



## LET'S TALK SELLING

Hello everybody:

As the first quarter winds down, there isn't a whole lot to smile about. We can't fool ourselves. It's rough out there. Very few people, with a few obvious exceptions, are having memorable years. As you hear over and over, "*flat is good,*" "*slight decreases are acceptable,*" and "*close to plan is fine.*"

We all know that things will turn around, and some of us are lucky enough to already be observing glimpses of improvement. Nobody knows when we will bottom out, but we will recover, and things will get better. There is no alternative.

With that in mind, this quarter's newsletter focuses on what managers need to be doing. It's up to them to keep the troops committed, motivated, excited and focused. Without an effective sales force, we cannot be successful.

Management needs to do whatever they can to maximize salespeople's productivity. If you are a manager, particularly a sales manager, you will find a few tidbits to consider. If you are a sales professional, you will gain some insight on what to expect... and request from your manager.

Hang in there. Better days are on the horizon. Keep the ships afloat and keep on sailing. Good times will return. They have to.

Very truly yours,

### Management—Stepping Up When Times Are Tough

OK, so these are difficult times. Everybody knows that. Business is slow, customers are risk averse, budgets are being cut and spending freezes are prevalent. Everyone is asking for lower prices and competitors are buying business. Cutbacks are common, and to put it mildly, the salesperson's job has become extremely difficult. And very frustrating.

But there is business out there. Maybe not as much as there was a few years ago or even a few months ago, but it's out there and somebody is going to get it. It might as well be your company. That's why the role of the sales manager has become ever so much more critical.

When you look at the sales force, think about how much your people need you in order to succeed. Consider three challenges that you always face when it comes to your salespeople, but are exacerbated in times like these:

- Keep them motivated
- Retain them now
- Make sure that they don't leave when things improve

#### Motivating the Sales Force.

A motivated salesperson is a productive salesperson. But when business slows and

sales are flat, many don't earn as much, don't feel as good about themselves and aren't as excited about their jobs. The results can be disastrous.

Managers must coach their people more often. They need to be more accessible and more visible. They need to check in more often, make more joint calls, conduct more sales meetings and do whatever they can to ensure that their people feel good about themselves, their jobs, and the company.

Our research indicates that most salespeople contend they receive coaching from their immediate manager once or twice a year, mostly in the form of a performance review. Yet managers believe they coach their people six to ten times a year. That's a big miss! Motivating your people can be driven by effective coaching.

#### Retention is a key issue.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because the job market is soft, salespeople are less willing to leave. Though there may be some truth in this, your best salespeople are always marketable and attractive, particularly in times like these. A manager is responsible for retaining people—now more than ever.

With that in mind, we encourage you to identify the

most "at risk" people you have and develop retention plans (*see Sidebar*). Schedule retention meetings during which you can encourage your people to discuss with you how they feel about their job and whether they are receiving adequate support. It's important to keep them informed and to minimize the danger of the rumor mill. Most of all, they need to know you are there for them, available to help in any way possible, and that they can count on you for support.

**Plan for the future.** We often hear managers are concerned that when things *do* turn around, they will lose lots of people. Once things are better, it is possible that everything you have done will mean little. The doom and gloomers anticipate that people will leave in droves.

That doesn't have to be the case. As Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman expressed so thoughtfully in their landmark management book, *First Break All the Rules*, the majority of people who **leave** companies do so because of their immediate manager, and the majority of people who **stay** in companies do so because of the immediate manager.

*continued*

## Management—Stepping Up When Times Are Tough (*Continued*)

So, though it increases the pressure, the reality is that it is up to you to keep your people. The immediate manager plays as significant a role as anyone when it comes to retaining people.

What you do now will yield dividends in the future—in spite of what cynics say. Be the leader you can be, be there for your people and do the things you need to do to let them know you care. Taking steps to gain their trust and respect will make it more difficult for them to walk in your office and resign. You can become the firewall between your employees and the path to other organizations.

In these tough times, our salespeople are not having much fun. But they will impact our future and they need to go above and beyond to be successful. Without management support, this simply will not happen.

You will be delighted to see just how much impact you can have on your people's attitude and performance if you do what you must to make a difference. Never forget that you need them more than they need you, but also remind yourself just how much they need your help and support.

Management is defined by Drucker as *getting things done through others*. If ever there is a time to manage, to lead, to mentor and to deal with challenges—it is this moment. Make it happen. Results are sure to follow.

