isn't a friendly competition—it's a *death match*. Frames don't merge. They don't blend. And they don't intermingle. *They collide, and the stronger frame absorbs the weaker.*

Only one frame will dominate after the exchange, and the other frames will be subordinate to the winner. *This is what happens below the surface of every business meeting you attend, every sales call you make, and every person-to-person business communication you have.*

The moment your frame makes contact with the frame of the person you are calling on, they clash, battle, and grapple for dominance. If your frame wins, you will enjoy *frame control*, where your ideas are accepted (and followed) by the others. But if your frame loses, though, you will be at the mercy of your customer, and your success will depend on that customer's charity.

Understanding how to harness and apply the power of frames is the most important thing you will ever learn.

Frame-Based Business

One of the many benefits of using a frame-based approach to doing business is that it does not require a lot of technique, tactics, or smooth talk. In fact, as you will soon see, the less you say, the more effective you will be.

Sales techniques were created for people who have already lost the frame collision and are struggling to do business from a subordinated or low-status position. The sad fact is, these methods are

typically ineffective and usually end up offending people instead of promoting pleasant, mutually beneficial business.

For decades, there have been many books and seminars—there are more than 35,000 on Amazon—promoting methods to persuade, influence, cajole, and browbeat customers into making rapid purchase decisions. Many years ago, when the promoters of these programs realized how inefficient their methods were, they explained it away with the *law of large numbers*. Their typical promise is “Make 100 sales calls using our sales technique, and you will land two sales.” In other words, work much, much harder than everyone else, and you will get a 2 percent success rate. But really, *what kind of success is that?*

What these sales gurus are missing is this: When you fail to control the *social frame*, you probably have already lost. All you can do then is fight for survival by fast talking, spin selling, trial closing, and a myriad of equally ineffective and annoying tactics that signal to the customer that you are needy and desperate—and defeated.

By preaching the law of large numbers, the purveyors of sales techniques are asking you to work longer and harder, with no real competitive advantage. They are forcing you to compensate for your weak position with a Herculean effort to win new business, claiming that *it's just a numbers game*. It's rather rude of them to give away so much of your life this way, isn't it?

Frame-based business takes the opposite approach. It promotes the use of social dynamics, stacking things in your favor before the game even begins.

When we think back about why this pitch or that pitch failed, we usually arrive at the fact that the terms of the deal weren't right for the buyer. Or we had a bad day and didn't position things correctly. Or the potential buyer found something he or she liked better. The reality is, however, that a pitch will fail for reasons that

are far less obvious. And that's because frame control is won or lost even before the pitch starts.

When you own the frame, you are positioned to reach an agreement with your buyer. And you are also in a position to decide which deals, orders, or projects you want to work on instead of taking what you can get.

Think it's not possible? I do it every day and for the simple reason that I want to serve my buyers well. I can't do that if I'm continuously engaged in a frantic chase for new business.

Instead of flogging yourself to the point of exhaustion by making dozens of mind-numbingly unproductive sales calls and presentations, I'm going to show you how to get, and keep, frame control. And you are more likely to find yourself pitching five deals, tossing out the two deals you don't like, and keeping the three that interest you. How do you like my law of large numbers? This is what I do and what I have been doing for years.

Own the Frame, Win the Game

Let's do a quick review: A frame is the instrument you use to package your power, authority, strength, information, and status.

1. Everyone uses frames whether they realize it or not.
2. Every social encounter brings different frames together.
3. Frames do not coexist in the same time and place for long. They crash into each other, and one or the other gains control.
4. Only one frame survives. The others break and are absorbed. Stronger frames always absorb weaker frames.

5. The winning frame governs the social interaction. It is said to have frame control.

The Cop Frame: An Introduction to How Frames Work

So that you can become familiar with the terminology of frames and the basic function of frames in social encounters, here is an example of a dominant frame that you already know about—an almost textbook example of frame control.

Imagine you are driving along California's Highway 101 north of Santa Cruz. The weather and the scenery are intoxicating, as is the rush of speed you feel as you take the fast lane at 80 mph in your pursuit of the setting sun. The moment is perfect—until you see those flashing lights in your rearview mirror. It's a police interceptor. The *whoop-whoop* from a piercing siren and the Technicolor strobing of the light bar alert your croc brain that danger is imminent. *Dammit, where did he come from? How fast was I going?* These are the last few thoughts going through your neo-cortex before fear (a basic and primal emotion) sets in, and your croc brain seizes control of your actions. You are now “pulled over.” As you reach for your license and registration, you see the cop approaching in the driver-side mirror.

As you will see from this example, frames make human communication simple because they package a particular perspective and all the information that goes with it.

You roll down the window. In this moment, two frames are about to collide: the cop's frame and yours.

Quick! What is your frame made of? “I was going with the flow of traffic” or “I thought the speed limit was higher out this way.”

You settle on the “nice guy” frame: “Officer, I’m usually a good driver. How about cutting me a break this one time?”

But the cop frame is nearly invincible. It’s reinforced—morally, socially, and politically. Oh yeah, he’s got you on a speed gun, too.

You meekly smile as you hand him your license and registration. He pauses, scowling at you through his mirrored aviators. Now, your “nice guy” frame is about to be disrupted. “Do you know why I pulled you over?” he asks.

You know you were speeding. Because you do not have any higher moral authority to bring to the frame game, your frame will be destroyed. This is the key to frame control. *When you are responding ineffectively to things the other person is saying and doing, that person owns the frame, and you are being frame-controlled.*

Of course, there’s no mystery about the outcome here. The officer has the stronger frame. Your two frames collided, and the cop frame won.

I chose this example so you could see how lesser frames literally crumble under a frame built from authority, status, and power. In this example, the officer had every form of power possible: physical, political, and moral power (you broke the law, and you knew it).

Let’s explore the officer’s frame on a deeper level so as to understand what really happened. The silhouette of his cruiser in your rearview mirror and the flashing lights pulled your primal levers of fear, anxiety, and obedience. Your croc brain went into defense mode. Your stomach tightened. Your breathing accelerated, along with your heart rate, and blood rushed to your face. All this happened the moment your croc brain was alarmed. You couldn’t come up with any frame, any perspective, any way to view the situation that would be strong enough to break the officer’s frame.

The lesson of the cop frame is an essential one: *If you have to explain your authority, power, position, leverage, and advantage, you do not hold the stronger frame.* Rational appeals to higher order, logical thinking never win frame collisions or gain frame control. Notice, the officer does not need to pitch you on why he is going to issue you a citation. He does not need to rationalize with you. He doesn't have to explain his power, he doesn't need to rest a hand on his gun, and he doesn't need to describe to you what will happen if you decide to resist. He feels no need to explain how critical it is that you remain calm and obedient. He doesn't suggest that you have fear and anxiety. Your croc brain instantly and naturally has these reactions to the cop frame. You are reacting; your croc brain is in control. Your actions are automatic, primal, and beyond your grasp.

In the final moments of the social encounter, the officer hands you the ticket. This roadside meeting is over. The only other thing he says to you is: "Sign here. Press hard. Fifth copy is yours."

Finally, not quite an afterthought but perhaps intended as a reward for your calm obedience, he says, "Slow down, and have a nice day," crowning your defeat with shame. *Every social interaction is a collision of frames, and the stronger frame always wins. Frame collisions are primal. They freeze out the neocortex and bring the crocodile brain in to make decisions and determine actions.*

Strong frames are impervious to rational arguments. Weak arguments, made up of logical discussions and facts, just bounce off strong frames.

