



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Summertime 2005 Bonus Edition

YOUR ANNUAL GOOD EATS ADVISORY!

2005 recommendations ...

Molyvos, New York City. Terrific Greek food right near Letterman, Rockefeller Center, and Broadway shows. Wonderful salads and lamb dishes. Get there around 6, before the theater crowd, or just after 8pm.

The Venetian Room, Caribe Royale Resort, Orlando. A hotel restaurant earning a rave review? Yes indeed! The food, the presentation, and the service add up to a most enjoyable experience.

Kuleto's, Burlingame, California. This location of the well-known San Francisco eatery sets out authentic and excellent Italian fare. It is right near SFO and convenient to Silicon Valley.

Omaha Steaks, Houston. Many direct marketers know and admire the Omaha Steaks catalog. Now you really need to check out the restaurant in-person. Oh my, these steaks are GOOD!

Bon Ton Café, New Orleans. A short walk from the big hotels and Bourbon St., this little brick-walled gem is a "must." Cajun specialties, of course, and everything is great ... especially the crawfish etouffée served graciously by 80-year-old Leonard the waiter.

Texas de Brasil, Dallas. Never been to a churrascaria? Visit this one! Waiters slice charbroiled-to-perfection meats right at your table. Also enjoy the tasty salads, Brazilian veggies, and tropical fruits. A real treat!

THE ACQUISITION OF WISDOM

Amidst the pros and cons about outsourcing, little has been written or said about what happens to a company's wisdom when the experience that yields wisdom accrues elsewhere. So here goes.

Quite simply, organizations that outsource forego the wisdom. The knowledge gleaned from

direct interactions with prospects and customers ... kaput! The nuanced complaints and compliments and suggestions ... someone else hears them. The opportunities hidden in contacts' answers and comments ... slide right past un-attuned ears.

When the people conducting dialogue on behalf of one organization wear the badges of another, the former cannot acquire or preserve wisdom. Sure, it can capture data and fool itself into thinking it is developing a "360-degree view" (as if that were possible.) But *real* wisdom comes from the exchange of spoken words. If a company does not say and hear the words itself, it never gets or owns the wisdom.

Best Advice: Recognize that dialogue with prospects and customers **must** be a core competency. If it already is, enhance it via constant assessment, process improvement, and skills training. If it is not, work smart and hard in your organization to make it so. Strategic guidance and tactical assistance are right here. **800 373-3966.**

OFFSHORING DEBATE IS FAR FROM OVER

From *CRM* magazine: "Sen. Ted Strickland (D-OH), has introduced a bill that requires notification of the location of the (inbound) call center and provides the caller with the option of rerouting the call to the United States if the caller does not want to speak to an offshore agent." Readers ... what do you think? Good idea or not? Your opinions next edition.

ON STRATEGY

Lee Gomes of the *Wall Street Journal*, in an editorial about HP's new CEO and that company's path forward: "Perhaps the best strategic advice for a company is to ignore strategic advice, because (it) all will be warmed-over conventional wisdom. Instead, companies should make sure they are on the right side of history, and then try to do whatever they do as well as they can."



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CELEBRATING NINETEEN YEARS!

On June 20, 1986, I transitioned from the world of corporate marketing, sales, and training to being a business owner. Dear clients, for 19 years you have provided good business, kindness, and friendship. I am honored. Thank you!

ARE THE DAYS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE AS "RODNEY" ALMOST OVER?

From *CRM* magazine's reader poll: "Which department within your organization is in charge of owning the customer experience?"

- Customer service, 46%
- Marketing, 20%
- Sales, 20%
- IT, 6% (*My comment: IT? Bad idea!*)
- Other, 9%

If these stats represent reality, could it mean that customer service finally is rising above its long-standing "don't get no respect" status? When we see the 46% actually increase their funding for customer service, only then will we distinguish customer service from lip service. How about at your company?

DEFINE THE DELIVERABLES!

A key reason for the frequent and mutual dissatisfaction between business marketers and phone service bureaus is that each assumed they knew what the other really wanted.

Case in point: an industrial manufacturer hired a BtoB bureau to generate leads, and offered an incentive for lead-to-sale conversions. But the marketer did not define with sufficient precision what they consider a viable lead. The service bureau thought "qualified" meant completed data capture. The result: few real leads and even fewer sales. The marketer now thinks the bureau is deceptive and the

bureau thinks it is getting gypped out of its incentives. They are on the verge of firing each other. Too bad, because such acrimony is remarkably easy to avoid.

Best Advice: Marketers: always define the deliverables with completeness and great precision. Establish and communicate your definition of a lead, the qualification criteria, how you want the leads rated ... it is NOT "qualified" v. "unqualified!" ... and the "release point" at which genuine opportunities pass from the service bureau into the appropriate sales channel. And never, ever offer a service bureau incentives for lead quantity, quality, or conversion. The former two yield inflated ratings and unreliable leads. The latter is beyond their scope and influence.

Service bureaus: insist that the marketer do all the above. If they cannot or will not, turn down the gig. If you do the project, perform as promised and deliver the deliverables. It is the best way to make an honest buck, earn repeat business, and build a solid, marketable reputation.

Both: don't go it alone! I help you keep 'em honest and on target. Call **800 373-3966**.

SPEAK POWERFULLY, SELL MORE

Wimpy: Following-up, Interested, Just, Cheaper, Extend the offer, A top-seller for us, I think, I'll try, Did you receive ...?, Have you had a chance?, Touching-base, See if you have any questions

Influential: Best, Cost-effective, Profitable, Advance, Increase, Look good, Make your case, Impressive, You can be sure, Different and better, I promise, Hear your reactions/opinions, You'll like it, Shall we go ahead and get you some?

B-to-B MARKETING CONFERENCE

Sept. 13-15 at the Westin La Paloma in Tucson, Ariz. www.the-dma.org, click Events.