



Business To Business By Phone®
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TEN TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PHONE RESULTS

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A show of hands please ... how many of you put your home phone numbers on the national "do not call" list? Oh come on, you mean you don't enjoy those exciting, value-laden calls that interrupt your dinner? And how about at your business? I bet you can hardly wait for another "have I got a great deal for you on printer toner" scam that adds fun to your office day.

Because you've been on the receiving end of bad calls, you're probably smiling and nodding knowingly. But if it's *your company* that's making such calls, then "cowboy, change your ways today!" Here are 10 things to do and avoid in business-to-business by phone:

1. Beware the artificial distinction between "telemarketing" and "telesales" ... that telemarketing is scripted and telesales is not. NONSENSE!! If you have to script it, don't do it. You don't buy from people who talk like machines and neither do your customers. Instead, create and use call guides with open-ended questions and targeted benefits. Let your phone people communicate as human beings.
2. Don't call your phone enterprise *tele-ANYTHING!!* If your phone people sell; i.e., consummate business, call them Sales Representatives. If they generate and qualify leads, nurture and develop opportunities, and arrange fulfillment and e-mail response, call them Marketing Reps. If they resolve issues, call them Customer Care or Customer Service Reps.
3. Customers *really* dislike calls to "update our database." A much better opening: "I'm calling to hear your opinions and preferences about us and our products/services with an eye toward keeping each other up to date and informed."
4. In qualifying and selling, too many closed-ended questions make callers sound like prosecuting attorneys, not marketers or sales people. So ask no more than three closed-ended questions in a row. Early in the conversation, the best ratio is two open to one closed. Mid-way, make it 1-1. As you approach the close, one open and two closed.
5. Phone is an audio medium. But too often, callers let the visual distractions of their computer screen or data capture form drive the questioning. The resulting conversation sounds forced and customers don't like it. Attend to the audio content of the conversation first, data capture second.
6. Do not pay incentives for lead quantity or quality. Quantity incentives lead to rushed dialogue, incomplete profiling, and sales rep skepticism. Quality incentives lead to inflated lead ratings and questionable pipelines. Likewise, information completeness and accuracy are job performance requirements, not a contest. It is OK to reward for referrals, more phone numbers, etc.

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7. The scenario: your outsourced service bureau conducts pre-qualification calls after marketing event response. Pre-qualified leads then come in-house for second-tier full qualification. The problem: second-tier qualification annoys prospects because they dislike having to repeat their story. Solve by: developing different question sets for first tier pre-qualifiers and for 2nd tier opportunity developers. Also, provide the first tier answers to second tier callers.

8. Some outsourced service bureaus want to conduct full account management for you. Such a consideration is strategic and certainly not trivial. So before talking with any such vendors, convene a high-level management meeting and open it with this question: Even if an outside service bureau *could* manage our accounts, would we really want them to?

9. You have only three ways to conduct simultaneous inbound and outbound calls. You can let them happen at random, which never is a good idea. You can separate inbound from outbound, which works well in transaction-processing environments and for "spot sales." Or you can establish a schedule for inbound and outbound time blocks, which works well in account development and account management scenarios.

10. Phone-based marketing and sales create administrative overhead: research, e-mail response, and so on. A good working guideline is to *build-in* your administrative overhead by limiting your phone-based reps to six live phone hours a day. This also keeps your reps' voices from getting tired and stale by day's end and reduces the complaints about not having enough clerical support. Also, use technology as much as reasonable and do budget for administrative help.

Michael A. Brown advises and trains BtoB marketers about telemarketing and telesales strategies and techniques. Contact him in Austin, Texas. www.michaelabrown.net or 800 373-3966