Over the years, I observed that a successful pitch depends on your ability to build strong frames that are impervious to rational arguments. These strong frames can break weak frames and then absorb them. Is there a formula for creating such a frame and using it? Turns out, there is.

Choosing a Frame

Whenever you are entering a business situation, the first question you must ask is, “What kind of frame am I up against?” The answer will depend on several factors, including the relative importance of your offering to the business interests of your buyer. But know this: Frames mainly involve basic desires. These are the domain of the croc brain. It would be fair to say that strong frames *activate basic desires*.

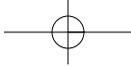
One way to think about this is that there are only a few basic approaches that the buyer’s croc brain reacts to, so you don’t need to carefully *tune* each frame to individual personalities. If you were a mechanic reaching into your toolbox, then a frame would be more like a rubber mallet than a screwdriver.

I think of these things before I take a meeting: What are the basic primal attitudes and emotions that will be at play? Then I make simple decisions about the kind of frame I want to go in with. For many years, I used just four frames that would cover every business situation. For example, if I know the person I’m meeting is a hard-charging, type A personality, I will go in with a *power-busting frame*. If that person is an analytical, dollars-and-cents type, I will choose an *intrigue frame*. If I’m outnumbered and out-gunned and the deck is stacked against me, *time frames* and *prize frames* are essential.

I am also ready and willing to switch to a different frame as the social interaction develops or changes.

Going into most business situations, there are three major types of opposing frames that you will encounter:

1. Power frame
2. Time frame
3. Analyst frame



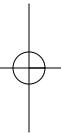
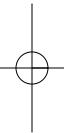
You have three major response frame types that you can use to meet these oncoming frames, win the initial collision, and control the agenda:

1. Power-busting frame
2. Time constraining frame
3. Intrigue frame

There is a fourth frame you can deploy. It's useful against all three of the opposing frames and many others you will encounter:

4. Prize frame

What follows is a discussion of how you can recognize opposing frames and defeat them.



The Power Frame

The most common opposing frame you will encounter in a business setting is the *power frame*. The power frame comes from the individual who has a massive ego. His power is rooted in his status—a status derived from the fact that others give this person honor and respect. You will know that you are facing a power frame when you encounter arrogance, lack of interest (a vibe that conveys “I’m more important than you”), rudeness, and similar imperial behaviors.

Power frame types (a.k.a. big shots, egomaniacs—whatever you want to call them) tend to be oblivious to what others think. They are more likely to pursue the satisfaction of their own appetites. They are often poor judges of the reactions of others. They are more likely to hold stereotypes. They can be overly optimistic. And they are more likely to take unmeasured risks.

They are also the most vulnerable to your power-busting frame because they do not expect it. They expect your fawning deference and obedience. They expect you to laugh at their bad jokes. They expect you to value their feelings above your own. They expect you to adopt their frame. Therein lies their weakness. Not for a moment do they think that your frame is going to take control. You will almost always take them by surprise.

When you approach an opposing power frame, your first and most important objective is to avoid falling into the other person’s frame by reacting to it. And make absolutely certain that you do nothing that strengthens the other person’s frame before your frames collide.

Observing power rituals in business situations—such as acting deferential, engaging in meaningless small talk, or letting yourself be told what to do—reinforces the alpha status of your target and confirms your subordinate position. *Do not do this!*

As the opposing power frame approaches, when you first encounter the person you are meeting, you must be prepared for the frame collision to happen at any moment.

Prepare well and your frame will disrupt his, causing a momentary equilibrium in the social forces in the room, and then your frame will overtake and absorb his.

This all sounds like high drama, but in practice, it is often swift and tranquil. Before your target realizes what has occurred, control of the frame has shifted. Once you get used to establishing the dominant frame, it will become second nature. And when it does, you are going to have the time of your life.

Encountering the Power Frame

Several years ago, I had a meeting at a large money center bank whose name you would recognize in an instant. This was supposed to be a one-hour meeting, and it was made clear by the guy we were meeting that he would give us precisely *one* hour. This is classic power framing with hard time pressure thrown in.

The cost of getting our team to Washington for this pitch was more than \$20,000. But the meeting could be worth millions if we pitched it right.

After my team and I were escorted through security, we rode the elevator to the nineteenth floor, where more than *\$1 trillion* worth of business was traded each year. We felt like we were about to take a place among the nation's most powerful and elite financial traders.

Thirty-five traders moved billions of dollars a month here, and we were one hour away from being part of the game. I had contacted all my investors, and together we had pooled about \$60 million in investment money that I was bringing to the table.

My contact, a trader named Steve, was meeting us, and I would be pitching him and two analysts. After a long wait, an impeccably

dressed young woman led us to the largest conference room I've ever seen, about half the size of a basketball court. Steve and his entourage came in and exchanged the standard pleasantries. Steve was one of the bigger volume traders on the floor. He showed up several minutes late and then spent 15 minutes talking about himself. A precious 22 minutes had been burned. Finally, I was able to hand out our materials and begin the pitch.

During the economic boom of the time, Steve had become accustomed to doing \$100 million deals that would close in a single day; by contrast, we had a \$60 million deal that would take at least 30 days to close. So he didn't seem terribly interested.

I talked about the types of assets we wanted to buy and what we would pay. During a moment of pause, I looked over at Steve. He had taken our pitch book, flipped it over, and was absent-mindedly tracing his hand on the back of it with a pen.

How significant is this lack of attention? Well, it's pretty bad. However, if you view the world through the lens of traditional sales techniques, you would think there's something wrong with my information or my deal. But instead, if you view the world through frames and social dynamics, then you would understand that the *deal was fine*. This is just the power frame coming at you, and in the collision of frames, you've just lost.

I first thought, *Ouch, how could this be happening?* I had burned a lot of time and money getting to this meeting, and I could see our opportunity slipping away. The guy was *tracing his hand* on *my* executive summary. I felt two inches tall. My crocodile brain became overwhelmed with basic, primal emotions. I was frame-controlled. My simple, emotional, reactive croc brain told me to run, and I considered it.

When you abide by the rituals of power instead of establishing your own, you reinforce the opposing power frame.

I soon recovered my poise, and here is what followed:

“Steve, gimme that,” I said, pulling the pitch book away from him.

That’s a power frame disrupter.

Dramatic pause . . .

I looked at Steve’s drawing intently. “Hold on, wait a sec. Now I see what’s going on. This drawing is pretty damn good. Forget the big deal for a minute. How about you sell this to me. Name a price.”

This is an extreme example of high-stakes power frames. But you can do this in everyday meetings in a far less dramatic way to change and refocus the frame to a totally different subject. If a guy is going to dominate you, let him dominate you on the price of something like a hand drawing in this case, something that doesn’t matter. If you find yourself in a similar situation (the day will come when this happens to you, too), then pick something abstract and start an intense price negotiation over it—and it doesn’t matter if you win or lose. The power of the person’s frame is rendered trivial, and the focus is back to you and what you want to do with the meeting.

Steve didn’t expect this, and the concussion from the force of my frame-busting move completely changed the dynamic of that moment and the remainder of the meeting. I got another chance to get the focus back on the real subject—the \$60 million I was there to spend. And now I had Steve’s complete attention.

