NEGOTIATION PREP BRIEFING | ADOBE ETLA, CREATIVE CLOUD AND ACROBAT

Adobe ETLA Renewal: Talking Points, Call Scripts, and Negotiation Prep

A three call playbook for sourcing teams: word for word scripts for the first, second, and third call, the mechanics behind Adobe's side of the table, and prompts to customize every line | 27 August 2026

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READ THIS BEFORE YOU DIAL

Adobe renewals are a repackaging machine. Plans get renamed, AI gets folded in, prices move, and the whole thing is presented as a migration you are subject to rather than an increase you are negotiating. At the same time, nearly every enterprise estate is oversized by default: named users who left the company, all apps licenses on people who open one application, and premium seats on casual users a lighter tier would serve. Adobe can read your activity data; so can you, and whoever reads it first owns the renewal.

Two moves decide this deal before any discount is discussed: the license hygiene you run in your own admin console before the quote exists, and the like for like demand that forces every repackaging into the open as a priced, declinable line. Add the sharpest competitive knife in enterprise software, the PDF segment, where drop in alternatives are genuinely credible, and the renewal Adobe planned as a migration becomes a negotiation you run. Three structured calls are how.

1. THE 2026 REALITY: FOUR SHIFTS THAT CHANGE YOUR SCRIPT

- **Repackaging is the uplift.** New plan names with AI included arrive at new prices, framed as where you are being moved. Demand the like for like quote first, on current plans at current units, and let every migration be a separate line you can accept, price, or decline. A migration you did not price is an increase you did not negotiate.
- **The estate is oversized by default.** Between a fifth and a third of a typical enterprise deployment is inactive users or misfit tiers, and the evidence sits in your own console. Reclaim the inactive, retier the misfits, and move the casual population to the lightweight tier before the quote is built, because reductions after the quote cost negotiation capital that reductions before it do not.
- **Generative credits are the meter.** AI credits arrive woven through every plan, pooled or per user, with overage models maturing fast. Nothing consumption based enters the agreement without pooling, caps, rollover, and no automatic overage billing, or it waits for the next cycle.
- **The PDF segment is your sharpest knife.** Acrobat alternatives are drop in credible in a way platform alternatives are not, and the price gap is dramatic. Unbundle Acrobat from the creative estate, benchmark it hard, and let the result discipline the whole deal.

2. BEFORE CALL 1: WHAT YOU ASSEMBLE

- **Their calendar, not yours.** Adobe's fiscal year ends in late November, with quarters ending around late February, May, August, and November. The autumn close is the deep one. If your renewal is misaligned, negotiate the close into their Q4 or pre agree a short extension.
- **The activity audit.** Admin console data on last activity, apps launched, and assignment versus usage, per user. This becomes the reclaim list and the retier map, and it is finished before Adobe hears about it.
- **The persona model.** Which populations genuinely need everything, which need one or two applications, and which belong on the lightweight tier. The mix is where the money is; the discount is where it hides.
- **The price archaeology.** Per unit pricing by tier from your current agreement, because your anchor is the net unit price you pay on the plans you have, not the list price of the plans they invented last quarter.
- **The benchmark set.** Named alternatives per segment with real quotes: the PDF estate above all, plus the design adjacent tools for lighter populations. Segment competition at Adobe is credible; use the credibility.
- **One voice.** Route everything commercial through sourcing. Creative teams' loyalty to the tools is genuine, vocal, and expensive, and the account team cultivates it directly; every side conversation reprices your deal.

CALL 1: THE FRAMING CALL

T MINUS 9 TO 6 MONTHS

Goal: control the process, force the repackaging into the open, and put your license audit on record. You are not negotiating on this call; you are setting the rules the negotiation will follow.

