



Selling Disruption™ Show

With Mark S. A. Smith

*Why Being a Go Giver Disrupts Sales
and Your Competition, Fast*

Bob Burg

Mark S A Smith: I met our guest, Bob Burg, for the first time in 1990 at a National Speakers' Association convention, where he conducted a breakout session that blew my mind. I had never seen someone deliver a high-content speech without notes, without a PowerPoint deck, without some kind of a prompter. I wanted to be like that guy. So Bob's powerful idea was shifting your focus from getting, to giving; that is creating value for others. It's the simplest, most fulfilling and most effective path to success in business and in life and why I've invited him to be a guest on the Selling Disruption Show.

His book, "The Go-Giver," has sold more than 500,000 copies so far, has been translated into 21 different languages and he's written a number of other books selling more than a million copies across all of those. Through the years, Bob's influenced my view of selling, contributed ideas to my books and been a great inspiration. Thank you Bob for joining me and for being my hero.

Bob Burg: Well, Mark, my absolute pleasure. Thank you for those very kind words. I'm a huge fan of yours as well as you know and as I've told you and I love following your wisdom, reading your articles and books, and thank you for having me on with you.

Mark S A Smith: It's a delight. You know, the key thing that you showed me all those decades ago was that traditional sales methods have been about manipulating and taking and you flip that on its head. Tell me about how you came about to being the go-giver master.

Bob Burg: First, I was very fortunate to be born to parents, wonderful people, who embodied the go-giver philosophy if you will. It's not a term that we thought or that was used but I noticed that they always, in everything they did, they focused on others. They provided value to others. And I think for a while, especially when I first got into sales I got away from that a little bit but then fortunately came back to it. I remember one incident in particular, some advice I received from what we call a "drive-by mentor."

This is someone who you may not have known and maybe never heard from again, never saw again but they happened to come along at just the right time to give you a piece of advice that was just game-changing for you. I was working for a company at the time, it was a high-ticket item and I remember coming back to the office and I guess I looked kind of discouraged because it was a non-selling appointment. Not purposely non-selling, but non-selling nonetheless and I think he saw me sort of as a Joe, the main character in "The Go-Giver," who was a upcoming, ambitious, aggressive, salesperson who had great potential but still hadn't come close to realizing it.

And he said, "Burg, can I give you some advice?" And I said, "Yes, absolutely." This is the guy I saw around every so ... An older guy, I think he retired soon after that, he wasn't even in sales. I think he was in the engineering department or something. Nice guy. And I said, "Yes, absolutely." He said, "If you want to make

a lot of money in sales, don't have making money as your target. Your target is serving others."

Mark S A Smith: Right on.

Bob Burg: Now, when you hit the target you'll get a reward and that reward will come in the form of money and you can do with that money whatever you choose, but never forget the money is simply the reward for hitting the target. It's not the target itself. The target is serving others.

Mark S A Smith: Absolutely true. When we were selling disruptive products, that's the whole point, was we're bringing the new type of service they don't even know exists yet, and so we have to do it that way.

Bob Burg: Yes exactly and think about really what selling is because a lot of people, Mark, and not you because you're an expert on this, but a lot of people think that selling is trying to convince someone to buy something they don't want or need. That's not selling. That's being a con artist.

Mark S A Smith: Well it is, and it's a single event. You can manipulate people into buying anything once, but it will never happen ever a second time.

Bob Burg: Right. And you won't get referrals, you'll start to get well-known in your territory for all the wrong reasons and hopefully you won't feel good about yourself if you do something like that.

Mark S A Smith: That's right.

Bob Burg: So selling, to me, by definition selling is simply discovering what the other person does want, does need, does desire and helping them to get it. The old English root of the word "sell" was "sellan," which meant "to give." So when you're selling, you're literally giving. Now someone might say, "But isn't that just semantics?" And I would say in this case I don't think it is and here's why. When you are selling, so you're in front of someone and you're doing a presentation and so forth. When you're selling, you're giving time, tension, counsel, education, empathy, and most of all you're giving value.

So if you're selling correctly, you're absolutely giving and it's about them. You know Mark, you made a good point earlier when you said that, "It's that shift in focus from getting to giving," and we say "giving" in this context, we simply mean constantly and consistently providing value to others. Yes, it's a nice way to conduct business but it's also financially profitable and for a very important reason. It totally taps into human nature. After all, nobody is going to buy from you because you have a quota to meet.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Not a soul is interested in your quota.