To instigate a power frame collision, use a mildly shocking but not unfriendly act to cause it. Use defiance and light humor. This captures attention and elevates your status by creating something called “local star power.” (You will read about creating status and local star power in Chapter 3.)

Taking the Frame

Here are some subtler examples of taking the power frame away. As soon as you come in contact with your target, look for the first opportunity to

1. Perpetrate a small denial, or
2. Act out some type of defiance.

Examples

You place a folder on the conference table that is labeled “Confidential—John Smith.” When the target reaches for the file, you grab it and say, “Uh-uh, not yet. You have to wait for this.”

If you deal in creative work and you brought visuals, let the target sneak a peek and then, when you see him curiously looking, turn it over, take it away, and deliver a soft reprimand that says, *not until I say you’re ready.*

This is a quick tease followed by a strong denial, and it is massively disruptive to the target’s croc brain. What you are doing is not offensive, and it’s not mean. It’s playful, and it tells the target subconsciously, “I’m the one in charge here, not you, my friend.”

The key to taking the frame is to perpetrate the denial and make it clear: Not yet. This is my meeting, we’re following my agenda, and everything that happens will be on my timeline.

Another way to control the frame is to respond to a comment with a small but forceful act of defiance.

TARGET: “Thanks for coming over. I only have 15 minutes this afternoon.”

YOU: “That’s okay, I only have 12.” *You smile. But you are serious, too.*

With this simple remark, you have just snatched the power frame away from your target. This can easily become a frame game. I've had meetings get cut down to just two minutes this way. They will say, you only have 12 minutes? I forgot, I only have 10. Then I will come back with 8. And so on. As you'll find out, these kinds of frame games are good for relationships. They are a way of *prizing* (which you will read about next) and can be entertaining for both parties. It can be that simple. The better you are at giving and taking frame control, the more successful you will be.

Think of how many ways you can use small acts of denial and defiance in the opening moments of meetings. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination. Defiance and light humor are the keys to seizing power and frame control. Keep it fun, do it with a grin on your face, and the moment the power shifts to you, move the meeting forward in the direction you want. This is the foundation of frame control. You'll be seizing more power and status as the pitch continues.

Power shifts and frame grabs start small and escalate quickly. When this first power transfer takes place, when your target loses the frame, he knows it—he can feel that something just happened. His cognition is hot, which means that his basic desires have been activated. Now, he is paying close attention and is fully engaged. He is thinking, *Whoa, what do we have here?*

He might be feeling a little buzz from what you've just done but is not offended because you were not rude or mean. *When you are defiant and funny at the same time, he is pleasantly challenged by you and instinctively knows that he is in the presence of a pro.* This is the moment when he realizes that this is a game, that the game is now *on*, and that you are both about to have a lot of fun playing it.

Once started, the game has its own inertia, and you can use it to your advantage. Don't be afraid to play with your power by engaging in a little give and take to keep his attention in the moment because that is the entire purpose of this game—to *capture and keep attention until your pitch is complete*.

You must also take care not to abuse the power you now hold. The *frame master*, which is what you will be when you get good at this, knows that dominating the frame is not *how* you win the game but rather a *means* to win the game. No one likes to be dominated, so once you own the frame, use this power in ways that are fun and mutually exciting.

Small acts of denial and defiance are enormously powerful frame disrupters. They equalize the social power structure and then transfer all that power to you. Then, all you need to do is hold on to the power and use it wisely.

The Prize Frame

Another common situation occurs when the key decision maker does not attend the meeting as was agreed to. This situation requires a special kind of response that not only will reaffirm your control of the frame but also will establish you as someone unlike anyone else they have dealt with.

Let's say that you've done everything right so far. You've come into the business interaction and quickly asserted strong frames and, hopefully, frame control with the people you've just met. You're ready to start your pitch and are waiting for "Mr. Big" to come in, when his assistant steps in to announce, "I am so sorry. Mr. Big just called. He can't make the meeting for another hour. He says to start without him." She turns to leave.

This is a defining moment for you. You have just lost the frame, and there is nothing you can do about it. However, this does not mean that you do not have choices. Your options are

1. Go ahead with your presentation, even though you know you've lost the frame, hope for the best, and hope that maybe Mr. Big will join the group toward the end of the meeting. I would not recommend this.
2. *Stop everything*. Reframe using power, time, or prize frames (which are covered in this chapter) or perhaps all three. Immediately take the power back.

You've traveled to this meeting, prepared for it, and have an established goal. Are you willing to throw that away?

No one can tell your story as well as you can. If you trust your presentation to subordinates and expect them to pass it on to the decision maker with the same force and qualities of persuasion that

you have, then you are not being honest with yourself. Again, no one can tell your story as well as you can. Mr. Big must hear it. *He must hear it from you.*

This is what I usually say in this situation:

“So you guys are asking me to delay the start? Okay. I can give you 15 minutes to get organized. But if we can’t start by then, *then let’s just call it a day.*”

Usually someone will volunteer to track down Mr. Big, and that person will try as hard as he or she can to find him and request that he join the meeting.

Or someone will say, “Let’s go ahead with the presentation, and we’ll make sure that Mr. Big is briefed.” You can’t let your frame get absorbed by this. Your response? “No, we’re not going to follow your agenda. This meeting is going to start when I say *start*, and it will end when I say *stop*. You’re going to make sure that all the right people come to the meeting on time. Then we’re only going to cover the items on my agenda, and you’re going pay attention to every minute of my presentation.”

You only *think* this way, of course. What you actually say is, “I can wait 15 minutes, but then I have to leave.” That’s enough to get the message through.

The first time you think this way and say these words, you’ll be uncomfortable—no, make that terrified—and you’ll wonder if you are doing the right thing. Your heart will race, and you’ll fear the consequences of your boldness, afraid of having offended your audience. You’ll second-guess yourself and think you’ve just made an awful mistake.

And then something awesome will happen. The people in the room will scramble, doing their best to prevent you from being offended, doing their best to keep you from leaving. They are worried about *you*.

When you own the frame, others react to *you*.

Like Peter Parker's transformation into Spiderman, you will suddenly be empowered by an internal change state that is felt by everyone in the room. Be judicious with this power as you are now in complete control of the situation. If you stand, pack up your things, and leave, it will be a social disaster for Mr. Big and his staff. So be benevolent, give Mr. Big the promised 15 minutes to arrive, and act politely but true to your frame.

And if he does not show at that point, you leave. You do not deliver your presentation, you do not leave brochures, and you do not apologize. *Your* time has been wasted, and you don't even need to say it. They know.

If it seems appropriate, and if this is a company with which you want to do business, tell the most important person in the room that you are willing to reschedule—on your turf. That's right, you offer to reschedule and acknowledge that these things happen (we have all missed meetings before), but for the next meeting, they must come to you.

This is a subtle framing technique known as prizing. What you do is reframe everything your audience does and says as if they are trying to win you over.

A few moments earlier, you learned that Mr. Big wasn't coming to your meeting and apparently you were just the morning entertainment. Now, however, you are communicating to your buyers that *they are here to entertain you*. What prizing subconsciously says to your audience is, "You are trying to win my attention. I am the prize, not you. I can find a thousand buyers (audiences, investors, or clients) like you. There is only one me."

It also conveys to your audience that if they wish to get any further information from you, they will first have to do something to earn it.

