



## Scott Tillema

### INFLUENCER

Senior leaders are routinely asked to hold a difficult conversation with a peer, a regulator, an acquirer, or a workforce that has lost trust. Most have no formal training in how to do it. They rely on instinct, escalate when they should slow down, and lose the room when emotion enters the conversation.

Scott Tillema is a retired SWAT hostage negotiator, FBI-trained, who teaches senior leaders how to handle high-stakes conversations using methods drawn from twenty years of crisis negotiation.

## Scott Tillema's 2026 Biography

### AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

## Why organisations work with Scott Tillema

### SCOTT'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Business Continuity and Crisis Management
- Emotional Intelligence
- Executive Development
- Leadership
- Resilience & Stress Management
- Storytelling & Business Communication

- Practitioner authority that is genuinely operational. The negotiation craft was learned in live SWAT incidents in the Chicago area, not modelled in a classroom. That changes how a sceptical executive room receives the material.
- A single, transferable framework. The Four Pillars (Understanding, Timing, Delivery, Respect) gives an executive team a shared vocabulary they can use in the next M&A negotiation, regulator call, or internal escalation, not just remember from the talk.
- A proven public artefact. The TEDxNaperville talk “The Secrets of Hostage Negotiators” has passed one million views, which means most participants arrive primed and engaged rather than cold.
- Cross-sector translation. The same material has been delivered to Microsoft, Citi, Vimeo, Bosch, YPO chapters across three continents, and audiences at SHRM and PMI conferences, which gives a buyer evidence that the content lands outside its origin context.
- A teaching credential at IMD. Five guest appearances on IMD Business School’s Advanced High Performance Leadership programme means the material has been pressure-tested in front of senior leaders inside one of Europe’s top executive education environments, not only on the keynote circuit.

### LANGUAGES: English

## Biography highlights

- Twenty-plus years in law enforcement, retired SWAT hostage negotiator, Chicago area
- FBI-trained crisis negotiator
- Graduate degree in psychology and bachelor’s degree in behavioral science
- Negotiation training at Harvard Law School’s Program on Negotiation and at IMD Business School

- Five-time guest speaker on IMD Business School's Advanced High Performance Leadership programme
- TEDxNaperville speaker, "The Secrets of Hostage Negotiators", over one million views
- Founder of Negotiation Excellence, LLC; clients include Microsoft, Citi, Vimeo, Bosch, the FBI, Harvard University and YPO chapters

## **Biography**

Most negotiation training in corporate settings is built on case studies. Scott Tillema's is built on incidents where someone's life depended on the next sentence. Twenty years as a SWAT hostage negotiator in the Chicago area, FBI-trained, and the work shows up in the room as composure rather than theory.

The academic foundation is real as well. A graduate degree in psychology, an undergraduate degree in behavioral science, and negotiation training at both Harvard Law School's Program on Negotiation and IMD Business School. The combination is what allows the operational material to be taught, not just demonstrated. Leaders leave with a framework they can use, not an anecdote they can retell.

The framework is the Four Pillars: Understanding, Timing, Delivery, Respect. It was first laid out for a wider audience in the TEDxNaperville talk "The Secrets of Hostage Negotiators", which has now passed one million views. The same model now anchors the executive sessions he runs through Negotiation Excellence, LLC for Microsoft, Citi, Vimeo, Bosch, YPO chapters across three continents, and audiences at SHRM and PMI conferences. It is also the basis on which IMD invited him back five times to its Advanced High Performance Leadership programme.

What a senior team typically takes from a session is not a lecture on persuasion. It is a more disciplined posture in the conversations that actually decide things, the regulator call, the M&A walk-through, the internal escalation, the workforce announcement that has to land cleanly the first time.

## **Key speaking topics**

- High-stakes communication
- Crisis negotiation and de-escalation
- Influence without authority
- Conflict resolution
- Trust building
- Leading difficult conversations
- Decision-making under pressure

## **Ideal for**

- CEOs, COOs and senior leadership teams preparing for board, regulator, or workforce conversations where the first sentence sets the outcome
- HR, people and ER leaders managing escalations, restructure conversations, or formal grievance processes
- Sales, business development and commercial leaders running enterprise negotiations
- Crisis, security and legal teams who need their senior leaders fluent in de-escalation, not just trained in process

## Audience outcomes

- A working vocabulary for the Four Pillars (Understanding, Timing, Delivery, Respect) that a leadership team can use in their own conversations the following week
- A more disciplined sense of when to slow a conversation down and when to move
- Practical de-escalation techniques drawn from live crisis negotiation, not workshop simulations
- Greater confidence in conversations where authority alone will not produce the outcome

## Scott Tillema's 2026 talks & topics

### Communication and Connection: Insights from a Hostage Negotiator

A keynote on how trust is built in the first minutes of a high-stakes conversation, drawn directly from SWAT hostage incidents.