Bob Burg: They're right. They're not going to buy from you because you need the money. They're not going to buy from you because you're a really nice person who really believes in this new product or service that you're trying to introduce to the marketplace. No, they're not going to buy for any of those reasons. The only reason someone, and this is in a free market-based economy of course where no one is forced to buy from anyone else. The only reason why someone will buy from you is because they believe they'll be better off by doing so than by not doing so.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Now there are very rare exceptions to the rule. They tend to be around Girl Scout cookies and Boy Scout popcorn. But in general, you're absolutely right. People only buy because it helps them meet a desire or need that is yet unmet.

Bob Burg: Exactly.

Mark S A Smith: When we sell disruptive products, we have to earn the right to sell to the person because they don't know that they need what we're buying, which is the whole spin there, which means that a disruptive sales professional must be a go-giver to earn that right to sell to them.

Bob Burg: That's exactly what I would say, sure, and that's where that relationship comes into play.

Mark S A Smith: Absolutely right. So what's the first step that you see as being the right way to earn the right to sell?

Bob Burg: It's focusing on that other person, and again this depends on the product/service, it depends on the situation. But when you have the opportunity to speak with someone who may or may not be a prospect, or may or may not be a referral source, it's to focus on that person not necessarily in such a way that you're tying it in with your product or service. Not yet. It's at first building that rapport. It's first making them feel good about you.

As you know, Mark, in however many years ... 25 or 30 years I've been doing this, my basic underlying premise has always been that all things being equal, people will do business with and refer business to those people they know, like and trust. There's no faster, quicker, more powerful, more effective way to elicit those feelings toward you than when you move from an "I" focus or a "me" focus to that other focus. So in doing that, we need to take our mind first off of ourselves and our product because it's never about us. It's never even about this product or service, whether it's a well-known product or whether it's a new disruptive product, it's never about us.

So we've got to create the relationship with this person. So we might ask this person questions about themselves. Well, not might, we should ask that person questions about themselves. And it may be questions just as simple as, "How did you get started doing what you're doing? What do you enjoy most about it?" Or

even what I like to call the one key question and that's to say, "I love connecting good people with other good people. How can I know if someone I'm speaking with would be a good prospective client for you?"

Mark S A Smith: I absolutely love that. Back when I was writing the "Guerrilla Negotiating" book and you kindly supplied me with your engaging questions that you've been teaching about for years as a way of connecting with people and that's one of the questions that you asked, is "I love connecting good people with good people." And I recall that, it was such a great strategy for networking. Because most of us need to network somehow when we're selling professional services. So you want to take a few moments and talk about some of your old school, but boy-do-they-work-powerfully-every-day-forever networking strategies?

Bob Burg: The first thing always to do is to define what networking is because I can guarantee you, Mark, that if you asked a thousand people about networking 800 are going to say, "I hate networking," or "It doesn't work."

Mark S A Smith: Well it's because it's usually not working, not networking.

Bob Burg: That's true too and it's also I think because they have a different definition of networking than we might have because when you say the word "networking," you often ... you can see this look on the person's face, that they're thinking of the stereotypical networking sales guy. The kind of guy who walks into a room and glad-hands, back-hands, slaps hands, shakes hands, sticks a card into the face of everybody they meet and says such clever things like, "Hey, give me a call. I'll cut you a deal."

In other words, they're hitting people up ... If that's how you were to define networking well I wouldn't like it either. I wouldn't want to do it. Just like we reframe sales, let's reframe networking. And as you would say, disrupt the usual conversation about it. I define networking as simply the cultivating of mutually beneficial, give and receive, win-win relationships. When done correctly, when done with a genuine caring about the other person, about their needs, their wants, their desires, now you're approaching it a totally different way. And now you're creating that environment where a new relationship can be established and then built and developed.

Mark S A Smith: I think that's exactly the definition that we are looking for as selling disruptors.

Bob Burg: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: So how do we cultivate that relationship in an intentional way? You got some really awesome questions that you use to kick that off.

Bob Burg: The couple questions we talked about earlier and those are what I call fielded questions because they're not meant to come off as sales-ey, intrusive, invasive and so forth. They just feel good. They make this person feel good about themselves, about you, about the conversation. Questions such as, "How did you

get your start in the ... " so-and-so business? That's not a slick question, it's not a clever question. "How did you get started in your business?" or in the so-and-so business. It's a question people love to answer though because you've done something for them that few other people have ever done. You've actually shown interest in what they do.

Mark S A Smith: Yes. I want to hear their hero's journey.

