



Michael A. Brown's

## ***Business To Business By Phone***<sup>®</sup>

2006 Happy New Year Bonus Edition

### SEEKING EXPERIENCE AND COURAGE

As we begin 2006, a growing issue for outsourced service bureaus ... and for some in-house marketers as well ... is callers' *fear* of approaching and speaking with executive-level and wealthy prospects. The fear is exacerbated by the callers' youth and lack of basic business experience. To compensate, several service bureaus are trying to hire older callers ... retirees and laid-off 50-somethings.

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### VIEWPOINTS ON POWERPOINT

From Ruth Marcus in the *Washington Post*: "The soul-sapping essence of PowerPoint was captured perfectly in a spoof of the Gettysburg Address by Peter Norvig of Google. It featured Abe Lincoln fumbling with his computer and then collapsing his speech into six slides, complete with a bar chart depicting four score and seven years. For example, Slide 4: 'Review of Key Objectives and Critical Success Factors'

#### *What makes nation unique*

- Conceived in liberty
- Men are equal

#### *Shared vision*

- New birth of freedom
- Gov't. of/by/for the people"

*Best Advice:* Recognize that .PPT is a presentation medium. Use it to support your narrative, not to overwhelm it. And please ... never read .PPT presentations word for word.

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### PITCHING TO THE "DESIGNATED HITTER"

In baseball, the DH only bats, never fields. In business, the DH only talks, never buys. In fact, *CAN'T* buy. The DH may decide, but can't act. May negotiate business, but can't consummate it. Some DHs don't even know what they're not authorized to do until, with every good intention, they run afoul of

their companies' "ground rules."

In business, Designated Hitters are frustrating, but sometimes we have to pitch to them anyway. Here are some key questions to ask the DH and thereby advance toward the sale:

- *"If you like what you see and hear from me, what happens next?"* or *"Who do we have to convince, and how?"* Reveals the process and usually the participants.
- *"The last few times you've proposed this type of purchase or project, what happened?"* Reveals the DH's won-lost record and helps you assess the likelihood this time.
- *"As you go forward with this proposal or project, who will support you and who will oppose you?"* Reveals the political climate and the DH's standing with the rest of his\her team and with management.
- *"On a scale of 11, with 11 the highest, how confident are you that we can make this happen?"* Truth or dare time.

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### HEADS SHOULD ROLL FOR SUCH CALLS

Many of you have heard my story about the caller from American Express who, despite my 19+ years as a business cardholder, asked me, "So what does your company do?" Well, Amex still makes similar dumb, ineffective calls.

Recently, Clark phoned from American Express, offering me a corporate gold card ... the same Amex card I have had for 19+ years. I asked Clark, "Did you not know that? Did you not look at my account history before this call?" His reply: "Oh no, we're in sales ... we wouldn't know or do that."

Poor Clark goes to work each day and has to make dumb, ineffective calls. The people with big offices who cause him to do so deserve to be fired.



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### INTERCHANGE AT ANNE'S BLOG

Anne Holland, who runs MarketingSherpa, also writes a dandy blog. Recently, she quoted this stat from ThomasNet: "'56% of (survey) respondents do not want vendors to contact them until they have made the initial contact.'"

I wrote back to Anne, "A key reason is that over-aggressive web marketers often demand that web site visitors *register* as a condition of merely looking. But forced registration violates visitors' 'right of anonymity' and so they balk. Even in B to B, initial web site visits ought to be analogous to retail: we can walk into a mall store without having to formally validate the merchant's perception of who we are.

Moreover, the initial vendor contact after a registration often is a weak, generic phone call or an intimidating one. The former: 'I noticed that you visited our web site and I'm just calling to see if you have any questions.' Yawn. The latter: 'According to our records ... 'Click.'"

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### READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Almost everyone reads their own industry's publications. Are you reading your customers' trade press as well? For example, if you sell technology into corporations, *CIO* magazine is for and about your prospects and customers. Read it! For other segments, there are *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, *Broadcasting*, *Progressive Grocer*, *Pacific Shipper*, and so on. By reading what your prospects and customers read, you'll enjoy a common frame of reference, which means you can have better, more substantive marketing and sales conversations.

Also, send article reprints and links to prospects and customers. Urge them to visit interesting, relevant web sites you've discovered. Doing so shows you're paying attention to their concerns.

### SELL WITH THE PARTS OF SPEECH

"Public" the noun is noble ... the American *public*. But "public" the adjective is disrespected, distrusted, sometimes feared and despised ... *public* officials, *public* transit, *public* housing, *public* enemy.

The point here is that words have power. Nouns have more power than adjectives. Verbs have more power than adjectives *or* nouns. Verbs influence and sell.

*Best Advice:* Use more verbs in your marketing and sales messages. Limit nouns to explaining what your product or service includes. Lose the "hype," most of which is adjectives.

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### CHASING THE MONEY TO JAIL

At companies in California and Illinois, seven phone-based lead qualifiers have been fired for falsifying their call counts and talk-time. Their employers had been paying quarterly bonuses to the reps with the most calls and minutes. The crooked reps dialed bogus numbers and kept the lines open to inflate their results. They won the money and now may face prison for fraud and grand theft.

*Best Advice for reps:* be honest!

*Best Advice for companies:* hire honest reps. And NEVER offer bonuses for call counts or talk-time! Instead, establish the ratios required to deliver enough viable opportunities to sales. In particular:

- Connects\dials
- Conversations\connects
- Next steps\conversations
- Viable leads\next steps

Then, pay for production plus artistry, with bonuses (not commissions) ONLY for exceeding the required ratios and/or for improvement trends.