> **OPEN WITH THIS**
>
> *"Thanks for making time. We are starting early because we run this renewal as a formal sourcing event, alongside a license activity audit across our estate. All commercial communication routes through me.* **[creative or IT owner]** *owns the platform, not commercials. Today I need three things: a like for like quote on our current plans at current units, every planned repackaging or plan migration that would affect us, disclosed in writing, and your timeline from quote to signature."*

Ask these five questions, in this order

1. "Will Adobe quote a like for like renewal on our current plans, current units, and current net unit prices? I need that in writing before anything else."
2. "Which of our plans are being renamed, repackaged, or migrated, and what happens to our pricing under each, line by line?"
3. "What are the true up mechanics for the term, and what downward flexibility exists at each anniversary?"
4. "How are generative credits allocated, pooled, and billed at exhaustion under what you intend to propose?"
5. "When does your fiscal quarter close relative to our renewal date of **[date]**?"

> **INSIDER NOTE**
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> The like for like demand is the whole call. Adobe's renewal math starts from the new packaging, and buyers who never see the old baseline cannot price what the migration costs them. Forcing the comparison into writing converts a fate into a menu. Announcing the activity audit does the rest: an estate about to shed a fifth of its seats gets quoted differently than one assumed to only grow.

Deflect these, word for word

- They say the old plans are being retired: "Then quote the successor at our current net unit price and show the delta as its own line. Retirement is your decision; its price is our negotiation."
- They ask about budget: "We build the budget after we see your like for like quote, not before."
- They ask about AI plans or credit needs: "Everything consumption based is out of scope until the renewal baseline is agreed."
- They offer a creative workflow value session: "After commercials close. Not during."

> **CLOSE WITH THIS**
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> *"Action items: the like for like quote, the full repackaging disclosure with per line pricing, and the credit mechanics, in writing, within two weeks. Our next commercial call is* **[date]**. *Anything sent to anyone else in this company comes back to me unanswered."*

CALL 2: THE DECONSTRUCTION CALL

AFTER THE FIRST QUOTE, T MINUS 4 TO 3 MONTHS

Goal: take the quote apart tier by tier, execute the reduction and the retiering, put the PDF benchmark on record, and force pricing authority into the room. Never react to numbers in the meeting where you receive them: acknowledge, schedule this call, respond on your clock.

> **OPEN WITH THIS**
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> *"We have reviewed the quote. Before we discuss it, the baseline: our current agreement at current units costs* **[X]** *per year. Your quote is* **[Y]***, of which* **[Z]** *is repackaging rather than usage. Walk me through every line that moves, and why, one at a time."*

The six moves of Call 2

- **Unbundle.** "Creative Cloud, Acrobat, Sign, Stock, and credits each get their own line and their own decision. A single blended number is a decline."

- **Strike the migration uplift.** "Where a successor plan replaces ours, it lands at our current net unit price, with the added AI shown as a separate, declinable line. We do not pay a renaming."
- **Take the reduction in cash.** "The activity audit reclaims **[n]** seats and retiers **[m]** more: the mix on the next quote is **[all apps / single app / light tier split]**. We take that as a lower invoice, not as swapped product or extra credits."
- **Put the PDF benchmark on record.** "For the Acrobat estate, **[alternative]** quotes **[amount]** for equivalent function. Close the gap on that segment or the segment closes itself." Name the vendor and the number; segment threats at Adobe are credible and get logged.
- **Cage the credits.** "Generative credits enter pooled at the enterprise level, capped, with rollover and no automatic overage billing, priced as their own line. Otherwise they wait for the next cycle."
- **Summon the desk.** "For the next call, bring whoever owns pricing authority on this account. I do not run final rounds with people who cannot approve."

> CLOSE WITH THIS, AND ONLY THIS
>
> *"No counteroffer today. If the renewal lands at* **[target]** *on our mix, we can then discuss which new capabilities earn a pilot. You now know the order of operations."*

HOW THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CALL IS PAID, AND WHY IT IS YOUR LEVERAGE

The digital media account team is paid on recurring revenue growth: seat expansion, tier upgrades, and now AI attach. Repackaging is how the company manufactures that growth without selling anything new, which is why the migration arrives as an assumption and why your like for like demand lands like a spanner in the machine. The desk can grandfather pricing and hold units on successor plans; it does so for buyers who priced the migration and rarely for buyers who accepted it.

