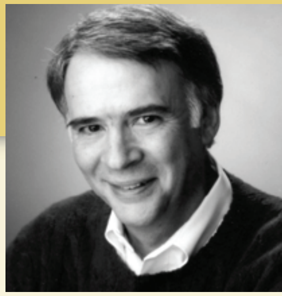
The Baron Group, Inc. December 2007

LET'S TALK SELLING



Dear Friends,

Here we are in the final month of the year. It has been quite a year for most of the people we know. A good year. Perhaps with more volatility then we would like, but a solid year nevertheless.

So, since we are concluding the fourth quarter, many of us are well into the planning process. And with that in mind, this quarter's newsletter will provide some tips associated with this critically important process.

Of course, everyone is wondering about 2008. Opinions vary, and many customers remain cautious. We are hoping for a good year.

We hope 2007 finishes on a most positive note for all of you. And of course, we wish you and yours a wonderful Holiday Season.

Very truly yours,

Eric

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Five Things To Think About When Planning for 2008

1. Assess Your Performance

Hopefully, you are receiving regular feedback from your manager. Part of his or her job description speaks to the subject of providing you with feedback— whether it's informal or formal, a coaching session or performance appraisal, a quick review or a long discussion, you should be receiving consistent feedback.

But it always remains helpful to give yourself feedback as well. You are probably your toughest critic, so why not step back and give yourself feedback. It can be a very useful exercise. One mode that works is the "keep/stop/start" exercise. What you do is develop three lists—one each for the keeps, the stops and the starts.

The "keeps" refer to the things you feel that you are doing well and want to continue to do well. Without being modest, list on paper 5 to 7 things that you have done well and hope to continue in 2008. Be sure to do this first. It won't mean as much if you do it last. Next, list the "stops." These are the things that you are doing that you need to stop doing. Be specific. "Stop wasting time" is a good example of a stop, but is not specific enough. Another way to say this is to "stop wasting time calling on small accounts with little potential," or "stop rambling when leaving voice mail messages to prospects."

These are personal and important. Give some thought to as to those things you do every day or occasionally that you need to stop doing to be more effective. Again, a list of 5 to 7 is adequate.

Now the fun part. List the "starts." These are the things that you aren't doing now that can make you more successful. They can be simple, ("start arriving on time regularly") personal ("start running more constantly") complicated ("start identifying new prospects in this segment") or challenging ("start pushing back with customers who are making bad decisions")

Then narrow each list down to the 4 or 5 that are most important to you and that can impact your performance most significantly. Put them on several pieces of paper and post them where you will see them every day. These will become reminders as to how you can improve in 2008.

2. Develop your Personal Performance Enhancement Program

Okay, so now you have assessed your performance; it is time to figure out how to get it to the next level. The data is good—the ways and means to do that is better.

Review those keeps/stops/starts very carefully. Look for themes. Look for similarities. Look for motifs. Ask yourself what those comments are trying to tell you. In other words, listen to yourself.

Next, build upon that list to develop five key personal objectives for 2008. These are different then the goals and objectives you will include in your sales plan. These are your personal goals to enhance your performance.

Again, specificity helps. If a goal is to become a better team player, embellish it by thinking about things you will do to ensure that you accomplish this goal. So, ideally you will have five goals with 2 or 3 specific activities that will make each one happen.

Goal:
Become a better team player.

Activities:
- Participate more in team meetings.
- Offer to make joint calls with 2 other reps this year.
- Send 2 memos to the team outlining successful initiatives and how I made them work.

(continued...)

3. Classify your Account Base
Many of us have lots of accounts or accounts within accounts. It is a useful exercise to break our account list into categories. Here are examples.

Priority Accounts—Our largest accounts and highest potential prospects. Many people call these "A" Accounts.

Key Accounts—Our important accounts that require lots of attention, but aren't a priority. Also included here are good solid prospects. These are "B" Accounts.

Maintenance Accounts—Accounts we need to see and prospects that deserve our attention. But they aren't that critical and don't justify that much time. These are our "C" Accounts.

Telephone Accounts—These are the customers and prospects with whom we need to maintain contact but only by telephone. These are our "T" Accounts.

You will see in the side bar article a way to use this classificationto help you plan your call frequency.

These are other classifications of accounts you may want to consider. And you can have fun listing them. Some could already be categorized A, B, C, or T. here are examples.

Revivals—Dead end accounts that you would like to revive in 2008.

Wish List—Unlikely accounts that you refuse to give up on even though chances are slim.

Growth Potential—Smaller accounts that you know could be larger with the proper attention.

Vulnerable Accounts—Accounts that are at risk which you need to approach differently to save your position.

Long Shots—Prospects with whom you have no contact that you hope to meet at least once in 2008 to start the process.

