



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

PHONE PHUNNIES™

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I hope you enjoy this collection of laughs, stories, and random thoughts that have appeared in my Business To Business By Phone® newsletters over the years.

HEY, HOW DO YOU SPELL HIPOCRISY?

There's a protest group in California that vehemently opposes any and all telephone solicitation. But recently, a representative of the group left me an anonymous phone mail message soliciting me to visit their web site.

A FUNNY BUT RISKY LINE

Administrative assistant asks, "Is this a sales call?" Rep replies, "It is if I do it right!"

HOORAY FOR NEW YORKERS!

A midwestern polling company reported in *Direct* magazine that it's *tough* to telemarket or survey-call consumers in the Big Apple! So tough that the firm pays its pollsters assigned to NYC \$3 more an hour than agents who dial into less "hostile" territory. Maybe they called Lou in the Bronx, who answers his phone with a gruff, "It's yaw quawtuh ... staht tawkin' awready!"

DEAR OCCUPANT ...

I laughed out loud upon reading this in *DM News*: "Business-to-business magazine publisher (name withheld) is peppering its direct mail subscription-renewal campaign with *prerecorded phone messages to give its marketing efforts a personal touch.*" (Italics added.) Ah yes, we all love those oh-so-personal prerecorded messages!



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BEFORE THROWING MONEY AT FADS, PAY ATTENTION TO THESE FOLKS

Management consultant Bill Brendler in *CRM* magazine: "There's not a single technology in the world that's ever established a relationship with a customer."

David Golan of Applix Corporation, also in *CRM* magazine: "The promise of CRM ... the high-level ROI ... has not materialized." And his company *makes* the stuff!

Technology writer Meredith Levinson in *CIO* magazine: "Failure to rethink business processes - not technology trouble - grounds most CRM implementations."

Best Advice: There are no known substitutes for people or smarts. Reject technology that purports to replace either. Consider technology that enhances both.

THE LINE BETWEEN CROSS-SELLING AND REVENUE-STUFFING

The scene is the veterinary clinic where I was picking up the family cat after a grooming and teeth cleaning. The clerk told me that a bag of teeth-friendly treats was included. Imagine my surprise when I examined the bill and found a \$17 line item for teeth-friendly treats! "That's what we always do," said the clerk when I challenged the charge. "Not any more," I protested, and returned the bag of cat goodies to the shelf. Hey, included means included ... not extra! The vet agreed and we fixed the bill.

The incident reminded me of the sneaky surcharges that appear on hotel folios and the handling charges that append without warning to some mail order invoices. Such hidden fees are *not* cross-selling! They reek of deception and revenue-stuffing ... no way to run a business.

Best Advice: Examine your business, marketing, and sales rules and assure that the billing practices that derive from them are right, proper, and enforced rigorously.

PHONE PHUNNY

The caller asked me, "So what does your company do?" I replied, "I help business marketers do profitable **Business To Business By Phone®** via consulting and training." Three second pause, then the caller sighed, "Oh man, my very first day on the job and I have to call *you!*"



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TO THE TUNE OF "THE WHO'S" CLASSIC
WE WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN

They were the darlings of Wall Street
Armani shoes upon their feet
But the riches they were seeking are all gone
And the ones who funded it all
Well, they got out before the fall
While others who were used to money
now have none

Well, what became of the e-revolution?
Venture capital is no substitution
For actual customers and genuine profits
There's still a lot of e-hype
But reality will top it
Dot coms falling like leaves upon the ground
Former e-millionaires the pavement now must pound

And they'll be sending out their résumés
Today, like yesterday
Forgive me, but I have to say ...
We all got fooled again!

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LONE STAR HUMOR

"Redwood Trainin'?" the Texas-accented wrong-number caller asked. "Why Redwood? I'll tell you whut ... bein' as y'all are in Texas, y'all might wanna change the name to Mesquite or Cactus."