Prizing 101

To solidify the prize frame, you make the buyer qualify himself to you. “Can you tell me more about yourself? I’m picky about who I work with.” At a primal, croc brain level, you have just issued a challenge: *Why do I want to do business with you?*

This is a powerful and unspoken expression of your high status and your frame dominance. It forces your audience to qualify themselves by telling you exactly how interested they really are.

Sound outrageous? It’s not, I promise you. *When you rotate the circle of social power 180 degrees, it changes everything.* The predator becomes the prey. In this instance, what your target is feeling is a kind of moral shame—they have wronged you—and they feel obligated to make things right.

Initially, you walked in with low status. Just another pitch in a long string of pitches. Over many experiences, these people have learned how to have their way with salespeople and presenters like you. But now, you’ve broken their power play. They will apologize, appease, and try to correct for the social gaffe, and in most cases, if Mr. Big is in the building, they will find a way to get him in front of you.

In a moment, I’m going to address what happens when you encounter *time frames* and *analyst frames*. Before going into these aspects of framing in greater detail, though, I think it might help to prepare the ground if I recount how I came to develop and use frames over the years. As you will see, the practical side of frames grew out of my personal experiences, sometimes in high-stakes situations where there was much to be gained and lost.

Remember, when you own the frame, people respond to you. Let me share an example from my own experience.

The Avocado Farmer's Money

I looked down at my phone. Fourteen missed calls, all from the same person, D. WALTER. I'd turned off my ringer for less than 30 minutes, and the phone blew up. I listened to one of his messages:

“Oren, I have a serious problem,” he started.

His serious problem was a deal that had already gone bad, and now it was my job to help.

Dennis Walter was an avocado farmer, a guy who got his overalls dirty, a guy who put in long days in the hot sun. After 35 years, he was ready for retirement. He had money saved, but a good portion of it (\$640,000) was in an escrow account, controlled by a man named Donald McGhan.

Dennis wanted his money now, and it was his, legally. But he was unable to get it back despite repeated attempts. This was now affecting an \$18 million deal that both Dennis and I were in. If Dennis couldn't wire his money to me, all \$640,000, then the deal—a large property we were buying in Hawaii—would start to unwind. So his problem was now my problem, too.

To retrieve Dennis's money, I would have to sit down with McGhan and make an appeal to have the money returned. This is how I was thrust into a pitch that clearly was doomed to fail. It wasn't life and death, but it was close. This was a man's life savings.

I knew a little bit about McGhan. He had a reputation as a successful businessman, primarily in the field of medical devices. Intriguingly, while at Dow Corning in the 1960s, he helped to invent the first generation of silicone breast implants. Today, he owned two companies: MediCor and Southwest Exchange.

MediCor's breast implant business had looked promising for a while. But the success enjoyed there was short-lived, and McGhan

turned desperate. To keep MediCor solvent, McGhan began siphoning money from Southwest Exchange.

Southwest Exchange, which McGhan bought in 2004, gave him instant access to over \$100 million in escrow accounts. Real estate investors, like Dennis, had used Southwest Exchange to hold their money while looking for new investments.

Soon after acquiring Southwest Exchange, McGhan, according to federal investigators, transferred \$47.3 million from Southwest Exchange to MediCor. Just like that. Including \$640,000 from Dennis, the avocado farmer.

Now I was on our corporate jet, en route to Las Vegas, on my way to help Dennis attempt the impossible.

I thought about McGhan and what it might be like to confront him face to face. At the time, I had no idea I was walking into a \$100 million problem involving hundreds of investors. Or that McGhan was a bad guy, a criminal, presiding over a large-scale Ponzi scheme. All I knew was that this wasn't going to be pleasant.

As I drove to Henderson, a Las Vegas suburb, I had a strong sense of purpose. Not only was McGhan harming Dennis, not only was McGhan in the wrong, but the lost \$640,000 also was holding up my Hawaii deal.

I pulled into the Southwest Exchange parking lot, and I met Dennis for the first time in person. He was a nice guy, looked like your typical farmer, and looked like a guy who really needed my help.

I was clearly nervous. Although I almost always enjoy pitching deals, it's usually for new business. Making this kind of pitch, to get money back—a lot of money—from a bad deal, is mentally and emotionally tough.

To calm myself, I thought about frame control and all the other methods that I had spent countless hours learning, and trying to master. As I mentioned before, no situation has real *meaning* until

you frame it. *Frames* are mental structures that shape the way we see the world and put relationships in context. The frame you put around a situation completely and totally controls its meaning. But you aren't the only one framing. People are always trying to impose frames on each other. The frame is like a picture of what you want the interaction to be about. And the most powerful thing about frames? There can be only one dominant frame during any interaction between two people.

When two frames come together, the stronger frame absorbs the weaker frame. Then weak arguments and rational facts just bounce off the winning frame.

Dennis and I spoke for a few minutes in the parking lot. I prepared my frame. Then, just like that, I was ready, so we walked into the building together, and I went looking for the one guy who had caused all these problems: Donald McGhan.

It was 9 a.m. when we walked into the building. It was a generic looking office with a black leather couch and magazines spread neatly on the coffee table.

"Good morning. How can I help you?" a receptionist asked.

"I don't need help," I said. "Just tell me which office Don McGhan is in."

She began her gatekeeper script: "I'll see if he's in."

Rituals like these are meant to reinforce status hierarchies. But I was there to establish my own status and frame control and certainly not to supplicate a gatekeeper.

I strode past the front desk and down the hallway, the gatekeeper chasing behind me. She tried to keep me out of the office, to keep me from finding Dennis's money, so I had no choice but to start throwing open doors to various offices, interrogating anyone and everyone. What were they going to do, call the cops? Back at the office, my partner already had the local police and the FBI on speed dial.

“Where’s Don McGhan?” I bellowed!

There were plenty of people now trying to stop me, but I wasn’t going to stop until I’d spoken to McGhan. And I wasn’t going to leave without Dennis’s \$640,000.

As I made my way through the building, office by office, Don McGhan hustled himself out the back door, not wanting to deal with me. Instead, he sent his son, Jim, who finally came out to “handle” things.

Jim McGhan, in his early 40s, was dressed in an Armani suit and had a confident, arrogant way about him. He was tall, and he looked down at me. We sat in a conference room, and right away, he was trying to take control, trying to frame things by saying, *There’s a rational explanation for all of this.*

So *that* was his game; he was playing with the *analyst frame*, which relies on facts, figures, and logic.

I had a better frame prepared, the *moral authority* frame, and it’s an analyst disruptor.

“Jim, you cannot hold Dennis’s money,” I told him. “We’ve requested it properly, and you’re going to get it for him right now.”

Jim was a player. I saw it in his eyes. But he knew that his scheme was falling apart, and he wasn’t interested in giving Dennis the money. Instead, the money probably would be wired to McGhan’s attorney by day’s end, and then, we’d never get it. He knew what he was doing. He was using his status and authority to confidently explain the so-called facts.

I give him credit for one thing: Jim pulled off a beautiful analyst frame. He was completely unfazed, arrogant, and acting puzzled as to why we were there. Then he began with a rational, highly detailed, and analytical explanation of why the money couldn’t be transferred right away.

This was the squaring-off phase.

He was trying to spin. He thought he could put us off and have us leave empty-handed.

Of course, I wasn't having that. I came in with a moral authority frame—that we were right and he was wrong—a nearly unshakeable frame when used correctly. The game was on. He knew my frame, and I knew his.