Two more mechanics work for you. The agreement may be papered through a reseller, but the pricing is Adobe's; parallel quotes through the transactional channel give you the shadow price that keeps the enterprise quote honest. And the experience side of Adobe runs on separate reps with separate quotas, so keep any marketing platform negotiation in its own lane: spend there buys you nothing here, and blending the two muddies both.

Time it to the autumn: the fiscal year ends in late November, and the final quarter concentrates the flexibility. Know what is cheap for Adobe to give: Stock allocations, Sign envelopes, light tier seats, credit allowances, sandbox access. Know what is expensive: the per unit price on the premium creative tier and Acrobat. Trade cheap for expensive, never the reverse.

CALL 3: THE CLOSE CALL

TIMED TO ADOBE'S QUARTER END

Goal: convert leverage into signed paper. Everything lands in the agreement and its order documents; the desk honors paper only.

> OPEN WITH THIS
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> *"We are prepared to sign inside your quarter if the remaining items land. Here is the complete list. Nothing gets added by either side after today, including by us."*

The final asks checklist, read it out loud

1. Per unit pricing at or below current net on every tier, on our mix of premium, single app, and light seats, line by line.
2. Successor plan protection: if any plan we hold is renamed or repackaged during the term, we keep function at our price.
3. Renewal uplift capped at **[0 to 3]** percent, written into the agreement.
4. True up at the locked per unit rate, and a downward flex band of **[x]** percent at each anniversary.
5. Generative credits pooled, capped, rolling over, with no automatic overage billing, as their own line.
6. Price hold for added seats at the same rates for the full term, attached as a price schedule.
7. Everything co terminated to one date; any mid term add on inherits this pricing and this end date.
8. A short extension pre agreed in writing as fallback, so their deadline pressure evaporates and only theirs remains.

> TWO TRADING LINES THAT WORK
>
> *"A referenceable creative organization is worth real money in your account plan. What is that worth at the desk?" And when it stalls: "The reclaim and the retiering execute either way. The question is whether the rest of this renewal lands in your November or in next year's number."*

3. THE TIMELINE, END TO END

WHEN	WHO	WHAT HAPPENS
T minus 12 to 9 months	**You**	Activity audit run in the admin console, reclaim list and persona model built, price archaeology done, segment benchmarks quoted, reseller shadow prices gathered, single voice announced.
T minus 9 to 6	**Call 1**	Framing call. Like for like quote demanded, repackaging disclosed line by line in writing, credit mechanics extracted, your audit announced and logged.
T minus 6 to 4	**Adobe**	Quote arrives built on the new packaging, AI woven through, migration framed as a fact. Acknowledge, do not react, and hold it against the like for like.
T minus 4 to 3	**Call 2**	Deconstruction. Lines unbundled, migration uplift struck, reduction and retiering taken in cash, PDF benchmark logged, credits caged, desk summoned.
T minus 3 to 2	**You**	Conditional counter in writing on your mix. Reclaimed seats visibly come back in the console; nothing argues the audit like the numbers moving.
Final 6 weeks	**Call 3**	Close aligned to the autumn quarter end. Complete final list on the table, extension pre agreed as fallback, nothing new accepted from either side.
Signature	**Both**	Every concession in the agreement and order documents. Mix, rates, successor protection, flex band, and credit terms verified line by line before anyone signs.

4. CUSTOMIZE THE SCRIPT TO YOUR SITUATION

The scripts above are deliberately generic. Adjust them with the rows below, and replace every **[bracketed item]** with your numbers before the call, never during it.