007 CALLING

I'm in an elevator at the New York Hilton. A man's cell phone rings with the James Bond theme music. Another passenger says, in a great Goldfinger accent, "No, Mr. Bond ... I expect you to press lobby!" Big laughs from all aboard



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ADVICE IN A SENTENCE OR LESS

For banks: remember whose money it is.
For insurance companies: if you don't want to pay for our losses, get out of the business.
For airlines: learn how to use clocks.
For marketers: to find out why people are skeptical and response rates low, let's read our own stuff.
For sales people: let's tell the truth, folks.
For telecom, cellular, and cable companies: please see "For marketers" and "For sales people."
For campaign strategists: people distrust promotions with asterisks (*), so don't do them.
For broadcast journalists: ask your question, then stop talking and let the person answer.
For Budweiser: bring back the frogs and lizards!

WOOF

"Is this the pet clinic?" the caller asked. "It's Business To Business By Phone®," I replied. "Oh! Well, my dog doesn't know how to use the phone."

SOMETIMES THE OBVIOUS ISN'T OBVIOUS

Steve Hurst, who runs maat.net in Pennsylvania, tells this story: "A big copier distributor near here brought on a line of telephone systems from the same company that makes the copiers. So far, they can't *give* away a phone system. It is draining the profitable 'copier' part of their business. I asked the distributor's president if he had marketed to his installed base. He put his hand on his chin and said, 'why no, we never did that' ... 3000 plus companies have their copiers!"

QUOTABLE

"There are only two industries that refer to their customers as 'users' - drugs and computers." Edward R. Tufte in *Sales & Field Force Automation*.

"What framework you put in place now tends to grow roots and become your strategy. A lot of basic business principles still need to be applied to the Web." Emmett Higdon in *CIO Web Business*.

"A substitute for profits ... more money coming in than going out ... has not yet been invented." Jack Falvey in the *New Hampshire News*, on the "value" of many Internet companies.



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EARLY WARNING TO THE WISE

Less than 8,000 more years until Y10K. Get your IT people on this right away!

GIFTS

My family and I have been blessed over the years by unexpected acts of kindness and charm performed by people who just as well could have considered us nameless, faceless customers.

In 1970, I completed Army basic training and went to retrieve my car from the recruits' parking lot. Although I arrived more than three hours before the lot's official opening time, the sergeant who managed the facility opened the gate, smiled, and said, "Good luck, soldier!"

When my son Jeff was ten months old, we were badly delayed at Chicago O'hare. A completely harried but very nice United Airlines gate agent gave us a pass to the Red Carpet Club and an upgrade to business class to make sure my wife and I and our baby would be comfortable. The coolest thing was that we didn't have to ask ... the United lady simply knew to let kindness prevail.

Last year on a business trip to New York City, I had breakfast at the famous Carnegie Delicatessen. I forgot that the eatery doesn't accept credit cards and so was very embarrassed when the check arrived. I asked the cashier if I could leave collateral while I went to the ATM at the market next door. "I trust you, honey," said the cashier, "you look honest." With fresh cash from the ATM, I hurried back, paid the bill, and tipped the waitress. I offered the cashier a gratuity also. "Feh!", she exclaimed. "I should worry that you skip the check? Naah!"

May similar memories of kindness lighten your burdens and gladden your heart. And in this holiday season, let us think kindly of those who have been kind to us and, in turn, be kind to others.

THOUGHT WHILE SHOPPING

The only blessing of retail is anonymity.

DIRECT MAIL YAWNER

One of the dullest, most boring pieces I have received recently is for a seminar titled "How to Design Eye-Catching Brochures."



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JUST WAIT 'TIL THEY GET VIDEO PHONES!

Seems that a Dutch phone service bureau was having a really tough time finding new callers. So they ran an ad recruiting nudists! A Reuters story picked up by *DM News* reports that the ad headline read, "Always wanted to work in the nude?" So far, at least 75 responses!

I FEEL A CONTEST COMING ON!

