

# LET'S TALK SELLING

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## APRIL—2006

In 2006 we continue to hear the same intriguing words that we have heard for the last few years. And we hear them over and over and over again.

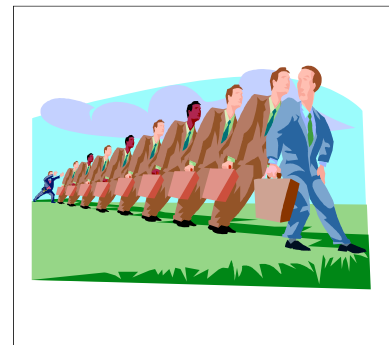
*"We need to differentiate ourselves" - "Our clients say we're all the same" - "We're really selling a commodity." - "We need to show that we're different."*

This issue of The Baron Group's newsletter speaks to that particular issue. As we enter the second quarter and find ourselves in an increasingly competitive environment, we must figure out ways to stand apart from our competition. If we don't, we will pay a significant price.

The best way to do that is with our sales- people. They are the greatest differentiator we have. So let's take a look at what they can do to differentiate themselves. If they succeed, you will succeed.

Thus far, 2006 looks promising. We hope it is a most successful year for you.

Sincerely,



*We need to show that we are different*

## OFFERING THE UNSOLICITED IDEA

I remember when I started my career at Union Carbide, many years ago. At our orientation program, the VP of Sales stood before all of the new excited salespeople and said something I will never forget:

*"You need to bring something new to every sales call."*

The words scared me to death. How could I bring something new to each call?

After learning what I could about the customer and

offering my products and services, how could I bring something new every time I visited the same customer?

It took me over 25 years to figure out what he meant. Of course there were new products, services, and alternative approaches. Of course needs changed and companies evolved.

Of course there would always be new opportunities.

But that wasn't what he meant.

What he really knew, and was wise enough to let people figure out for themselves, is that we can always bring our customers, clients and buyers new ideas.

That's right, new ideas. And often the idea would have nothing in it for us other than enhancing the relationship. And what better way for us to differentiate ourselves?

## A GREAT WAY TO DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELVES...



*“You need to bring something new to every sales call.”*

*“It took me over 25 years to figure out what he meant.”*

Think about it. Our customers arrive in their office, plant, facility or headquarters every day focusing on their business, their customers and their problems. But as salespeople we are on the go all the time. We see so many applications of our products and services.

We learn where the industry is going. We speak with many people.

And as a result we can always come up with ideas for our customers. This does not mean violating confidentiality or sharing inappropriate information. Of course not. It is about ideas.

It is about bringing to a customer’s attention something to think about that perhaps they never thought about themselves.

It can be business related or personal. It can be a big idea or a simple suggestion. It can be brand new or a different way to launch an idea from the past. But it is an idea, and idea that you offered. Even if the idea doesn’t work for them, it can get them thinking. And it shows that you have been thinking about them.

We heard about a Buyer at a national chain who kept a mason jar on her desk. If a salesperson did not offer her a new idea, she asked them for a dollar. When the mason jar filled up she gave the money to United Way.

*“I want you guys to share with me what you are learning out there,”* she explained.

We heard about a wealthy woman who gave all her assets, (30 million dollars) to a small regional bank.

The Private Banker was on vacation and bought her a book at an antique bookstore that discussed an interest of hers.

*“I could care less about the book,”* she chuckled, *“but if my Private Banker is thinking about me when he is on vacation that’s the guy I want to manage my money.”*

The ideas don’t have to be revolutionary. But they do need to help the customer. And if they miss the mark, that’s ok. You’ve demonstrated to that customer that you are thinking about them, you do care about them, you do add value to the relationship and yes, you are a bit different than everybody else. If we are going to offer unsolicited ideas, we need to be careful about how we do it. And we need to be sensitive.

With that in mind, we suggest the following approach:

#### Get Permission:

That’s right, get permission first. Do not just offer the idea—you can come across as insensitive, or worse, somewhat overzealous. People don’t always like unsolicited ideas—just think about a time that it happened to you when you weren’t interested. So simply ask if it’s ok: “I’ve been thinking about what you said last month about those inventory issues. If you are interested I have an idea for you”

#### Identify the Need:

We are all consultative salespeople, right? So we can’t offer an idea very comfortably without relating it to a need. Whenever we present anything, we start with the need. Remember to use that “I” message and don’t make assumptions. “I learned from what you said on my last visit that you want to improve how you manage inventories consistent with the ever challenging impulses of your customer base. Is that right?”