Next came the moment of first contact. It's that moment when two opposing frames are about to collide with full force. You can feel it—usually as a pang of anxiety in the pit of your stomach. It is at this moment when you need to strengthen your resolve and commit completely to your frame. No matter what happens, no matter how much social pressure and discomfort you suffer, you must stay composed and stick to your frame. This is called *plowing*. So you prepare yourself to plow, as an ox might plow a field. *Always moving forward. Never stopping. Never any self-doubt.* And, as you are about to see, when two frames collide, the stronger one always wins.

The niceties didn't last long. I spoke plainly and looked Jim right in the eyes. "We want Dennis's \$640,000, and we are getting all of it back from you, today, right now."

He hemmed and hawed. He threw out a bunch of promises, half-truths, and MBA double talk. But I saw through the jibberish. And I had the stronger frame: *moral authority*.

I plowed.

"Look," I said. "Your lips are moving, but I'm not listening to a single word. Your words have no meaning. Stop talking. Start transferring money." He blinked. He tried one more time to explain, to argue, to rationalize why the money hadn't been transferred to Dennis, something about misplaced wire-transfer numbers. But rational explanations will never override a moral authority frame.

At one point, I saw the realization cross his face. He knew that he had picked the weaker frame. In fact, he tried the moral authority frame out for himself, "You know what, I've had enough of this. Get out of here now, or I'm going to call the cops."

But it was too late for him. He had already picked a weak analyst frame and had overcommitted to it—and was about to pay for doing so. It was time for *frame disruption*. I was ready to pulverize his frame into a puff of fine mist.

I pulled out my phone and dialed a colleague, Sam Greenberg. I put him on speaker and discussed the logistics of getting the FBI involved. Dramatic? Yes. But Jim McGhan knew at that moment we were 100 percent committed to following through. I was activating the primal fears in his croc brain. As soon as he became afraid, my frame would crush his, and he would bend to my will.

“Let me paint a picture for you, Jim,” I told him. “You’ve seen SWAT teams in the movies. It happens *just like that*. They are going to swarm through this door, FBI accountants wearing Kevlar vests and Glock 22s. And the sheriff will be blasting pepper spray at anything that moves, dogs will be barking, and they’ll be fastening your hands behind your back with zip ties. Is that how you want today to end, hog-tied, pepper sprayed, lying in the back of a black van with no windows? The other option is—you starting transferring money to us.”

SMASH! That was the moral authority frame, delivered with emotional realism, and here, I achieved the *hookpoint*. Our frames had collided. My frame had absorbed his. The only options were my options. There’s a moment in games of strategy when the other side realizes that no matter what moves it makes, the game is lost. This was *that moment*.

I now had his full attention. Although it was his office and his domain, I had seized the high-status position. Although he still had our money, \$640,000, I had the *frame control*.

“Jim, starting right now, every 15 minutes, you’re going to give me a deliverable. That means—just so you understand me perfectly—every 15 minutes something happens that benefits *me*. Cancel your

schedule, do not leave this room, pick up the phone, and start finding our money.”

He was listening, and I continued.

“I need the money wired to Dennis’s account, right now.”

Just because you have frame control doesn’t mean that someone won’t push back. You *just stay committed to your frame and keep it strong. You plow*. Jim started with more MBA double-speak, returning to rationalization mode. So I expanded the frame to include new characters and new consequences.

“Listen, Jim. *Stop*,” I told him. “Get your friends and family and investor’s list and start dialing for money. Every 15 minutes you need to hand me a wire-transfer confirmation.”

This was the point of consolidation. Because I had done everything right, up to this point, there was no need to make threats or create drama. *The frame was set. The agenda was my agenda. Because the social interaction was being governed by my frame, these were the rules Jim had to follow:*

Rule 1: Everything happening must involve Dennis’s money.

Rule 2: Something good must happen every 15 minutes.

Rule 3: The meeting isn’t over until all \$640,000 is wired.

I sat with Jim for six long hours as he dialed associates, family members, and friends. The money came rolling in, in small increments (\$10,000 here, \$15,000 here).

As I mentioned earlier, when two mental frames come together, when they collide, the stronger frame disrupts and absorbs the weaker frame. I’d controlled the frame, started it small, and expanded it, and Jim’s weaker frame collapsed. His internal state went from nonchalance and arrogance to panic and desperation. His status went from high to low. Responding to my frame, he

raised Dennis's money, and we walked out with all the \$640,000—irrevocably secured via wire transfers. Mission accomplished.

Over the next few days, Dennis and I and some other victims worked with the authorities and Southwest Exchange was raided. I got Dennis's \$640,000 out just in time, thanks to my knowledge of framing. Not for a moment was it about threats or power plays.

Although it was Dennis's money legally, perhaps Jim and Don McGhan never should have given back that \$640,000. It wasn't in their best interests. If Jim McGhan really thought I was going to call the FBI, he should have wired that money to his attorney. It was clearly the last bit of cash Jim and Don could scratch together.

I had always respected the nature of frame control. But now, with Dennis's \$640,000 back in my escrow account, I was learning to rely on it more and more often.

All told, the McGhans had bilked more than 130 investors out of more than \$180 million. Several people lost their life savings, and the case spawned numerous lawsuits. In 2009, Don McGhan, age 75, was sentenced to a 10-year prison sentence for wire fraud.

This is an example of owning the frame. There are still more frames that you will encounter that I haven't discussed yet. Let's take a look at *time-based frames* and how to respond to them.

The Time Frame

Frames involving *time* tend to occur later in the social exchange, after someone has already established frame control. Again, if you want to know who has the frame, it's easy to observe. *When you are reacting to the other person, that person owns the frame. When the other person is reacting to what you do and say, you own the frame.*

Time frames are often used by your Target to rechallenge your frame by disrupting you and, in the moment of confusion, unwittingly take back control. As long as you are alert, time frames are easy to defeat.

You will know that a time-frame collision is about to occur when you see attention begin to wane. You've been pitching for a few minutes, and the temperature in the room is noticeably cooler. The game you initiated was fun at the beginning, and now the audience has cooled and might be a little bored. There are limits to the human attention span, which is why a pitch must be brief, concise, and interesting, as you will read about in Chapter 4.

If you wait for someone in the audience to say (or give body language to the effect), "We only have a few minutes left, so let's wrap this up," you will lose the frame because you now have to react to that person.

Instead, when you see attention begin to bottom out and expire, that's it. You're done. Stay in control of time, and start wrapping up. *Running long or beyond the point of attention shows weakness, neediness, and desperation.*

In Chapter 4, I explore attention extensively and you'll begin to understand that attention is an extremely rare cognitive phenomenon that is exceedingly difficult to create and manage. When

attention is lacking, set your own time constraint, and bounce out of there:

“Hey, looks like time’s up. I’ve got to wrap this up and get to my next meeting.” If they are interested in you, they will agree to a follow-up.

Ironically, the mistake most people make when they see their audience becoming fatigued is to talk faster, to try to force their way through the rest of the pitch. *Instead of imparting more valuable information faster, however, they only succeed in helping the audience retain less of their message.* Here is another example of an opposing time frame and how to respond to it. If you visit customers’ offices, you will recognize this situation:

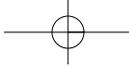
CUSTOMER: “Hi, yes, um, well, I only have about 10 minutes to meet with you, but come on in.”