OK phone phans! Let's write some *alternate headlines* for the nudist caller ad! I'll start: "The naked truth about telemarketing." "Natural talent needed in Holland." "New phone opportunities in business casual atmosphere." Send yours and I'll run the best next time.

BEST HEADLINE FOR THE NUDIST CALLER AD

"Know how to clothes but don't want to?" *Now that's funny!* Congrats and thanks to Bernard Jones of the US Dept. of Commerce.

BEST POETIC JUSTICE IN A LONG TIME

As reported in the *Wall Street Journal*

"Kansas City, MO. – After a big barbecue in St. Louis to celebrate its acquisition of Trans World Airlines, American Airlines flew its executives and Missouri dignitaries to a similar bash here at TWA's sprawling maintenance base.

The party was timed to attract live coverage on the 6 p.m. local news, and American's wide-body 777 was on the ground at 6:02 p.m. But the tug that was needed to tow the plane to the hangar broke down. More than an hour passed before a replacement could be found and the plane could be maneuvered into line with the red carpet that awaited it. By then, Kansas City's mayor had to leave for another engagement.

One American executive quipped that maybe the plane's door would be open in time for the 10 p.m. news. Donald J. Carty, chairman and chief executive of American's parent, AMR Corp., fidgeted. "We've been on the ground an hour and a half. It's nuts."

Hey Don! Welcome aboard!



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KEEPING THE AIRLINES HONEST

The two most beautiful words on your airline's departure board are "on time." But wait! What does the *arrival* board show? Your "outbound" departing plane has to arrive "inbound" from *somewhere*!

On a recent evening at Chicago O'hare, United showed 1171 to Austin departing "on time" from Gate E2A. But when I found E2A on the arrival board, it showed 1171 from White Plains arriving more than 2 hours late! Enough time to dash over to American and get home at a reasonable hour. *Best Advice*: Before taking your "on-time" at face value, carefully scan the arrival board for your gate.

PHONE PHUNNY

"Hi, this is Redwood Training ... Michael Brown here." Young voice at other end asks, "Can you train my appaloosa?"

I reply, "Possibly ... what's an appaloosa?"

"It's a horse!"

"Ohhhh. Well, I train marketing and sales people, but not horses." Short pause, then the young voice asks, "What's a marketing person?"

THREE AT ONCE

It's fun tracking the sale and rental of a list with my name mis-spelled. Consumer telemarketing is the funniest, when the caller tries to pronounce "BRONW."

In a Sunday *San Jose Mercury News* classified section, there were eleven ads for phone-based positions in which the hiring company requested "No phone calls." I guess they like listening to paper resumes instead.

Marketers and sales reps dislike NATO prospects: No Action, Talk Only. David Foley in Canada also laments NORAD customers: Never Orders, Request Additional Documentation.



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AM OR FM?

While hearing an AM station blaring from a teen-ager's boom-box, it suddenly dawned on me: business-to-consumer phone selling is AM. Business-to-business is FM. Which do *your* reps sound like? Monitor, coach, and counsel those who sound a bit too "Top 40."

ADVICE IN A SENTENCE OR LESS

For medical office staffs: Treat us not only as routine patients, but as valued customers.
For companies with CRM: Ask your customers if they have noticed that you have it.
For companies considering CRM: Ask your customers what they would do if you had it.
For "spam" victims: Delete but don't type "remove."
For Delta and Continental Airlines: Flying sardine cans ... pull some seats, guys!
For Americans: "Ask not what your country can do for you ... ask what you can do for your country."

FINALLY! A GOOD USE FOR THOSE CDs!

Most of us have a dozen or more unrequested CDs from software companies and Internet service providers. Rather than using them as landfill or drink coasters, donate them to your local youth sports teams! They make terrific sideline and end zone markers because they glint in the sun and under the lights. Referees and umpires can see them clearly, which reduces questionable calls. That, in turn, promotes greater amity amongst the players, parents, and coaches.