

All It Takes Is Everything We've Got



By T. Patrick Hurley

Demanding times test our resolve, and surely these are demanding times. Insightful vigilance and stamina are essential for us all if we are to avoid painful disappointment.

ACG members are well aware that long gone are the days when corporate buyers and equity sponsors could lock down a seller and plod through due diligence and financing. Hurdles are higher and schedules are tighter.

Deals often hinge on relationships forged or diluted during stressful periods of positioning and bidding, and then deepened or strained while working to close or keep a process from breaking. Savvy buyers parlay synchronized deal teams and persistent pressure to consume attention and maintain focused momentum.

Desirable companies always have alternatives and tend to manage exclusivity much differently these days. The sharpest of tenacious buyers know how to get "that call" when there is an opening and swoop in to secure a deal when sellers second-guess their initial choice.

If something doesn't feel right about a deal, the problem is more likely to get worse than to disappear. That cuts both ways and requires immediate attention when the stakes are high. Communication is more than talking — it needs to be decisionmakers setting agendas and delegating responsibilities so that issues are resolved.

Uncertainty is poison in fragile circumstances when a deal is at risk. Teams for both parties have to be invested throughout in accomplishing the goal and interacting with an appreciation for how their actions impact day-to-day progress.

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Each person on the deal team affects the shared confidence and overall momentum that keeps people in the boat, pulling in rhythm in a sprint to the finish. None of us can take for granted that a transaction will somehow get done or that we can rest for a moment because an issue is someone else's concern.

Of course, closing is also a beginning. Goodwill earned along the way can pay real dividends in integration, just as ill will can haunt buyers and spoil opportunities. Advisers tend to filter out the



organizational and day-after issues for the people running the businesses when in fact those are often a foil for contractual differences — which often delay or sink deals.

Owner-manager professionals differ dramatically from professional owners. Buying from a corporate or private equity seller is rarely as laced with emotion as dealing with a family or group of private shareholders. Avoiding surprises and not making any assumptions can help any transaction.

ACG brings us all together to help deepen our knowledge and hone our skills while expanding the network of contacts most relevant for growing our businesses and increasing personal success.

I am impressed with the caliber of ACG members and the intensity you display in the field of play. We know this is not a game any of us can afford to lose.

It takes everything we have to succeed in this intensely competitive marketplace, and we have to keep getting better every day. You have what it takes.

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