Bob Burg: Exactly, exactly. And no one asked them that. Even their family probably doesn't ask them that. And you, who they've met for the very first time, rather than sticking a business card into their face and giving them your elevator pitch, you're doing something totally different. You're focusing on them. They'll enjoy telling you and it's probably a fascinating story because most people actually do have pretty fascinating stories when you actively and genuinely listen.

Mark S A Smith: That's right.

Bob Burg: A follow-up to that is to simply ask, "What do you enjoy most about what you do?" This is kind of cool because it elicits a feel good feeling. Again, it flies on the face. It's disruptive. It's a pattern interrupted. It flies in the face of most traditional sales teaching where we're taught to immediately "find their pain," reach into their heart and tear it out.

Mark S A Smith: Oh, don't do that. I asked that question just a couple weeks ago. "What do you enjoy most about your work?" I asked that to the Pace car driver, the race track that I was visiting and I got to ride in the Pace car for one of the races and he looked at me and he said very seriously, "Making sure that people don't kill themselves in their cars."

Bob Burg: Yes he had what our friend, Lisa Earle McLeod, a great, great sales and leadership teacher who wrote a book called, "Selling With Noble Purpose," and then, "Leading With Noble Purpose," which she calls "the noble purpose." He has a bigger purpose than himself. His purpose is not to drive a Pace car, that's just what he does. His purpose is to save lives.

Mark S A Smith: That's right, which is really awesome. So thank you for teaching me that question, which led to that interesting answer and a really interesting round of conversations after that. Thank you.

Bob Burg: Oh, my pleasure. My pleasure. You can always ask someone about their family. Generally speaking, most people love talking about their family, their talented spouse, their straight-A student, their athletic son or daughter. Just make sure you don't one-up them. I remember when I was a sales manager I had a new person with me and he had this habit of one-upping. So, when the prospective customer would talk about their kids, he kind of had something even better about his kids and I'm thinking, "Oh no. That's not a good thing."

Mark S A Smith: No, no, no.

Bob Burg: So it's not about ego, its ... And-

Mark S A Smith: This is not a contest about who has the best children or the worst life. This is about creating a trusted connection, that allows us to have a conversation that leads to a transaction that both people really will enjoy and benefit from. So you're right on.

Bob Burg: Yes, exactly. You can always ask people about their recreation. People generally are passionate about that. You can also and sometime within the course of that recreation question, they'll tell you about their main purpose or cause. They may be in a charitable cause or they may be an animal activist, they may be looking for a cure for something and so that will often come up. When you can talk about that and ask them about that and then you can go right back into the, "How did you get started?" "How did you get interested in that?" "What do you enjoy or find most fulfilling about that?" You're asking questions that has a person really feeling great about you and it goes without saying, we need to do this genuinely and authentically otherwise it's manipulation and that's now overlooking.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, without authenticity they won't like us and we can't like them and it shows. The question that I really enjoy, I don't remember if you taught me this or not but it's, "What are you working on?"

Bob Burg: No that wasn't me but it's a great question.

Mark S A Smith: So Bob, what are you working on these days?

Bob Burg: I am working on making myself a better human being.

Mark S A Smith: Whoa. You've been doing that for so long it's really hard to hang out with you these days. I'm just kidding you pal, this is-

Bob Burg: Lots more to go in that regard.

Mark S A Smith: Oh, me too. There is no end to the work that can be done.

Bob Burg: No, no, no, no, no.

Mark S A Smith: So selling disruption means creating extraordinary value beyond what your customers are used to and creating value is one of your key principles of the go-giver. So how do you approach creating unique and extraordinary value?

Bob Burg: First, I think it's understanding the difference between price and value because many people confuse the two as one and the same and if we're doing things correctly they are two totally opposite concepts. Price, of course is a dollar figure. It's a dollar amount. It's finite. It simply is what it is. Value on the other hand, is the relative worth or desirability of something to the end user or

beholder. In other words, what is it about this thing? This product, service, concept, idea that brings so much worth or hold so much worth or value for someone, that they will willingly exchange their money for it and be ecstatic that they did, while of course you make a very healthy profit.

What we need to do is look for something deeper than just the intrinsic value of the product or service itself because the fact is, technology has pretty much leveled off the playing field. Most products and services work, they work well, most companies understand you have got to guarantee it and service it and make sure so that's sort of equal. As you know, you teach these things, if a prospective customer sees little difference between many different vendors it will always come down to who has the lowest price.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. All things being equal, price rises to the top of the list.

Bob Burg: Yes, unless your last name is Walmart, that's probably not a good place to lead.

