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"Let's Talk Selling"

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The Baron Group, Inc.

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Editor- Fred Lamparter

About this issue...

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Well, we are more than half way through 2005 and most of our clients and partners feel good about how things have gone so far and are optimistic about the next six to twelve months. We hope things are going well for you.

As business gets better, more inquiries come in, more RFP's go out and more prospects find their way into the pipeline. Unfortunately, this also means more competitors emerge, more challenges exist, and winning business becomes more difficult.

That is why this newsletter focuses on the Finals Presentation— that critical meeting when an organization formally tells its story.

It's the moment of truth, "show time." So it better be good— no, it better be great. That is what we will talk about here.

Please continue to stay in touch. Let us know how this works for you. And we certainly hope the year is a great one for you.

Eric

Eric R. Baron

Inside this issue:

Finals Presentations— it's show time!

What is it?

Sometimes it's a formal presentation with 4 or 5 of us presenting to a group of 12, 15 or even 20 people from the customer/client side. Sometimes it's a one-on-one with the ultimate decision maker. In some businesses like advertising, we could have invested millions of dollars to get there. In others, like Financial Services, we could have had a Deal Team prepare for months. In still others, it can be more spontaneous and less structured, with one or more clients and it's just a matter of working through the process. The situations vary, but we have prepared accordingly and feel ready to go.

Positioning the Presentation and "Needs as Understood"

Good isn't Good Enough

Whatever format, this is the moment of truth. And the Presentation has to be outstanding. The competition is too tough, too well prepared, too hungry and too professional. If we are not great we won't win, so it has to be well thought out, well constructed and of course, client focused.

Before the Meeting

Admittedly, rehearsing isn't cool. Most sales teams and most salespeople don't rehearse. They may talk a bit about what they want to accomplish, but that's about it.

What a miss! Real-time rehearsals help dramatically. Whether the team does a group dress rehearsal (the best choice) or individuals practice with a colleague (very helpful, but to a lesser degree), it will pay off later on. The best actors, dancers, athletes, politicians and singers rehearse every day. So why can't we? Cool or not, it's the way to win the competition.

OK, so how do we do it?

So, now it's show time; let's make sure we do it well. Here are some ideas to help you make the presentation more compelling and thus increase your chances of closing the sale.

Positioning the Session

Anyone that has worked with The Baron Group or read our book or newsletters knows how much value we put into positioning our client meetings. In finals presentations, positioning becomes even more important.

If there are two people there, or twenty, we encourage you to *ask each person to tell you who they are, what their role is in the organization and what they want to accomplish* during the meeting. Even if you only have an hour, and this eats up 20 minutes of your time, it is still a great investment. We've often heard horror stories about how senior managers, subject matter experts or even outside consultants attended the Finals Presentation and the sales team didn't even know who they were.

Of course, this goes both ways. You need to introduce your team members also. *Don't be afraid to brag about them.* Don't go overboard, but if you show pride in your colleagues and talk about their experiences and achievements, it helps set a positive and confident tone for the meeting.

And now everyone knows who's who, why they are there, what they want to accomplish, and what the agenda is. So now it's time to present.

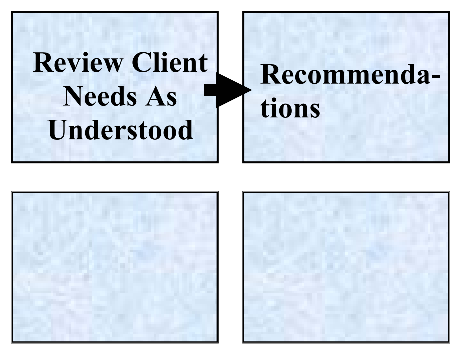
Making the Presentation

This is the fun part of the sales process. Most salespeople feel especially comfortable at this time, and for obvious reasons. We are doing the talking. We feel like we are in control. We are sharing what we know. We feel good about what we do. It doesn't get any better than that.

"Needs as Understood"

The best way we know to start a presentation is to ***talk about the client***. So we encourage you to begin every presentation—whether it's 1 on 1 or 5 on 20—by reviewing your understanding of the client's needs.

We like the expression "**Needs as Understood,**" since it suggests that this is *our* understanding of the needs. We could be off a bit, and we don't want to appear omniscient. So we review with the client our understanding of their situation and give them a chance to confirm or take issue with what we've said. *We have to get it right*, so



The Elements of the Presentation and How to Sequence Them

if we are off, let's *find out early*, self-correct and move on.