## Four Things Managers Can Do To Bring Out The Best

### 1. Coach, coach and coach some more

**People need feedback.** They need to know how they are doing. Research indicates that nothing is more important to employees than feedback from the boss. Give them feedback in formal coaching sessions and be sure to reinforce what they are doing well. At the same time, identify how they can be better. Offer ideas to help them improve. Allow them to push back and resolve differences. Develop action plans. Our favorite definition of coaching is *using your skills to help your people improve their skills*. Coach your people at least once a month and their performance will improve. That's a promise.

### 2. Develop a Retention Plan

A retention plan is not complicated and consists of two main components—identifying people at risk and conducting retention “check-ins.”

#### People at risk typically demonstrate the following behaviors and traits

- ▶ Excellent track records
- ▶ Knowledgeable and experienced
- ▶ Intelligent and credible
- ▶ Difficult to replace
- ▶ Solid performers
- ▶ Possibly dissatisfied
- ▶ Open to change
- ▶ Risk takers; adventurous
- ▶ Confident, self assured

#### The Retention “Check in”

- ▶ Call a meeting to discuss satisfaction; not performance
- ▶ Explore if their work is satisfying
- ▶ See what you can do to make it more fulfilling
- ▶ Ask what they want to learn in order to grow
- ▶ Ask how you are doing in helping them succeed
- ▶ Commit to address areas within your control
- ▶ Let them know you are available

#### Don't miss warning signs

- ▶ Demonstrating frustration with respect to their job
- ▶ Appearing distant from you and other team members
- ▶ Seeming distracted more than normal
- ▶ Not discussing the future as often
- ▶ Not participating in meetings as in the past
- ▶ Expressing dissatisfaction more frequently

**3. Conduct sales meetings with the team**

One reason people join companies is to satisfy affiliation needs. Meetings are one way for people to address those needs. We encourage you to conduct regular meetings either live or remotely if necessary. Include different topics and develop different agendas. Do this more often than in the past.

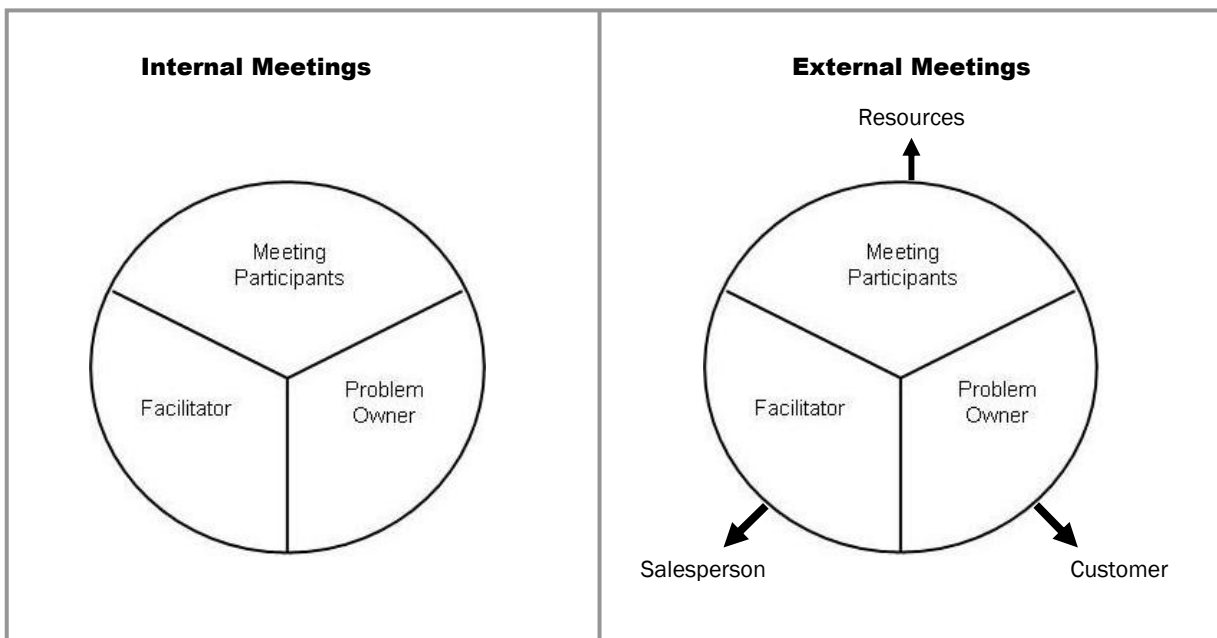
**Topics for Sales Meetings**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide overview of the Team's performance</li> <li>▶ Review success stories</li> <li>▶ Explore losses and learn from them</li> <li>▶ Discuss prospecting techniques</li> <li>▶ Problem solve to address customer issues</li> <li>▶ Review key selling skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review products/services—particularly benefits</li> <li>▶ Assign specific projects to team members</li> <li>▶ Q &amp; A for the Boss</li> <li>▶ Role play when appropriate</li> <li>▶ Explore ways to work better with other functions</li> <li>▶ Invite guests from other functions</li> </ul>
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**4. Make more joint calls**