Mark S A Smith: It's absolutely a lousy place to lead because the only way that Walmart makes money is by buying massive quantities and bulk cheaper than anybody else can buy it, because they buy more than anybody else. So they're doing it on volume and also very clever ways of managing how they do that. But the reality is, that price is the last thing we want to have to talk about. We want to make sure that there is no comparison with what we bring to the market. We've got to create that so nothing is equal, that's the plan.

Bob Burg: Exactly.

Mark S A Smith: Nothing is equal. How do we go about creating that nothing is equal within the go-giver paradigm?

Bob Burg: We become that additional value. We are the additional value. While there are probably dozens, if not hundreds of ways to communicate that additional value, Mark, they tend to come down to five, what we call "elements" of value and they are: excellence, consistency, attention, empathy and appreciation. And to the degree that you can communicate one or more of those, hopefully all five in every single touch point with your prospective customers. That's the degree that you take price totally out of the equation and you become that trusted resource. Remember, when you sell on low price you're a commodity. When you sell on high value, you're a resource.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Absolutely true. So let's review those five elements. It's excellence, consistency

Bob Burg: Attention, empathy and appreciation.

Mark S A Smith: Empathy and appreciation, excellent. All of those cost us nothing ...

Bob Burg: To deliver.

Mark S A Smith: Exactly. They create a massive value increase, which results in higher profits. I love it. All highly disruptive concepts when applied correctly.

Bob Burg: Yes, exactly. When I speak at a conference I'll often give an example of the Ritz Carlton Hotel chain. Any guest contact employee who you come across at the Ritz-Carlton, then it's every employee, they will never greet you by saying, "Hi," "Hey," or "How you doing?"

Mark S A Smith: Nope.

Bob Burg: It's always, "Good morning," "Good afternoon," or "Good evening," depending upon the time of day. When you need help from them, they won't just tell you, they will stop what they're doing and they will place full attention on you and that's great. But when you say thank you, they will never reply by saying, "No problem."

Mark S A Smith: Never.

Bob Burg: They won't even say, "You're welcome." They'll say, "My pleasure."

Mark S A Smith: I always have a little fun with them and look at them square in the eye and say, "Doesn't take much, does it?" And they often laugh at me just like that.

Bob Burg: Yes. Here's an interesting thing. Someone might say, "Oh, but that's the Ritz-Carlton. They're huge and they have the budget, the training and ... " You know what? Any other hotel, motel chain could do the same thing; a huge conglomerate or a little "mom and pop." The Marriott, the Hyatt, the Western, all fine properties by the way, they could do that and some of them do, but it's not consistently good. Super 8 hotels could do it, Motel 6 where Tom Bodett leaves the lights on.

Mark S A Smith: That's right.

Bob Burg: They could do it too. And you know who else could? Dave and Mary and their team of three people at Dave and Mary Stop and Stay Inn. They could do it too. Someone might say, "Well Bob, the people at Dave and Mary Stop and Stay Inn, they could say "Good morning," "Good afternoon," "Good evening," and "My pleasure" till the cows come home, they're not going to take market share from Ritz-Carlton.

No, of course they're not but they will own their targeted demographic and they will probably take some market share away from Motel 6 and maybe even Super 8. It's those little things done excellently, consistently, paying attention to it, having empathy, showing appreciation. Then here's what I do from stage, I'll say, "Someone shout out the name of a fast food restaurant that also says 'My pleasure.'" Everyone will yell out Chick-

Mark S A Smith: Chick-fil-A.

Bob Burg: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: That's right.

Bob Burg: Isn't that interesting? They sell a commodity but they're known for their exquisite customer service, the way they treat people, the customer experience I should say, and for saying, "My pleasure."

Mark S A Smith: It's all part of their brand and that brand has created value and people search out Chick-fil-A. That is a clear example of go-giving, giving people attention, giving them respect, giving some consistency and appreciation. That creates that value. Extraordinary. Really great stuff. But I think the thing that's interesting is this concept of giving to generate sales has been well-adopted by a lot of the rapidly growing companies. For example, free applications for your mobile device, free samples at Costco. It's not just about being free though, it has to be given with a specific attitude.

Bob Burg: I think there's a big difference between when you do something out of a obligation or with an agenda and with the feeling of really want to provide that experience. It's a difference-maker. One's going through the motions and one's coming from the heart and you really mean it.

Mark S A Smith: Yes. Unfortunately a lot of people will say, "Well, Bob the agenda is to make sales. The agenda is to close business. How come we can't have that as part of our agenda? How is this going to work?"