Features & Benefits

These terms have been around since 1936. In the past, we tried to come up with newer, better ways to say the same thing, *but it always came back to* ***good old*** *features and benefits.*

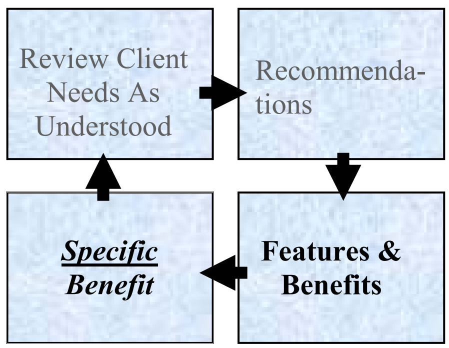
Features answer the question: "*what*?" **Benefits** answer the question: "*so what*?" Features are about *us*; benefits are about *them*. Features are hard to contradict— they are facts; but benefits are subjective and relative. So our tendency is to talk about features— particularly when the product is complicated or complex. But nobody buys anything because of its features— *they buy because of the benefits*. Benefits demonstrate **value**, *what the product or service* ***does for the customer***.

Specific Benefits

But that still isn't enough. ***Features and Benefits are generic***. They are fixed. They are what we put into collateral material or product brochures. ***Every customer has different needs***. So, *we can't talk the same way to each client about our products and services*. A benefit for one may not be a benefit for another.

Enter therefore a new concept: the **Specific Benefit**.

The specific benefit explains how your recommendation *addresses the* ***client's*** *needs*. Specific benefits vary customer to customer. It is almost like taking a product brochure and highlighting for that particular customer what is in it for him or her. What is highlighted are specific benefits.

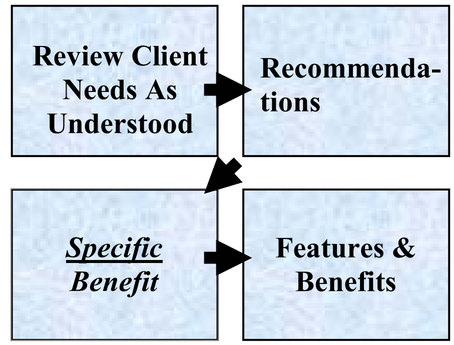


Order of Presentation

So now the four box model is complete. But there is still one major flaw. If we present in the way we think— saving the best for last— the client may be confused or distracted, and *never hear the specific benefit,* the most important and persuasive part of your recommendation.

With that in mind, we encourage you to present in a way that is counter intuitive. Yes, present in a way that is *not* natural.

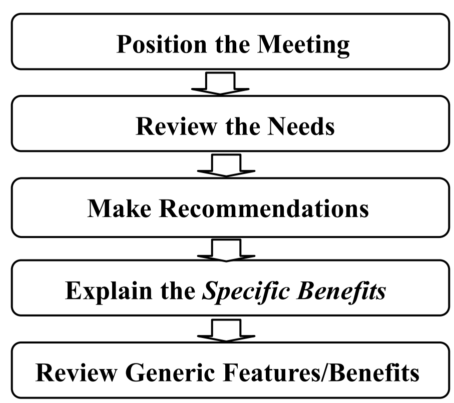
Review the needs. Tell them what you recommend. ***Then tell them about the specific benefits first*** and finally, explain the generic features and benefits. Don't give the client a chance to 'tune out,' too soon.



Yes, it is a bit like telling a joke and giving the punch line first. But it greatly *increases the odds that you'll truly* ***be heard*** *and that the client will see value in your recommendation.*

In Summary…

It's a simple, powerful model: start with first class positioning, review the needs, make your recommendations— stressing the specific benefits first— then end on the generic features and benefits of lesser interest.



Try it; see how well and how often it will work for you. And good luck….remember, it's Show Time!

Who We Are:

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The Baron Group is a consulting firm that researches and teaches the skills involved in the sales process, the sales management process and problem solving. Our primary focus is on the role of the salesperson as a problem solving resource to his or her clients. The salespeople who can help their clients solve their business problems by combining industry and product knowledge with proven problem solving skills will clearly become valued-added resources to those clients.

We develop programs customized to your needs— creating a uniquely effective sales process for your organization. We then provide the required training for your salespeople, sales managers and other professional colleagues.

◆ OPEN REGISTRATION PROGRAMS IN 2005 ◆

The Baron Group offers two different Open Registration Programs, held at our Westport, Connecticut training facility and available to individual participants on a first come, first served basis. The diversity of the companies and industries represented in these programs greatly broadens perspectives gained in the learning situation— especially in classroom dialogue and role-play activities. Remainder 2005 training dates:

- **Consultative Selling (2 days): Sept 14-15, Nov 16-17**
- **Coaching for Improved Performance (2 days): Oct 26-27, Dec 7-8**

These two offerings are our premier selling skills process programs. **Consultative Selling Skills** teaches consumer needs-oriented skills/processes for all salesperson/customer interactions, including relationship building, situation analysis, product/service presentation, objection resolution, and closing the sale. **Coaching for Improved Performance** teaches the internal coaching skills/processes which monitor, evaluate, reinforce and improve consultative selling skills. ***Please visit our website for details***: www.barongroup.com

For more information, fill out the form below and fax this page to: 203-221-8411, or *email us* at: info@barongroup.com

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❑ Consultative Selling ❑ Negotiation ❑ Sales Action Planning ❑ Strategic Team Selling
❑ Coaching ❑ Problem-Solving Meeting Facilitation ❑ Advanced Objection Resolution