SALESPERSON: “I really appreciate your time. Thanks for fitting me into your busy schedule.”

This is a common dialogue and form of business etiquette—and *it is exactly the wrong thing to do.* You are reinforcing your target’s power over you and confirming your target’s higher status. You are essentially handing your target your frame and saying, “Here, please, crush my frame, control me, and waste my time.”

When you encounter a time frame like this, quickly break it with a stronger prize frame of your own. Qualify your target on the spot.

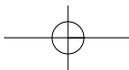
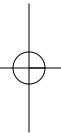
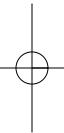
YOU: “No. I don’t work like that. There’s no sense in rescheduling unless we like each other and trust each other. I need to know, are you good to work with, can you keep appointments, and stick to a schedule?”



YOUR TARGET: “Okay, you’re right about that. Yeah, sure I can. Let’s do this now. I have 30 minutes. That’s no problem. Come on in.”

You have just broken your target’s time frame, established that your time is important, and he is now giving you focused attention instead of treating your visit like an annoyance.

Another frame that you will encounter is called the *analyst frame*. Like the time frame, the analyst frame usually appears after the initial frame collision and can derail you just when you are about to reach a decision. It is a deadly frame that you must know how to repel using the *intrigue frame*.



The Intrigue Frame

How many times have you been giving a presentation when suddenly one or more people in the room take a deep dive into technical details? That's the *analyst frame* coming at you. This is especially common in industries that involve engineers and financial analysts. This frame will kill your pitch.

The moment your audience does a “deep drill-down” into the minute details, you are losing control. The cognitive temperature of the audience, which was hot when things got started, naturally will cool as audience members listen to your pitch. But once you give their neocortex(es) something to calculate, they will go cold. *Problem solving, numerical calculations, statistics, and any sort of geometry are called cold cognitions.* Nothing will freeze your pitch faster than allowing your audience to grind numbers or study details during the pitch.

As you will learn in Chapter 4, the key to preventing this is to control access to details. Sometimes, however, a drill-down will happen anyway, and you have to act—fast.

It is important to realize that *human beings are unable to have hot cognitions and cold cognitions simultaneously.* The brain is not wired that way. *Hot cognitions* are feelings like wanting or desire or excitement, and *cold cognitions* come from “cold” processes like analysis and problem solving. To maintain frame control and momentum, you must force your audience to be analytical on its own time. You do this by separating the technical and detailed material from your presentation.

Oh, for sure, audience members will ask for details. They believe that they need them. So what should you do if someone demands details? You respond with summary data that you have prepared for this specific purpose.

You answer the question directly and with the highest-level information possible. Then you redirect their attention back to your pitch.

In financial deals, I respond with something like this:

“The revenue is \$80 million, expenses are \$62 million, the net is \$18 million. These and other facts you can verify later, but right now, what we need to focus on is this: Are we a good fit? Should we be doing business together? This is what I came here to work on.”

If you’re pitching a product and the drill-down is on price, don’t chase this conversation thread. Do answer fast, answer directly with high-level details only, and go straight back to the relationship question.

What this tells the audience is that (1) I’m trying to decide if you are right for me; (2) if I decide to work with you, the numbers will back up what I’m telling you, so let’s not worry about that now; and (3) I care about who I work with.

Keep the target focused on the business relationship at all times. Analysis comes later. This is the best and most reliable way to deal with a target who suddenly becomes bored and tries to entertain himself with the details of your deal.

Remember, when you own the frame, you control the agenda, and you determine the rules under which the game is played.

There will be times when you are doing everything right, but for reasons beyond your understanding or control, the other person stops responding to you. The personal connection you had at one point seems to be fading.

When it no longer seems that communication is flowing back and forth, the other person is in something called a *nonreactive state*. It’s like the other person’s mind is wandering or thinking about something else. This is a state of disinterest that you can correct for if you recognize it in time and act quickly.

You can tell that this is starting to happen when you notice remarks or body language that indicate that your presentation is not intriguing—when the target thinks he can easily predict what your idea is before you even explain it or when he feels that he can anticipate what you are going to say and how you’re going to say it.

Most intelligent people take great pleasure in being confronted with something new, novel, and intriguing. Being able to figure it out is a form of entertainment, like solving the Sunday puzzle. Our brains are wired to look for these kinds of pleasurable challenges.

When you described your idea initially to your target, you were pulling on a primal lever. When the target agreed to the meeting with you, what he or she really was saying was, “This is a puzzle I am interested in solving.”

No one takes a meeting to hear about something they already know and understand. It’s a fundamental concept driving every single presentation—it’s the hook that allows you as the presenter to grab and hold attention by subconsciously saying, “I have a solution to one of your problems. I know something that you don’t.” This is why people agree to take meetings and to hear a pitch.

At the start of the meeting, you have the audience’s attention. It’s a rare moment, but not for the reason you may think. Audience members are, with full concentration and at the most basic and primal level, trying to figure out the answer to this question:

“How similar is your idea to something I already know about or to a problem I have already solved?”

If audience members discover that the answer is close to what they had earlier guessed, they will mentally check out on you. They will experience a quick ping of self-satisfaction at the moment of realization, just before they mentally *check out*.

But *checking out* is not just a catch phrase to describe drifting attention or wandering minds. Checking out, in this context, refers to something very specific: an *extreme and nearly total loss of alertness*, and this is exactly what you need to avoid.

As your pitch moves along, at any time, some or all members of your audience will solve the puzzle, see the solution, and *get* the whole story. Then they check out. This is why you see presenters lose more and more of the audience as time goes on—*those who solve the puzzle drop out.*

We generalize by saying, “Oh, they lost interest.” But what really happened is that they learned enough about our idea to feel secure that they understand it—and there is nothing more to be gained by continuing to pay attention. They determined that there was no more value to be had by engaging with us on any level.

As I've said before, the brain is a cognitive miser. Unless it can get value for itself, it stops paying attention. The analyst frame can devastate your pitch because it only values hard data and ignores the value of relationships and ideas. This frame is completely lacking in any kind of emotion or connection to the people in the room.

The most effective way to overcome the analyst frame is with an *intrigue frame*. Of the four frame types at your disposal, intrigue is the most powerful because it hijacks higher cognitive function to arouse the more primitive systems of the target's brain.

Narrative and analytical information does not coexist. It cannot; that's simply impossible. The human brain is unable to be coldly analytical and warmly engaged in a narrative at the same time. This is the secret power of the intrigue frame.

When your target drills down into technical material, you break that frame by telling a brief but relevant story that involves you. This is not a story that you make up on the spot; this is a personal story that you have prepared in advance and that you take to every meeting you have. Since all croc brains are pretty similar, you will not need more than one story because the intrigue it will contain will have the same impact on every audience.

You need to be at the center of the story, which immediately redirects attention back to you. People will pause, look up, and listen because you are sharing something personal.

As you share your story, there has to be some suspense to it because you are going to create intrigue in the telling of the story by *telling only part of the story*. That's right, you break the analyst frame by capturing audience attention with a provocative story of something that happened to you, and then you keep their attention by not telling them how it ends until you are ready.

This is much more powerful than you may imagine. Now I can't give you a story to tell; that has to come from you. But what I can do is tell you what your story should contain and then tell you my personal analyst frame crusher so you can see how the elements come together to recapture and hold audience attention.

