

The Person Blocking Your Deal is Called an Eel

Eel [Noun]

1. (*sealife*) a snake-like fish with a slender body, proverbial known for its slipperiness.
2. (*business jargon*) the gatekeepers, deal spoilers, and nay-sayers at the whale company who work to prevent any sort of change.

There is an eel in every deal. An eel is someone who is against doing your deal—either now, ever, or at the size that you have proposed. It is important to understand their behaviors in order to set your strategy on how to address their threats.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDOUT

The quadrant on this side of the page lists behaviors you may recognize from “your eel”. The reverse side of this page identifies possible responses/strategies to those behaviors for better outcomes. If you feel overmatched by your eel(s), we invite you to [contact us](#).



YOUR RESPONSES TO EEL-LIKE BEHAVIORS

PROTECTING THE STATUS QUO

LOWER INFLUENCE PLAYER

BEHAVIORS

- Asks a lot of small detailed tactical questions
- Makes reference to past unrelated implementation failures
- Advocates taking smaller bites of the deal
- Advocates longer onboarding cycles

SOLUTIONS

- Summarize group questions to provide answers
- Create a transition map outline and share case studies of other client successes
- Set a minimum size initial implementation for valuable measurable results

BEHAVIORS

- Delays decision date or extends current provider contract
- Reduces priority of changing
- Increases anticipated friction cost of change

SOLUTIONS

- Demonstrate ease of transition map and speed of first realized benefit
- Show gross and net impact of profit if possible
- Provide clear friction cost calculator (value threshold)

HIGHER INFLUENCE PLAYER

BEHAVIORS

- Challenges your true understanding of unique business or culture
- Recruits larger numbers of disbelievers
- Focuses on similarity to past unsuccessful implementations of other initiatives
- Credentializes competitor with your or your colleagues' past experience

SOLUTIONS

- Demonstrate understanding through use of language and referent endorsements
- Work through 360 degree sessions of assessment to uncover and address issues
- Share successful and similar implementations 1:1

BEHAVIORS

- Avoids/Delays Meetings
- Questions your key value propositions vs. those of your competitors'
- Tries to add "out of scope" deliverables into the deal
- Disagrees with or challenges case studies
- Repeatedly changes buying criteria

SOLUTIONS

- Work through agenda, have meetings with decision-makers, and send follow-up notes
- Identify out of scope questions and separate from within scope items and answer them in an addendum
- Break case studies into the 3-5 demonstrated capabilities illustrations
- Establish buying criteria and review at each meeting

PROTECTING YOUR ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS