



Business To Business By Phone®
4520 Dusik Lane Austin, Texas 78746 USA
800 373-3966 www.michaelabrown.net

COLD CALL MARKETING: COMMON TRAVESTIES v. COMMON SENSE

© 2003, Michael A. Brown

The caller says to you, “Hello! May I speak to the person in charge of (whatever you’re in charge of)?”

You grimace but admit in a monotone, “Here I am.”

The caller continues, “Cool! My name is (they mumble it). I’m with (an outfit you never heard of.) We’re calling businesses in your area to find out if you’d be interested in our new state-of-the-art double-glazed heimelbeffer. Are you the decision-maker?”

Your eyes roll and you reply, “We don’t use those in our business ... never have and never will.”

Undaunted and tightly scripted, the caller retorts, “Well, is it OK if I send you our full-color 432-page heimelbeffer catalog and call you back in a week?”

Not that far-fetched, is it? Let us hope that it’s not *your* callers committing such marketing malpractice!

Most business prospects dislike cold call marketing because it so often sounds like that example and detracts from their business day. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Here is what you can and should do to distinguish your calls favorably.

Do your homework

A list shows names, not leads. That’s why an ounce of pre-call research, such as a quick web-site visit, is worth a pound of script. At the very least, callers must learn beforehand what their prospects’ companies do for a living. Don’t merely *allow* your reps to prepare, *insist* that they do so!

© 2003, Michael A. Brown



Business To Business By Phone®
4520 Dusik Lane Austin, Texas 78746 USA
800 373-3966 www.michaelabrown.net

Earn the right to have a conversation

At the outset of first-contact marketing calls, your callers have 18 seconds at most to convince recipients that it's worth it to converse. Anything that slows down getting to a powerful and compelling "reason for my call" decreases the likelihood of a conversation and puts success at risk.

So don't make your reps waste precious time with throwaway lines like "We provide products and services that help our customers maximize efficiencies and make it easier to conduct business with their customers, vendors, or partners." Stuff like that stops calls dead.

Instead, begin with an introduction using first *and* last names, your company name, a verb or two about what your company does, and a right-up-front statement of why a conversation is merited ... based on what the homework revealed. Then confirm that the time is right (or OK) to talk.

Clarify the business premise

Reinforce with your callers that the business premise for first-contact marketing calls is to locate and develop viable new opportunities. It is *NOT* to conduct a satisfaction survey about the product or service the prospect uses now. Nor is it about "just gathering information." Monitor calls frequently to assure that all callers conduct their dialogues accordingly.

Position the calls correctly

In lead generation and opportunity identification marketing, your reps are making calls of business inquiry or exploration. Train and direct them to find out ... by asking ... what the prospect is doing and/or considering that might make your product or service viable. Never position cold calls as administrative data capture.



Business To Business By Phone®
4520 Dusik Lane Austin, Texas 78746 USA
800 373-3966 www.michaelabrown.net

Common sense, yes? So how come in recent years lots of B2B marketers have been guilty of cold-calling travesties? The main reason: the economy. When the economy headed south, many companies headed to the phones with questionable strategies, poorly crafted calls, and awful results. Here are several examples.

Strategies mismatched to the circumstances

Customer retention almost always is easier, quicker, and less costly than new customer acquisition. But instead of striving to develop present accounts to cushion the downturn, many companies went trolling (i.e., cold calling) for new leads. Rented calling lists became very popular but simply could not deliver short-term results. Not necessarily because the lists were faulty, but because in a downturn, legitimate lead generation and new business development take longer. Also, with many companies dialing the same lists, prospects were deluged with cold calls and stopped accepting them.

Assigning freshmen and JV callers to varsity accounts

Quite a few firms outsourced cold calling to service bureaus. In turn, some of the bureaus staffed-up with phone freshmen and junior varsity temporaries. Not good. Real prospects don't want to talk with freshmen because freshmen talk like freshmen. Real prospects don't want to talk with the JV either ... reps who may be adept with a pre-qualification call guide but who add little if any value. Real prospects ... those who can authorize "yes" despite budget constraints ... want to talk with the varsity: first-string callers who have the content knowledge, skills, and prerogative to choreograph the business process. Not necessarily to consummate the sale, but at least to conduct substantive dialogue and arrange the next definitive step.

Hoping that with enough calls, opportunities would appear and business would materialize

The story: lots of identical cold calls to multiple lists, and sometimes even to *present customers* whose account history was unknown to or ignored by the callers. The results: it didn't work. The side effect: caller boredom, exhaustion, and costly turnover.



Business To Business By Phone®
4520 Dusik Lane Austin, Texas 78746 USA
800 373-3966 www.michaelabrown.net

Fudging the lead qualification factors

When the behaviors described above failed to produce enough genuine opportunities, some marketers passed the leads into the sales channels anyway. They will be paying for that no-no directly and indirectly for quite some time.

Cold call marketing is grueling at best, a money-pit at worst. To make it less grueling, apply the approaches you have read here and train your callers to implement them. Be especially diligent while the economy recovers. To avoid the money-pit, seek out and consider some of the new “heresies” about lead generation and qualification, account v. territory realignment, multi-media opportunity development, and so on. These are exciting strategies and you can profit from them! Good marketing!

#####

Michael A. Brown is the Business To Business By Phone® Expert. For a **FREE** e-newsletter, contact Michael in Austin, Texas at michael@michaelabrown.net or 800 373-3966.