The Intrigue Story

Your intrigue story needs the following elements:

1. It must be brief, and the subject must be relevant to your pitch.
2. You need to be at the center of the story.
3. There should be risk, danger, and uncertainty.
4. There should be time pressure—a clock is ticking somewhere, and there are ominous consequences if action is not taken quickly.
5. There should be tension—you are trying to do something but are being blocked by some force.
6. There should be serious consequences—failure will not be pretty.

What's new here is not that you should tell some kind of story to your target. What's new and important is *when* to use it—as soon as you recognize that the target is coming at you with an analyst frame. Then use it to nudge him out of analytical thinking. There are half a dozen other ways to disrupt the analyst frame—anger and

extreme surprise are two. But in most social situations they are impractical. The intrigue frame does it better and does it fast.

Here is my intrigue story, which I will tell you first, and then I will show you how I tell this story to my audience.

My Intrigue Story: The Porterville Incident. Recently, I was traveling in our company plane with my business partner and our attorney. We were at an airstrip in Porterville, a small California town about 300 miles from San Francisco. While this tiny airstrip served mostly small local aircraft, jet traffic in the air was heavy because of the many commercial planes going in and out of San Francisco. A jet must make a rapid and steep ascent after takeoff to join in with the busy traffic pattern.

In a pitch setting, I do not tell this story the way I just relayed it to you. When I was meeting with officials from a local airport, I told this story much differently. Knowing that my audience was made up of aviators, engineers, and guys interested in jets, I came to the meeting with this story prepared and ready to deploy if needed. As it happened, I did encounter an attack from an opposing analyst frame, and this story easily brought the meeting back under my control.

As the audience's attention began to shift to analytical questions, this is what I said:

“This reminds me of the Porterville incident. A while ago, my partner and I flew to Porterville to look at two deals. You guys know, they have a tiny airfield; it's visual-flight-rules-only and has no control tower.”

“Mostly they get single-engine traffic—Cessna Skycatchers and Beechcraft Bonanzas—and maybe a few small jets. So when we got there, our big Legacy 600 skidded to a stop at the far edge of the runway. But the landing was nothing compared with the takeoff.

“Since Porterville airspace is under San Francisco air traffic control, 260 miles away, the trick to getting out of there is to climb

fast and merge quickly into the traffic pattern. We expected an aggressive takeoff. It was no big deal when we found ourselves accelerating hard into a steep climb.

“The Legacy 600 is a ‘muscle car’ of a jet. When it’s under full power, you feel it. So we’re heavy and deep in this full-power ascent, we’re having casual business conversation, and I would estimate that our altitude was 9,000 feet when abruptly the jet surges and then *nosedives*.

“We dropped 1,000 feet in a few seconds.

“My seat is facing forward, toward the cockpit. The door is open, and I can see the pilots.

“We are all clinging to our seats and cursing, a Klaxon is howling, and one of the pilots is saying, ‘It’s the TCAS! It’s the TCAS!’ But I didn’t even know at the time what a traffic collision-avoidance system was.

“I’m trying to figure this all out, and I’m thinking this is it—I’m done, *Soy un perdedor*. . . .

“As we’re plummeting in this nosedive, I look through the door into the cockpit and see both pilots with their hands on the throttle. *Then* the plane rolls into a steep climb, *and I see the pilots fighting*, literally slapping each other’s hands off the throttle. The climb is short—just five seconds—and then the plane goes into a *nosedive again*.

“Anyway . . .”

And I go right back into my pitch. Why does this strategy work so well? The most extreme explanation is that the audience becomes immersed in the narrative. They take the emotional ride with me. Sure, they know that we obviously survived, but I’ve piqued their curiosity—*why were the pilots fighting?* They want to know. When I do not tell them, the intrigue spikes high enough to shock them out of the analyst frame.

In my experience with this approach, the opposing analyst frame gets crushed by emotional, engaging, and relevant narratives like this. Attention redirects back to me, allowing me to finish my pitch on my agenda, my timeline, and my topics.

After I finish the pitch, I complete the narrative arc by explaining the whole story:

“It turns out that the sudden dive was caused by the traffic collision-avoidance software built into the autopilot system. It had detected another airplane flying into our ascent path, and the computer had taken evasive measures just in time to avoid a crash. This was a very close call, and I am fortunate to be able to share this story with you now.

“The reason the pilots were fighting over the controls was because the copilot did not know the computer had taken over. But the pilot, older and more experienced, knew this and was pulling the copilot’s hands off the controls. The collision-avoidance software was doing its job.”

This true story has everything I need in an intrigue story—it’s brief; it has a tight timeline; it has danger, suspense, and intrigue (what were those pilots doing?)—and it happened to be perfectly relevant to a pitch I was making to the operators of an airport, which you will read about later.

Perhaps, in a broader sense, this is why we tell each other intriguing narratives—to participate in powerful emotional experiences involving high-stakes situations that we hope we will never have to face ourselves. A short, personal narrative like this is important to your audience because it reveals something about you, your character, and your life. As you think about your intrigue story, don’t be afraid to make it very personal. As long as it’s relevant to your business and has the six elements described earlier, it will serve you well.

Stop the Analyst Frame Cold

The key to using an intrigue frame is to trust in its power to stop the analyst frame cold. Remember, the person using the analyst frame will break your pitch into pieces and ultimately crush it if unchecked. The analyst frame filters your deal like this:

1. It focuses on hard facts only.
2. It says that aesthetic or creative features have no value.
3. It requires that everything must be supported by a number or statistic.
4. It holds that ideas and human relationships have no value.

Do not let your audience go there—keep audience members focused on the relationship they are building with you. Your intrigue story breaks this analyst rule set in an entertaining way and replaces analytical thinking with narrative discourse.

Breaking the Analyst Frame with Suspense

Consider the movie *Jaws* for a moment. This 1975 Steven Spielberg film is a classic, and decades later, it is still doing a brisk business on DVD. Why does this story work so well? In the first part of the film, Spielberg doesn't show you the shark. The great white lurks below the surface, creating a sense of terror and suspense. Where is it? When will it strike next? How big is it?

We see someone in the water, minding her own business. Then we see her as a victim, screaming, kicking, getting pulled under, and eventually disappearing in a froth of red water. This predator is unseen, and we have no idea when it's going to strike next. This creates great tension, and we are riveted to the action.

Now let's reimagine *Jaws*. Let's assume that the shark is fitted with a GPS transponder and that we know its exact location at all times. We know where the shark is going, where it's been, and what it looks like. When it comes time to hunt the shark, Police Chief Martin Brody and the crazy shark hunter, Quint, know exactly where to go and what they're up against.

Strapping a GPS transponder on the shark strips away the mystery and the intrigue. Telling the story this way would have wiped out nearly a billion dollars in box office revenue. *If you know where the shark is at all times, you have no tension, no suspense, no blockbuster.* The same can be said for your narrative.

Use the elements of surprise and tension, and as you approach the most interesting part of the story, move away from it and leave the audience *intrigued*—until *you* are ready to reveal. Clearly, this technique made Spielberg one of the most successful directors in history. It works for me in business settings, and it will work for you.

The Prizing Frame: Reloaded

Prizing is a way to deal with threatening and fast-approaching frames that are likely to push you into a low-status position. When you prize, you frame yourself as high value in the eyes of your target. Prize correctly, and your target will be chasing you.

