



Ann Arbor Credit Bureau, Inc.[®]

“Who Are You?”

I was recently asked this terrifying question while sitting in my office across from two well-dressed strangers who had flown in from California at my request. Faced with such a direct question, my heart rate and blood pressure spiked as my face turned bright red. Fear reigned upon me like when your boss calls asking to see you immediately and just hangs up. But I had asked for this--I even paid these people a copious sum of money to do it! Why, oh why, was I doing this to myself?

No, they weren't quoting a classic rock song by The Who, or simply asking me my name. What they wanted to know is: *What do you stand for? What have you accomplished? What are your unique strengths?* Questions we are rarely asked by total strangers.

You might wonder why I was paying these people so much money to ask me such prying questions. The answer is that the Management Team here at A2CB hired a prestigious marketing firm that specializes in collection agencies to completely overhaul our marketing “collateral” and help us to launch a new “brand”—which is a fancy term for upgrading sales material and generating a distinctive marketing image to identify and promote a product or service.

Michelle and Levon, our representatives from the firm, were like surgeons diagnosing brain matter one question at time, making us look deeply into a mirror, discovering who we really are. They were experts on cleverly extracting who we are, what our core values are, what our unique qualities are as a company, and why potential customers should use our services. Buried below my consciousness I had the answers, but had not been put on the spot like this in many years—this question offered me an opportunity to state in a concrete way what I already knew in my heart.

This is the beginning of a very exciting process for us. As of today, this project of self-discovery has only just begun and will take many months to complete. A time will come when we will look back on this and say, “That was a pivotal time in the growth of our company.”

So far, the process has been an incredibly productive exercise for us as a company. But I couldn't help but begin to ask these same questions of myself as an individual. The answers came surprisingly quickly: a good son, a devoted father, a helpful brother, a loyal husband, a

mentor, a patient coach, a rockin' band member, a generous charitable donor, a dependable friend.

So, I submit to you that there is a wealth of power in the process of asking such a question, and suggest you ask yourself and others near to you a very challenging yet rewarding question: *Who are you?*

R. J. (Bob) Barden, President