Managers need to get out of the office. Particularly in times like these.

Visit customers with your people. Be visible and remember that the time you spend with your people is invaluable. Offer Management's perspectives to customers, but, as always, let the salesperson run the meeting. Ask tough questions, flatter your salespeople and show the customer your appreciation. Bottom line—get out there. You will be positioned to do much more good for the company in the field than in the office. And any time you spend together between calls builds relationships and ultimately increases the likelihood of retention. Remember, when you make joint sales calls, you are working for the salesperson. Just like a facilitator manages the meeting for the problem owner in a problem solving meeting, the salesperson facilitates the sales call. Think of yourself as a resource—to the customer and the salesperson.



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2009 Public Workshops

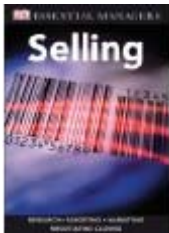
Visit our website for more information

**NEW! The Baron Group announces a new series of sales webinars – *Selling Now.***

These short, practical, and interactive webinars will help you deal with the unique challenges we all face in this very uncertain business environment.

- How do you build relationships with customers who are not buying as they have in the past, but will be eventually?
- How do you resolve objections that you've never heard before?
- How do you build trust and demonstrate reliability as a service provider?
- How do you hold prices in the face of relentless pressure to lower them?

We will be discussing topics like these and others in the very near future. We will send you information including details and dates very soon. Stay tuned!



"Selling", Eric Baron's latest book, offers useful tips and techniques for successful selling.

Learn to engage your audience, make outstanding recommendations and sell with confidence.

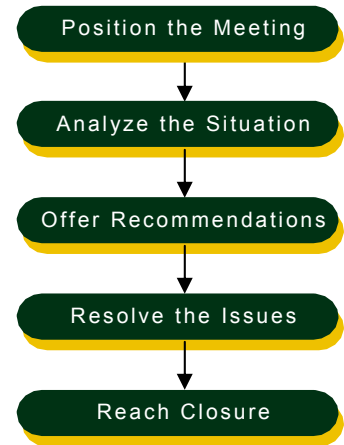
This book teaches you how to target your audience, understand your customer, perfect your presentations and manage resistance.

Tables, illustrations, "In focus" panels, and real-life case studies explain how to help customers solve their business problems, add real value to relationships, and as a result close more deals. Order your copy thru Amazon.com.

## Consultative Selling Skills

At the conclusion of this two-day workshop, 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 customers.
- Use state-of-the-art skills to determine needs, including: questioning, listening, reframing, interpreting understanding non-verbals and paraphrasing.
- Provide recommendations with benefits linked to specific client needs.
- Present ideas in addition to products and services as answers to customer needs and add value.
- Resolve objections using a problem solving approach and mentality.
- Apply facilitation techniques in selling situations.
- Plan and follow-up their sales calls in a professional manner.



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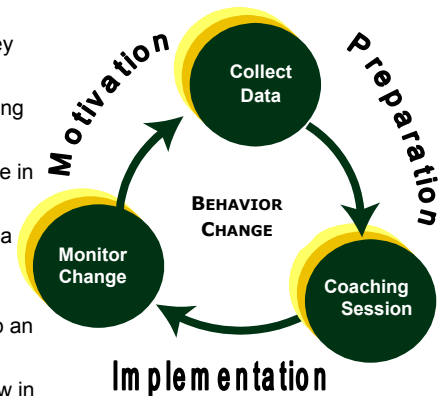
### 2009 Schedule

May 7-8 › August 6-7 › November 5-6

## Coaching for Improved Sales Performance

At the conclusion of this two-day workshop, 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 at the conclusion of the session.
- Apply the process in other situations to help people grow in their jobs.
- Deal effectively with coaching problems and issues.



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### 2009 Schedule

June 4-5 › October 22-23 › December 3-4