#### Offer the Idea:

Do not come across omniscient or give the impression you’re smarter than your customer, but let them know in no uncertain terms what your idea is: “I just learned about a new software package that was designed specifically to deal with organizations who have to be very nimble with respect to inventory because of the nature of their product”

#### Review the Benefits:

We all know that customers need to understand what’s in it for them. That is what benefits statements are all about. So tell them how you think the idea will address the need. Explain its value. Don’t go overboard selling the idea—just explain why you think it will help.

...IT'S NOT AN EASY TASK



We hope that every time you visit a customer, when the receptionist announces that you are there, the customer says something like:

*"I wonder what she has for me today" or "this guy always has a new idea, let's see what he'll suggest at this meeting."*

We suggest doing all this at the end of the meeting. It is a good way to conclude a sales call, and it leaves a lasting impression. If they don't love the idea, it will serve as a precautionary measure, and you will avoid getting the meeting off to an uncomfortable start.

*"Before I leave I've been thinking about what you said last time about..."*

And you are on your way.

Can it happen? You bet. Not every meeting, perhaps—but often. If you do, this you will bring something new to every sales call. And you will clearly differentiate yourself from the competition.

*"Before I leave I've been thinking about what you said last time about..."*

*"I wonder what she has for me today" or "this guy always has a new idea, let's see what he'll suggest at this meeting."*

2006 OPEN REGISTRATION SALES SEMINARS

**Consultative Selling Skills**

Teaches consumer needs-oriented skills/process for all salesperson/customer interactions, which include,

Relationship Building,  
Situation Analysis,  
Product/Service Presentation,  
Objection Resolution, and  
Closing the Sale.

- May 11-12
- July 13-14
- September 14-15
- November 16-17

**Coaching for Improved Sales Performance**

Teaches the internal coaching skills/process which,

Monitors,  
Evaluates,  
Reinforces and  
Improves Salespeople's Skills.

- June 1-2
- October 26-27
- December 7-8

\*If you have six or more people to be trained, we will conduct the seminar at a location and time of your choosing.



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## WHO WE ARE:

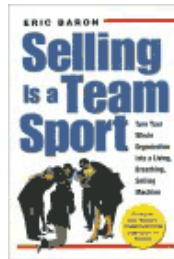
The Baron Group is a consulting firm that researches and teaches the skills associated with the sales process with emphasis on the relationship between the Buyer and Seller.

Through qualitative and quantitative research we have acquired a significant body of knowledge that focuses on two areas - why buyers buy and why successful salespeople succeed.

Our primary focus is on the role of the salesperson as a problem solving resource to his or her customers. Today's competitive environment demands that salespeople differentiate themselves. The salesperson who can help his or her customers solve their business problems by combining industry and product knowledge with proven problem solving skills will clearly become a value added resource to that customer.

The Baron Group was founded by Eric Baron in 1992. Eric spent eight years in sales, sales management and sales training at Union Carbide Corporation. He then spent five years at Synectics Inc., an international consulting firm that researches and teaches creativity and innovative teamwork, and ten years as President of Consultative Resources, a company devoted to training salespeople.

The Baron Group's services represent the combination of over twenty-five years of researching the processes associated with sales and problem solving. The programs and services offered by The Baron Group have the common thread of combining selling skills and problem solving skills to bring sales interactions to a higher level.



Eric's book *Selling Is a Team Sport* was a national best seller and is used as the text book used as textbook in the Entrepreneurial Selling course he teaches at Columbia Business School

The Baron Group is located in Westport, CT and consists of highly skilled professionals available to work with your organization. We develop appropriate programs to address your needs in creating a sales process for your organization and we provide the required training for your salespeople and sales managers.

## BARON GROUP PROGRAMS

- Advanced Objection Resolution
- Coaching Skills
- Consultative Selling Skills
- Effective Sales Management Skills
- Getting Appointments on the Phone
- Innovative Team Selling
- Internal Consulting Skills
- Making Effective Final Presentations

For more information on our programs, workshops or services,

Please call 203.227-7907 or e-mail us at [info@barongroup.com](mailto:info@barongroup.com)

**We also offer Keynote Speeches and Workshops at National Sales Meetings and other relevant events.**