IF THIS IS YOU	CHANGE THIS IN THE SCRIPT
Acrobat dominant estate, light creative use	You hold the strongest hand at this vendor. Unbundle Acrobat completely, benchmark the alternatives at their real quotes, and let Adobe decide whether the segment is worth keeping at a competitive price. Cuts on this line are routinely the largest in the deal.
Creative heavy organization or agency	Your leverage is the mix, not the exit. Tier ruthlessly by persona, keep premium seats for the people who use premium, and trade the reference value of your brand name for rate; Adobe pays for creative logos.
Being migrated to new AI inclusive plans	The like for like demand and successor protection are your whole defense. Function at your price, AI as a separate declinable line, and grandfathering asked for explicitly; the desk grants it to buyers who priced the migration.
Sign versus the incumbent e signature vendor	Whichever direction you lean, the other side of it is leverage. An e signature estate in play disciplines both vendors; price it separately and trade the decision, not the rumor.
Experience Cloud also on the table	Keep it in its own lane with its own team and its own close. At Adobe the marketing spend buys no creative flexibility, and blending the negotiations gives both reps a bigger story and you a worse blended price.
M&A or divestiture in flight	Negotiate transfer, split, and seat reduction rights now, while you have a renewal to trade. Named user counts inside a changing organization are where surprise bills live.

5. QUICK REFERENCE: THE ONE PAGE YOU BRING TO EVERY CALL

PRINCIPLE	THE LINE OR THE RULE
Like for like first	"Quote our current plans at current units before anything else." The migration is a menu, not a fate, and it gets priced line by line.
Never react live	Numbers received in a meeting get acknowledged, never answered. Respond on your clock, in writing, days later.
Hygiene before the quote	Reclaim the inactive and retier the misfits in your own console first. Reductions before the quote are free; after it they cost capital.
The mix is the money	Premium for the people who use premium, single app for specialists, the light tier for casuals. The discount hides what the mix reveals.
Their calendar	The fiscal year ends in late November; the autumn quarter is the deep close. Final asks land six weeks before it.
The PDF knife	Acrobat alternatives are drop in credible. Name the vendor and the number, and let the segment discipline the whole deal.
Cage the credits	Pooled, capped, rollover, no automatic overage, own line. Otherwise they wait for the next cycle.
Paper only	The agreement and order documents. Account and reseller emails are conversation, not contract, and the desk honors paper only.

FIVE SENTENCES THAT REPRICE THE DEAL AGAINST YOU

- "Just tell us the price of the new plans." You skipped the like for like, and the repackaging became your baseline in one sentence.
- "Our creatives insist on all apps for everyone." You just deleted the mix, the retiering, and a third of your leverage.
- "The board needs this signed by **[your date]**." Your deadline is their leverage; only their November should exist.
- "We could never take Acrobat away from the business." You just sheathed the sharpest knife in the deal.
- "The design team already told your rep we cannot work without Adobe." You just confirmed the side channel works, and loyalty is pricing. Pull it back to one voice immediately.

6. WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE AT SIGNATURE

Judge the outcome against these markers, not against the discount percentage in the final slide. A well run Adobe renewal lands per unit pricing at or below current net on a mix you chose persona by persona, with the migration priced, the successor plans protected, and the uplift capped for the next cycle. It takes the reclaim and the retiering as a lower invoice, locks the true up rate with a downward band at each anniversary, and admits generative credits only pooled, capped, and free of automatic overage.

And it delivers the position that compounds: an estate measured in your own console before every cycle, a creative organization that routes its loyalty through sourcing, and an account team that learned your renewals are audited, benchmarked, and never signed in a hurry. Against a vendor whose growth is manufactured in the packaging, the buyer who prices the packaging is the buyer it cannot be manufactured on.

USING THIS DOCUMENT

Fill every **[bracketed item]** before the call. Rehearse the openers out loud once; scripted lines only work when they sound like yours. Keep the quick reference table in front of you on every call, and keep this briefing off any screen you share. If the conversation leaves the script, return to the baseline: "Let us come back to the like for like first." Nothing in an Adobe renewal is ever lost by slowing it down, and almost everything is lost by speeding it up.

100 percent buyer side. Zero vendor affiliations. No reseller agreements. No referral fees.