Try Agains—Prospects where you didn't win the business in the past, but had the opportunity and where the time is ripe to try again.

You will come up with others of course. But putting lists like these together can be useful, insightful and fun. And you will be surprised how it will get you to pursue accounts you might have disregarded.

4. Develop Relationship Plans
Pick a finite list of accounts (five, ten?) and make the decision to develop comprehensive relationship plans. If you do one or two a week you can complete the task by year's end.

These are not necessarily your priority accounts, but are accounts that need more strategic thinking and justify more time spent on planning.

Put on paper your goals for the account. Not just the numbers, but how you wish them to perform. They can be both quantitative and qualitative. But get them on paper. Again, keep it to a manageable number.

Then figure out how you will get them done. Think about which activities will need to occur, the target dates, and who is available to help. Again, the more specific the better. You can have quarterly milestones, or other means to measure progress.

But do it. When these plans are on paper good things happen. Sometimes just doing this once results in your taking action you might not otherwise.

5. Think About Your Own Growth
Each of these ideas speaks to your own personal development; whether it's analyzing your performance, establishing a performance enhancement program, reviewing your account base or developing action plans, there are ways to improve your performance. But this would not be complete without thinking about a learning experience for yourself.

Whether it is reading some books, listening to tapes, or DVDs, doing an online seminar, taking a class at the local community college or enrolling in a training program, you deserve the opportunity to learn new skills.

They do not have to be work related, but they do have to expand your knowledge base.

Think about what you can do to become more effective—whether it is physical, spiritual, intellectual, or whatever. When you stop growing, you start declining. If you will pardon the cliché, don't forget that "tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life…"

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CUSTOMER TIME ALLOCATION

It is important to determine how much time you plan to allocate to face-to-face time with your customers. This is a one-time investment of your time which will pay dividends later.

Time Available:

Number of weeks in a year	52 Weeks	
Less 2 weeks legal holidays	= _______________	
Less ____ vacation days	= _______________	
Less ____ weeks for training, seminars etc.	= _______________	
Less ____ weeks for sick days, personal days, etc.	= _______________	
Less ____ weeks for "other"	= _______________	
Total weeks available in a year	_______________	A
Number of days per week dedicated to outside sales calls	_______________	B
Number of days available to sell (A x B)	_______________	C
Number of calls per day	_______________	D
This is your **call capacity** -- Total number of calls per year (C x D)	_______________	

Customer Time Allocation:

Next you need to rate each of your accounts:

"A" Accounts are your largest customers (key accounts) and hottest prospects.

"B" Accounts are important, but not key accounts and warm prospects.

"C" Accounts are relatively unimportant but you have to see them for some reason.

"T" Accounts are customers you only contact on the telephone.

Decide how many times you want to visit you're A,B, & C accounts.

A _____ B _____ C _____

Now, do the math. List your accounts. Based on the rating you assigned each account, and the number of calls you assigned that rating, determine how many calls you would like to make in 2008.

Total number of desired calls in 2008__________________

Next, compare the numbers. Usually the number of desired calls exceeds call capacity so reclassify your accounts like this:

A Rating — 6	B Rating — 4
Now A_1 = 6	Now B_1 = 3
A_2 = 5	B_2 = 2
A_3 = 4	

Continue to play with the numbers until your call capacity equals the number of desired (anticipated) calls. If you are still having difficulty getting these numbers to match, you will have to determine ways to increase your call capacity. The key is to think about how often you want to see accounts and to realistically plan how to make it happen in 2008.

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Consultative Selling Skills

At the conclusion of this two day course, participants will be able to:

- Understand the connections and similarities between problem-solving and selling in order to transform the sales call into a problem solving opportunity.
- Determine both the obvious and not so obvious needs of their clients.
- Use state-of-the-are skills to determine needs, including: questioning, listening, understanding non-verbals and paraphrasing.
- Provide recommendations with benefits linked to specific client needs.
- Present ideas in addition to products as answers to client needs.
- Apply facilitation techniques in selling situations.
- Plan and follow-up their sales calls in a professional manner.

Schedule for 2008
February 7-8 April 10-11 June 5-6 September 11-12 December 4-5

Coaching for Improved Sales Performance

At the conclusion of this two day course, participants will be able to:

- Observe their salespeople in selling situations with an understanding of what to look for and how to capture key points.
- Give feedback in a balanced, helpful, and non-threatening way.
- Offer a salesperson ideas as to how to be more effective in the selling role.
- Manage the resistance salespeople demonstrate when a manager suggests changing or modifying their sales approach.
- Gain commitment by getting the salesperson to develop an action plan.
- Apply the process in other situations to get people to grow in their jobs.

Schedule for 2008
March 6-7 September 25-26 November 6-7