



Ah, we can do that ourselves. They are not just vendors. They are partners. Ever heard that before? Then my friends, the next five days on the Procurement Zen Podcast will be something very special for you. Our very first focus week on the book, *Expensive Sentences*. Let's go.

Looking to up your negotiation and procurement skills? You're in the right place. Welcome to Procurement Zen, with your host Phil Kowalski.

Welcome back to the Procurement Zen Podcast with me, your host, Phil Kowalski and today we'll start something very special. We'll start our very first focus week. So, what is a focus week? I already introduced that to you in our last episode, where we talked about ultimatums. But today, I'm going to go a little bit more into detail. So a focus week is a series of episode the Procurement Zen Podcast, where we focus on one special topic and this special topic only for a series of episodes, like five to seven episodes.

In our very first focus week, we will have five episodes and the topic will focus on, that could be a book, that could be a case study, that could be some interesting development in the field of procurement and, or negotiation, that could be also, some topic that we simply want to cover more into depth, like preparation or similar stuff.

So this time, in the very first episode, we'll focus on the book, *Expensive Sentences* by Jake Quarles. And in this very first episode of the focus week on *Expensive Sentences*, I will give you an introduction, not only about what the focus week is. That's what I just did, the few seconds before, but I will also, introduce you what you can expect throughout the next episodes.

Oh yeah, and by the way, in the focus week, there will be one episode per day. Other than usually on the Procurement Zen Podcast, where we usually have longer breaks between each episode. So one episode per day, with this one the first and the next four coming over the next four days.

So let's focus a little bit more on the book, *Expensive Sentences*. The book itself is quite interesting and it is written by long-time procurement professional, Jake Quarles, who had several positions, also in management and procurement functions throughout his career. And really, first of all, let me give you my personal review of this book before we dive deeper and the book itself is really amazing because it focuses on a topic that is not so often covered.

If you're looking for books in the procurement space, you will find books on persuasion. You will find books on influence and stuff like this, but usually, it can become hard to find a book on how to say your ideas internally. How to overcome obstacles internally and usually, when you are in procurement and when you work as a negotiator or for example, as a contract manager or something related to procurement, you usually work in a bigger organization. And bigger organizations, from my experience, always come with some obstacles that seem hard to overcome and that exactly is the topic of this book.

And I open the book, it was a recommendation on LinkedIn, I think that someone gave to me and I opened the book and immediately, I saw two quotes that directly resonated with me. The first one, Bart Simpson, one of my all-time heroes who is quoted here with, "It's like a Milk Dud Lisa, sweet from the



outside, but poisonous from the inside." And the second one is from my all time favorite movies, Star Wars and it's Admiral Ackbar simply saying from the Return of the Jedi, "It's a trap."

And this my friends, perfectly describes what expensive sentences really are. They seem to be logic. They seem to be sweet from the outside, but they poison whole endeavors. They poison whole projects and they are traps. They are really traps. Traps in disguise, so to say. So maybe let me share my first experience with an expensive sentence here in this introduction before we dive a little bit deeper in how the book itself is structured.

So I was working together with my colleagues on a service contract where we wanted to set up a new service department and were looking for some consultancy and also, for some implementation work in that project. And we, upfront aligned on all the good things like, what are the criteria that we will take into consideration to evaluate the offers from potential vendors? How are they weighted? What is important to us and what isn't? What will we focus on?

From my perspective, everything was pretty clear because all the numbers pointed into one direction. However, I was overruled by an expensive sentence that was stated and I chose another vendor. Not the one that every thing, every document, every evaluation pointed towards. They chose another one, also, with the expensive sentences that came along as, they know us pretty well and nobody else could do what they could do. Later, this faction, although, unfortunate for my company, that selection obviously was a bad one because this vendor didn't play a fair game and the result was not as expected. So to a certain extent, it was satisfying for me, but of course, surely not satisfying for the company. So all in all, everyone loses here and that is also, a major characteristic of expensive sentences.

So let us maybe, dive a little bit deeper. First, you heard my first conscience occurrence of an expensive sentence, but let us now have a look how the book itself is structured. Jack Quarles, the author, actually structures the book in three sections. He says, "There are expensive sentences of certain flavors and they usually come in three flavors."

The first one is, "We are stuck." The second one is, "They are special." And the third one is, "This is scarce." And we will talk about this a lot more into detail on day five of our focus week, where I have the pleasure and the honor to interview Jack Quarles on this and he shares a lot of more insight into this. What is so good about the book itself is that for each of these three flavors of categories stuck, special and scarce, he shares three main examples, including several variations and he covers really, a lot of ground.

This is not only an analytical study, but also there are counter measures. How can we one, act to such an expensive sentence and therefore, this book is really hands on. It's a really practical guide and that's what I like. It's made from a procurement professional with lots and lots of experience for us. For us procurement professionals and that's what I really like.

So maybe we have a short look onto what you can expect in the additional episodes of this focus week. Over the next three days, we'll take one of each of these three flavors. Again, "We are stuck. They are special. This is scarce." We'll take an example out of this category and look at it with more detail. I also share my personal experiences with these special expensive sentences and on the fifth day, so in four



days from now. On the fifth day of this focus week at the end, as I told you already before, we will have an interview with Jack, the author of *Expensive Sentences*, himself.

In this interview, we look together at the field of procurement, its challenges. How it has developed over time and what has changed maybe in recent years and he also shares an interesting story that is not in the book. So make sure you listen to that, on how he discovered his first expensive sentence and also, how he felt about it and how it came into his mind that you need to do something about this.

So again, this focus week, let me give you another short overview before we end this episode. We have this introduction episode that you're just listening to, tomorrow and the two days after, we will cover one expensive sentence from each of the three flavors, stuck, special, scarce. And at the fifth day, we will have the interview with Jack Quarles.

In addition, I've prepared something for my VIP club members. So make sure you sign up to our VIP club and download the additional goodies. As always, you can find anything related to this episode and also to the focus week on my website at [procurementzen.com/005](http://procurementzen.com/005). That is for this episode or you can also go to [procurementzen.com/expensivesentences](http://procurementzen.com/expensivesentences), all written together. Again, that is [procurementzen.com/expensivesentences](http://procurementzen.com/expensivesentences), where once this focus week is fully published, you will find all episodes and also, the option to sign up for the VIP club and receive the goodies.

That's it for today. Make sure to listen to the next episode, which will come out tomorrow and until then, always have successful negotiation. Thanks and goodbye.

Thanks so much for listening to this episode of Procurement Zen with Phil Kowalski. For more great content and to stay up-to-date, visit [procurementzen.com](http://procurementzen.com). If you enjoyed today's episode, please review and subscribe and we'll catch you next time on Procurement Zen.