#### Key takeaways:

- How professional negotiators establish trust with someone who has every reason to distrust them
- Why timing decides more outcomes than content does
- How to keep emotion in the room without letting it drive the decision

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### Leading With Influence

A session for senior leaders on holding difficult conversations where formal authority is not enough.

#### Key takeaways:

- The structural moves that turn a confrontation into a negotiation
- How to prepare for a conversation you cannot control
- Practical language for moments when the stakes spike

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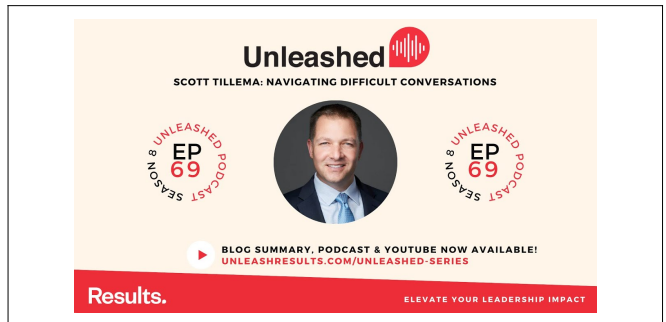
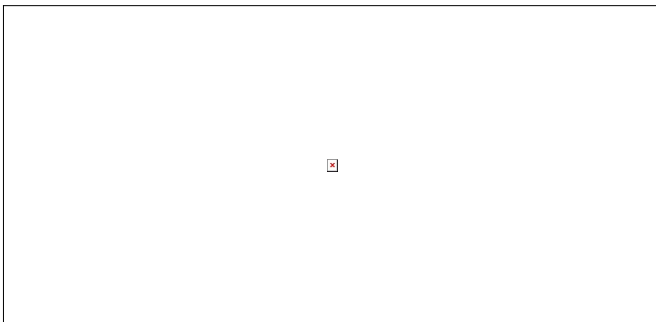
### Finding Success Through Conflict Resolution

A longer-form session, available from forty-five minutes to half-day, on moving teams from tension to collaborative outcomes.

#### Key takeaways:

- Diagnosing what the conflict is actually about, beneath the stated positions
- The Four Pillars applied inside a leadership team
- How to close a difficult conversation in a way that holds

## Scott Tillema's Videos



## What Scott Tillema's clients say

Thank you, Scott, delivering such an incredible message on connections! Your insights, energy, and expertise truly made an impact, and we're grateful for the time you took to share your knowledge and experience with us!

*CareFlite Team, 2025 Leadership Summit*

Thank you for a fabulous session!

**Mandy Forster**

*GE HealthCare (Australia, 2025)*

I expected great stories, which I got. What I hadn't quite expected was Scott's ability to translate his wealth of knowledge and experience into practical and applicable models we can use in business and in life.

**Gordan Stoddart**

*Co-Founder, The Recruitment Network*

Meaningful and engaging. Scott had our audience's attention within the first minute. The positive impact of his keynote was seen through the remainder of the conference.

**Kelley Collins**

*Director of Communications & Event Coordinator*

We invited Scott Tillema to speak in Texas for our 2023 conference, and I highly recommend him as the keynote speaker to any CIT conference across America. If you want your keynote to be memorable, Scott is your speaker.

**Charles Heasley**

*Vice President, Texas CIT Conference*

Having worked in sales for decades, I know Scott's life-saving processes that work under the gun also work in boardrooms, car lots, and classrooms. Scott brings real-world processes and techniques that produce results.

**Clay Schroff**

*Director, Aspen Project*

Scott Tillema is one of the absolute best speakers I have worked with in my many years of event planning for my organization! From the very first contact he was helpful, always going beyond our expectations, and is just such a professional at what he does.

**Amy P.**

*Board Member and Event Planner*

## Scott Tillema's 2026 speaking fees

Specific fees fall within the ranges shown. These are presented as a guide only and are subject to change without notice.

	<b>EUR</b>	<b>GBP</b>	<b>USD</b>
<b>Home Country</b>	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
<b>Asia Pacific</b>	Please enquire	Please enquire	Please enquire
<b>Europe</b>	Please enquire	Please enquire	Please enquire
<b>Middle East &amp; Africa</b>	Please enquire	Please enquire	Please enquire
<b>South America</b>	Please enquire	Please enquire	Please enquire
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Please enquire	Please enquire	Please enquire
<b>US East Coast</b>	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
<b>US West Coast</b>	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
<b>Virtual</b>	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000