Establishing a prize frame is the very first thing you need to do when you are on someone else's turf, ready to begin your pitch. When you get to the end of your pitch and it's time to get a deal, your success depends on how well you establish your frames at the beginning and how strong those frames actually are.

For a moment, think of the alternative to having strong frames. One is to sell harder by making more calls and being more pushy. In fact, our business culture has a fascination with the idea that a salesperson should never take no for an answer. There's pressure from the top. Always be chasing. Always be closing.

Everyone has heard a friend tell a version of this story: "The buyer didn't want my product, but I wouldn't take no for an answer. I just kept pounding away, until he finally signed up."

Such stories dramatize the myth that you can succeed by badgering your clients into buying something. The truth is, this rarely works, and when it does, you are sure to encounter buyer's remorse.

The same is true with pitching. If you think you can browbeat your target until finally he relents, you have it backwards.

Whenever we chase someone or value someone else more than ourselves, we assume the subordinate position and put ourselves at a disadvantage. Although we talked briefly about this before, I'll now introduce you in greater depth to the concept of prizing and the prize frame.

Who is the prize, or who is chasing whom, is one of the underlying social dynamics that influences most meetings. The answer

establishes a person's motivation and tells us how they will probably behave in the meeting. The basics:

- If *you* are trying to win your target's respect, attention, and money, he becomes the prize.
- When *your target* is trying to win your attention and respect, you are the prize. (This, of course, is what you want.)

Prizing is the sum of the actions you take to get to your target to understand that he is a commodity and you are the prize. Successful prizing results in your target chasing you, asking to be involved in your deal.

Why Is Prizing Important?

Successful prizing restores calm and poise to the social interaction. You won't have to chase as hard or worry so much about impressing your target. But there's another important benefit. It reduces your feeling of needing to perform to get a reward. Consider the way people talk about a presentation—they often call it a “dog and pony show.” This label evokes self-defeating imagery of you riding around in a circle on a pony. The only thing missing is rainbow suspenders and a clown nose.

Getting rid of those negative labels and ideas is an important step. When you are no longer performing for the money, the frame changes drastically.

Sure, it's easy to think that you have to earn the buyer/investor's approval to win the money. Especially when you're in the investor's office, on his turf, giving your pitch. The prize frame is the window through which you look at the world that allows you to see yourself as the prize: The money has to earn you, not the other way around. You're flipping the script.

Why Does Prizing Work?

Your pitch is first going to register in the target's croc brain. And as we discussed in Chapter 1, the croc brain would like to ignore you. But if you are dynamic enough—giving new and novel information—you will capture the croc's attention. Once that happens, the croc is going to have one of two primal reactions:

- Curiosity and desire, or
- Fear and dislike.

Breaking it down into such simple terms helped me to understand a crucial concept: If you trigger curiosity and desire, the croc sees you as something it wants to chase. You become the *prize*.

Let's consider three of the most fundamental behaviors of human beings:

1. We chase that which moves away from us.
2. We want what we cannot have.
3. We only place value on things that are difficult to obtain.

Are these universally valid laws that can be relied on in all social interactions? I think they are. And by now, you can see where I'm going with this. If you pitch in front of strangers, you know how easy it is to come across as a little too eager to do business. At the same time, you might make it seem too easy to get what you have. All your audience has to do is nod, and you will do everything else—it's too obvious that you're willing to do anything at all to make them happy.

The problem with this approach is that if it is true that people only value things that are hard to get, you are not hard to get. There's no challenge. Behaving this way means that you are failing to prize.

And if you're pitching for money, your problems can multiply. Framing money as the prize is a common error—and often a fatal one. Money is never a prize; it's a commodity, a means for getting things done. Money simply transfers economic value from place to place so that people are able to work together.

Prizing 201: Avoiding the Mistakes

The prize frame works only if certain conditions are fulfilled. In Prizing 101, you learned two basic ideas:

1. *Make the buyer qualify himself back to you.* Do this by asking such questions as, “Why do I want to do business with you?”
2. *Protect your status.* Don't let the buyer change the agenda, the meeting time, or who will attend. Withdraw if the buyer wants to force this kind of change.

Prizing 201 offers additional lessons beyond the previous learning:

1. There is a great temptation to use trial closes because we've all been told this is how selling should be done: “So, are we in the ballpark?” or “What do you think so far?” *Don't do it. This shows you as being too eager to get a deal done.* Anyway, trial closes are crude and ineffective.
2. Instead, take the time to step back, to withdraw. Work to control the underlying prize frame—then you don't have to push your ideas so hard. Instead of a trial close, you

might issue a challenge (do it with humor or it will feel forced): “So many buyers, yet only one of me. How are you going to compete for my attention.” I left out the question mark for a reason—because you are not seeking validation from the target. You don’t have to ask it as a question; just issue it as a statement. It’s important to get used to making statements instead of asking questions. Doing it this way shows that you aren’t constantly seeking validation.

3. Make the target perform a legitimate task to earn the deal. For example, BMW has a special-edition M3 that requires you to sign a contract promising to you’ll keep it clean and take care of the special paint. The company won’t even let you buy one until you promise this in writing.
4. What follows might sound like advice from the positive-mental-attitude crowd, but it’s an important part of the learning: The prize frame works best when you change your attitude about money—fully realizing that money is almost useless to any buyer/investor until it purchases what you have. Oh sure, the investor’s money can earn a few bucks in Treasury bills or corporate bonds. But that’s not what money wants to do. It wants to go to work by investing in deals and buying products. How does this work in the real world? This can seem a little abstract until you fully internalize the following fact: Money cannot do anything without you. The money needs *you*.

When you combine the elements in Prizing 101 and 201, at first it feels like you are walking up the down escalator. This is a natural

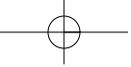
reaction. Don't worry, prizing does not mean that we have given up the pursuit of buyers—that would be an absurd notion. It means we must give up the concept of ABC, or “Always Be Closing,” a phrase popularized by the sales gurus of the 1980s. Instead, you must embrace the idea that money is a commodity, that it is available in a thousand places, and that it's all the same no matter where it comes from. Knowing this, it is more likely you will embrace ABL—“Always Be Leaving.” And it's also likely that you'll embrace the money that comes with it.

Money is a commodity. Every investment banker and economist you'll meet will confirm this. Imagine that—Investors reframed as a commodity, a vending machine for money. When you think about it, this makes perfect sense because there are many places to source money, but there is only one you. Your deal is unique among all others. If you think of yourself and your deal in this way and build frames around this idea, you will be pleased at how it will change the social dynamics in your meetings with investors.

If you want to get started with this, in a simple, low-risk way, here is a phrase I often use to set the prize frame firmly in place: “I'm glad I could find the time to meet with you today. And I do have another meeting right after this. Let's get started.” This is always a good start because it tells the audience that there are many like them but only one of you.

As you move into your pitch, find moments to reinforce the other frames you hold. For example, make appropriate comments about the value of your time to strengthen both your time frame and your prize frame.

If someone asks a question that is relevant yet veers toward an analytical tangent, let the question just bounce off your stronger power frame. Save the discussion of details for later, after you have said what you want to say.



Remember, small acts of defiance and denial, combined with humor, are extremely powerful in maintaining your frame control and in reinforcing your high status. Humor is important here—don't leave it out, or I guarantee that you will encounter unpredictable responses.

