



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Summer 2002 Bonus Edition

SEARCHING FOR THE REAL NOUN

What is "it" that you market or sell? What is the real noun that our senses can detect so we can know that we have your product or service?

I pose these questions because sometimes it is hard to determine what a company actually is offering. For instance, many technology companies pitch "solutions." "Solution" is an ambiguous noun if ever there was one. Often, it takes much probing and clarification to get the "solutions" marketers to admit that their "solutions" actually are software.

Software is a perfectly fine, unambiguous real noun. And if the software works as promised, then why would its makers want to disguise their noun as something else? Maybe they think that "solution" sounds cooler than software? It does not.

When I presented these notions at a recent conference, a brash "solutions" salesman took great exception. "The software plus the services equals the solution," he protested. Of course, he completely missed the point that while "solution" may be the required mantra at his company, it is murky at best to his intended clientele.

Best Advice: If we make prospects and customers search for our real nouns, we are marketing and selling poorly. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein paraphrasing Shakespeare, software is software and solutions are what chemists work with. So market your software as software. Sell your hardware or services as hardware or services. Only customers get to decide whether our real nouns constitute "solutions" for them. As the late philosopher Howard Cosell used to advise, "Tell it like it is."

THE DEATH AND BIRTH OF ACRONYMS

Business buzzwords and acronyms that fail to live up to promises and expectations, regardless of whose fault, fall into disfavor and then disuse. By

those criteria, could CRM soon pass as did MBO, Zero-Defects, TQM, re-engineering, ERP, and SFA? I think it may.

But what happens if CRM goes away and we don't have it to kick around any more? Fear not! A new acronym already has been born: DCM, Demand Chain Management! Supposedly, DCM looks like and works similar to CRM, plus production and distribution forecasting functions. However, with CRM falling into disfavor, and a few poorer-but-wiser CRM customers ready to bury it, perhaps the vendors thought it time to spawn a new acronym. Hence DCM.

DCM software makers tout their "solution" (of course) as a breakthrough business model: technology for responding to what customers want, when or *before* customers want it. (Right ... as if managing demand were even possible.) Wonder how many companies will throw money at it.

BEFORE THROWING MONEY, 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. Guidance is right here. Call 800 373-3966 or send an e-mail to michael@michaelabrown.net.



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Summer 2002 Bonus Edition

16th BUSINESS ANNIVERSARY!

June 20. Thank you, clients! You're the best!

WANTED: A FEW MASOCHISTIC CALLERS

From an ad for telesales reps on Monster.com:

DUTIES: Cold call and build relationships with "C" level executives in the Fortune 1000 community.

And later in the ad:

SKILL SET AND EXPERIENCE: 1+ years of internal phone room sales experience (100+ calls a day, all outbound).

Hmmm ... let's see ... Fortune 1000, 100+ calls a day. Sounds like a 9-10 day gig. Hey, those "C" level people are really easy to contact and they always accept cold calls.

STRATEGIES FOR LIST VALIDATION

The smart money in direct marketing says that 50% of any campaign's success derives from the list. The more current and RFM-based, the better. The more verb-based or affinity-based, better still.

Unfortunately, many of today's rented and purchased calling lists are awful. Outdated. Missing phone numbers. Names and titles having nothing to do with your category of product or service.

Worse, the names on the B2B lists you get likely are on a dozen other lists as well. Name replication is especially rampant in the high tech sector. As a result, the very people you want to talk with are receiving tons of calls from other marketers also. How should we deal with this?

Best Advice: Consider outside lists as raw data only. Apply one or the other of these techniques to convert the raw data into a viable and valuable prospecting resource:

Reactive Validation: accept the list names at face value and ask for them by name. If he or she is not who you need, ask for the person **responsible for** doing what your product or service does.

Proactive Validation: start out expecting that the names are outdated or wrong. Say to whoever answers the phone, "I hope you can help me. (Pause) I'm trying to reach the person **responsible for** (what your product does.) Who would be the very best person to speak with? Can you connect me please."

Test both approaches to see which works better with your lists. Either way, hold your list broker accountable for the level of completeness, accuracy, and timeliness that you're paying for.

PUT DOWN THE PHONE AND LET'S GO EAT!



Here are some terrific restaurants around the USA and Canada that clients and I have enjoyed and that I recommend to you, too:

PaulJoe's, San Carlos, Calif. Neighborhood Italian. Great calamari. How did the money get on the ceiling?

San Martin, E 49th St., New York City. The paella can't be beat! Fun people-watching on warm nights, too.

Mykonos, Calgary, Alberta. Genuine taverna, and souvlaki that's well worth the cab ride from downtown.

Far East Café, Grant Ave., San Francisco. Really good Chinese! Plus, the place looks like it should be in a movie, which it has been.

Grandma's, Fargo, ND. Loud, friendly, lots of good food. Check out the rack with all the hot sauces. Also, tell 'em Roger sent you!

Old Man Rafferty's, New Brunswick, NJ. Cool combination of business and university (Rutgers) atmosphere, with excellent steaks and seafood.