



The Baron
Group, Inc.

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Asking for the Business

There are lots of challenges when you are in the selling role. It is not a job for those who scare easily. It is not the ideal profession for the weak at heart. As one of our clients said recently, "this is not the ideal career choice for wimps."

It is tough. It is also gratifying. There is no profession out there outside of professional sports, or politics, or the arts where recognition is so immediate. You win, you lose. That is the way it goes. And for most people, you lose a lot more than you win.

One of the hardest parts of the job is dealing with the inevitable rejection we experience all the time. We haven't met too many people who enjoy that part of the job. It doesn't feel good to lose. Nobody likes that.

And that is the primary reason that many salespeople are reluctant to ask for the business. We just don't like to do that. There are many reasons why. We get to hear them all. They range from not wanting to make the customer feel uncomfortable, to not wanting to appear self-serving, to not wanting to be perceived as overly aggressive. The list is long. The reasons are understandable and in some cases thoughtful. But none of them hold much water.

The truth is we don't ask for the business because it is uncomfortable. *Fear of rejection* is a strong dynamic. We don't want to enter that space. We don't want to experience those feelings. It can be demeaning, embarrassing, even humiliating.

But we have to do it. We have to ask for the business. When we don't, we risk not getting it. We simply have to learn to ask for what we want.

Ironically, customers want you to ask for the business. We've never figured out precisely why. It could be a power or control thing. But they want you to do it. There is data out there to substantiate that.

One study we saw concluded that the sixth reason, in order of importance, that Industrial Buyers gave for choosing their supplier was that "the salesperson asked for the business." Some of you have heard us cite that research previously. We were as surprised as you when we hear it. We thought it would be 15th or 20th or 25th. But it was 6th. That's huge.

So we have to ask for the business. But we don't want to fall into what we call the "Glengary Glenross trap." The famous play (and later the movie) was about desperate real estate salespeople. They used the "ABC" method—"Always be Closing."

We think that is despicable behavior for sales professionals. We close when it's appropriate. Our "ABC" method suggests "Always be Collecting." Always try to obtain information so you can truly understand your client. Close when it's appropriate.

But when it is—Ask for the Business.

Our objection resolution model has five steps as you know. The last step is to "invite others." Every time you resolve an objection to the client's satisfaction you invite others. If there are others, you resolve them. If there are none, you ask for the business. That is the segue to closure.

That doesn't mean you get on your knees and beg for the business. But it does mean you ask the Client to commit:

- *"Are we ready to move forward?"*
- *"What's the next step to get things started?"*
- *"How do we proceed?"*
- *"Are you ready to commit?"*
- *"Do we have a deal?"*
- *"What do we need to do to make it happen?"*
- *"Are you prepared to do this?"*
- *"I'm ready, if you are..."*
- *"We'd love to start the process..."*

The words themselves are up to you. That is the content piece. But the process component suggests that once you've made your recommendations and resolved the objections to the client's satisfaction, it is time to ask for the business. And if you feel uncomfortable doing it, do what the guy who won the job to install a new video system in our training facility did when the timing was right:

"So it looks like this is the system you want. Can I get your approval to move forward?"

We said yes. And he won the business. And we were glad to award him with what proved to be a nice contract.

"Seek and ye shall find" is a familiar quote. *"Ask and watch what happens"* is one to consider.

You just might try asking for the order at home whether it's getting a day for yourself, or having a mental health day, or getting a few hours off to watch the game or whatever. If you don't ask you know what happens...