



Business To Business By Phone®  
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## HOW TO RECRUIT, HIRE, AND PAY FOR BTB TELEMARKETING AND TELESALLES

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Finding, luring, and landing competent, energetic business-to-business callers is very hard nowadays. There are midwestern cities where almost every adult who could possibly work at a call center either is doing so or already has done so. In major metro areas, most of the good phone people are gainfully employed (some are earning six figures!) while the bad callers keep bouncing from one desperate company to another. To meet your recruiting and hiring challenges, I recommend a two-part approach:

First, get past trying to find new callers in the same old places. For example, most mid-size and larger BTB call centers are suffering the same hiring challenges you are. So their “lowest common denominator” likely is below your required performance level. The risk is even greater in trying to recruit from consumer “telemarketing.” It usually is too expensive and time consuming for you to get the “dialing for dollars” crowd to do the thoughtful, respectful, BTB marketing or sales you want and need. Also avoid general temporary agencies. They are people brokerages that, of necessity, put production first. Even the supposed phone placement specialists don’t really “get” what *Business to Business By Phone*® is all about.

Instead, seek new phone staff from industries where questioning, listening, and conversational skills are *required* for success: travel and hospitality, health care, and journalism. Airline and hotel reservationists, business travel agents, medical and dental office assistants, and news reporters (all underpaid) often bring enthusiasm and fresh outlooks to your phone-based marketing and sales efforts. Also seek out sales and marketing retirees! They have been great finds for several of my clients. A phone rep I trained in Indiana moonlights as a radio DJ ... great voice and lots of sales. Do consider trying to spirit good callers away from your competitors ... carefully, however, because you often get unfortunate “baggage” from their old company and an attitude as well.

As part of your revitalized recruiting, write a brand new ad and run it under “marketing” or “sales” cross-referenced to “business development.” Don’t include the prefix “tele” even if the newspaper tries to force you. Run the print ad no more than two Sundays in a row and the on-line listing no more than four consecutive days. Set up an inbound phone mailbox with a complete description of exactly what the phone positions are and



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are not. Then invite and encourage candidates to record their verbal résumé to convince you with their spoken words why you should consider them. If they are unwilling and/or unable to do so, you don't want them anyway.

Second, begin strategically repositioning your phone program into something more distinctive and desirable within your company and in your local and regional labor marketplace. That's because if your call center is perceived as routine and average, you'll get "average Joes" and high turnover. So rewrite the phone marketing and sales charters. Add the requirements that phone reps also respond to and compose marketing e-mail, host tours of your web site, and perhaps even conduct on-line demos of your product. "Phone-only" is yesterday's job!

Besides full-time, offer part-time, flexible employment. Provide training to enable administrative staff to advance onto the phone marketing team. Challenge your younger marketers to leverage their education and phone experience into full account management. Apply your marketing wisdom on yourself and your company! Put out the good phone word ... promote phone like crazy.

#### Now let's talk about money

From the first "telemarketing" operation decades ago, most call centers and their people have been relegated to second class corporate citizenship and the lower pay scale that goes along with it. But let us be clear ... you *never* will get million dollar performance for \$10 an hour. In 2005, reps' compensation must represent their value to your company in your marketplace for what they do. So worry less about national salary surveys (which are based on business-to-consumer), local pay scales, and HR's notions of "comparable worth." Instead, upgrade your company's phone-based marketing and selling as recommended earlier, and pay your phone staff well.

#### Uncle Sam cares how you pay and you better pay attention

By law, your phone-based marketers and sales reps must be non-exempt employees. You can give them any title you wish and pay them as much as you want to, but you must account for their time and wages on an



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hourly basis, with overtime after 40 hours. Most HR departments and many sales and marketing managers don't know this. But the US Department of Labor does, and they are undefeated in enforcement. Indeed, more than a few employers have been hit with huge overtime back-pay settlements, hefty fines, and long-term governmental oversight for ignorance or willful violation of this rule. It dates from the 1930s, everyone except the unions hates it, but only recently have we seen any congressional stirrings to do anything about it. So abide by the law, adjust your compensation plan, and move ahead.

Whew! Quite a challenge!

Many business marketers consider all these phone-related matters and determine that either they can't do everything themselves, or choose not to. The question then becomes, what to do in-house and what to outsource? Here are the strategic guidelines for the "make or buy" phone marketing decisions.

*You and only you*

- Full account management
- Complex buy \ sell process
- Collaboration (team selling)
- Proprietary information for which you and/or customers require non-disclosure
- Customers demand substantive business and financial content and/or technical capability

*Consider outsourcing for*

- Consistent (but not "mass") process and content
- Easily learned
- Opportunity identification with limited criteria
- Sudden volume, e.g., events invitations and registration
- Order acceptance
- Multi-contact, multi-level opportunity development only with specialized, proven providers of this service

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Michael A. Brown helps business marketers conduct profitable, distinctive **Business To Business By Phone**<sup>®</sup> via consulting and training. Clients include a "who's who" of successful business marketers, from startups to the Fortune 100. He is a featured speaker at the *Direct Marketing to Business* conference and at corporate marketing and sales meetings. Contact Michael in Austin, Texas, **800 373-3966**. [www.michaelabrown.net](http://www.michaelabrown.net). E-mail is [michael@michaelabrown.net](mailto:michael@michaelabrown.net)

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