Bob Burg: It's the result. And when you make it the result as opposed to the focus, that result's going to happen more often. This is why we say that money is simply an echo of value. You don't go up to a fireplace and expect that you're going to get a fire before you throw on some logs and paper and light a match and so forth. You don't go up to a bank and expect to receive an interest payment before you make a deposit. It's not the way the world works, the universe works or sales works.

So someone says, "Okay Bob, but, I mean, this go-giver stuff is fine for after you already are doing well, but I need to make the money now." Here's the false premise, Mark, with this question. The premise is that doing it that way, with the focus on the money, is actually more profitable and even a quicker way of making money and I say no it isn't, and here's why. Let's just use an example. You are the prospect and I'm the salesperson and I need the money right now and I mean forget about this go-giver stuff for right now. I need the money.

When I do the presentation for you the prospect, I'm totally focused on the commission. Maybe I ask some questions but it's really only so I can get some good information to close you and you can tell that I'm very focused on the product and why you should have it. It doesn't mean I'm a bad guy or anything,

but you can tell that my motivation is your money, not pleasing you. Are you more likely or less likely to buy from me right now?

Mark S A Smith: It's not going to happen.

Bob Burg: Not even going to happen. Now let's say I still need the money, but I'm going to, just like in the movies where we willingly suspend our disbelief so that we can enjoy the movie, we're not going to deny our self-interest, we're human beings, but we are going to willingly suspend our self-interest. And we're going to focus 100% on bringing and communicating value to them. So we're not going to focus on the money. We're going to focus on pleasing them.

We're going to ask them questions so we can determine what they need, what they want, what they desire. When we ask questions we're going to listen. We're going to listen not to close but we're going to listen to understand. Only when we have discovered and we've affirmed what they are looking to accomplish are we then going to match the benefits of our product or service with what they need, want or desire. But the entire time they know that the one thing we desire is to bring value to them. Are you more likely or less likely to buy from me now?

Mark S A Smith: Absolutely going to do it and the reason why is because you're paying attention to me and you want to make sure that I'm a happy camper. One of the concepts behind selling disruption is the old school model of features, advantages and benefits is an attempt to map the product to a customer's motivation. The selling disruption strategy is to map their motivation to the product. What you're talking about is absolutely in alignment with that strategy, which is, let's figure out what makes them happy. Let's figure out what motivates them and then, we're going to map that to the product.

But it never starts with a conversation about the product. Never. Never, ever, ever, ever. It can't. It cannot. The moment that you turn on your product presentation mode, you are pushing them away unless they have invited you to sell. We have to earn that right to sell and the only way we can do that is by connecting, by giving our time, our attention. I love that idea of willingly suspend self-interest at the beginning, is what really amplifies sales and I think is at the heart of Bob Burg's go-giver philosophy.

Bob Burg: Thank you.

Mark S A Smith: I love it. Now you have recently fired up an online Go-Giver Sales Academy. Tell me little bit about that and how a listener can connect with that if they want to learn more about Bob's approach to making this a powerful sales tool.

Bob Burg: Yes, my business partner and business strategist, Kathy Tagenel, who is absolutely brilliant, she and I run this together and it's a seven-week online course called the Go-Giver Sales Academy on my course. We have done live and they will, after this, be recorded so that they're always there for people to be able to do them at their convenience. What we suggest is that they do one week

at a time and then they have, not assignments, we don't want to make this seem like school, but they can work on different areas that's going to help them for the next class and that's why rather than just binge listening, we'd really rather them do it once a week in these segments of one hour.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, learn and apply. Learn and apply. Learn and apply.

Bob Burg: Exactly, exactly. We're very, very excited about that and people have expressed breakthroughs and it's a lot of fun.

Mark S A Smith: You and I, my friend, have this mission to undo all the bad sales training that has been foisted upon us. I rejected most of the sales training I had as a young man, as did you, in taking the go-giver strategy. So I think it's really interesting that you've taken this approach and my recommendation to the listener is check out to the Go-Giver Sales Academy online course. You can check out the link on the show page for this event. Bob, it's been an absolute delight spending some time with you my friend. I appreciate the connection and the conversation, I appreciate the alignment with the selling disruption strategy.

Bob Burg: Well the pleasure is absolutely mine, Mark. Again, just to reiterate what I said earlier, I love the work you do and the work you've been doing and I love following you on social media, reading your articles and seeing everything you're doing. So thank you so much for being who you are and what you do.

Mark S A Smith: Thank you. It's a pleasure. This is the Selling Disruption Show.