



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Summertime 2006 Bonus Edition

YOUR ANNUAL GOOD EATS ADVISORY!

2006 recommendations ...

Blue Water Grill, Costa Mesa, Calif. Great seafood and service at this beautiful eatery in "The OC."

Orzo Trattoria, N. Andover, Mass. All the veal dishes are superb, and the people couldn't be nicer.

River Lane Inn, Milwaukee, Wis. Fresh Great Lakes fish are the specialties. Really good salads, too!

La Donna, Mansfield, Mass. Terrific Italian.

Chinn's 34th St. Fishery, Naperville, Ill. Casual, local, and really good.

Oak City Bar & Grill, Menlo Park, Calif. The best of the several restaurants at this location over the years. Excellent lamb chops.

BRANDING, REVISITED

Let us be clear. Companies cannot brand anything, especially themselves. Only customers can create a brand, and they do so over time based on the company's and product's performance.

That's why logos and slogans are not brands. Brands are reputations, good or bad. A logo or slogan represents the brand but is not identical to it. For example, the Goodyear blimp represents that firm's 100+ years of making and selling good tires. Goodyear's hard-earned performance reputation is the brand. Conversely, the worst brand of the 20th century was the swastika. Not because of its graphic design, but because it represented the most heinous behavior in world history.

Best Advice: Spend modestly on your logo. Invest BIG in superior performance that generates a superior reputation over time. Market your performance and reputation. Your customers, the

business community, and the public at large then will create your superior brand.

WHO GETS TRAINED, WHO BENEFITS

Fascinating study from Hudson, the international staffing consultants, reported in *CIO* magazine:

Annual Pay	Who Participates in Training	Who Benefits
\$100k up	68%	64%
\$75-100k	59%	55%
\$60-75k	68%	61%
\$40-60k	60%	52%
\$20-40k	55%	45%
Under \$20k	52%	33%

ON QUOTING AND WINNING

Alex Rodriguez's career .321 batting average is terrific in baseball, but well below the minimum in quoting and winning business. Indeed, if you win only .321 of your quotes, you're likely to get fired!

In my experience, a .510 or better win average is a must. That's why it is so important to abide by these rules of quoting and winning:

- Make sure you completely understand the customer's requirements and preferences. Ask!
- Never offer to quote in an attempt to bypass the customer's acceptance of the "you gets" or coerce their willingness to go forward.
- Offer to quote only *after* the customer's conditional acceptance of your value proposition; i.e., they believe they are getting what they need and want.



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- Ask, "How will you and your colleagues \ staff \ manager go about evaluating the quote? What are the criteria?"
- Ask, "How many alternatives will you be considering?" Note: *NOT* which competitors!
- Ask, "If the quote is right, will you be placing the order with me?"

If the answers reveal that you have zero opportunity, the procurement is "wired," or the deal already done elsewhere, do not quote! Say, "We respectfully decline."

But if the opportunity is legitimate, tell the customer, "I'll prepare the quote today and e-mail it to you. All I'll ask in return is that we can talk tomorrow so you can tell me if the quote is satisfactory. OK?"

BETTER BE READY WHEN THEY ARE!

Recently at a for-hire call center, I monitored a lead development rep calling a man who had attended one of their client's webinars about a new business alliance program. The caller asked a good opening question: "What aspects of the webinar did you find most relevant and appealing to your business?"

The prospect replied, "As a business owner, it all looked good to me! What kind of commissions and profits should I expect over the first half-year?"

For about four very uncomfortable seconds, the caller was at a total loss for words. When she did speak, she timidly confessed, "I don't know ... I'm just supposed to get information from you."

The prospect, almost surely "qualified," was ready to act! He was not about to answer the twelve qualifying questions on the data capture screen. Fortunately, the prospect was a nice guy and said, "Tell you what ... have your sales director get in touch this week. I want to do this." Then he excused himself and hung up.

The mortified young rep worried that her boss and the client would "freak out" because the twelve data capture fields remained blank. Much to their credit, they did not freak out.

Instead, with the manager looking on, I coached the caller to visit the prospect's web site and to cross-reference what she learned there with the profile of the company in a national business database. The caller did so and discovered a very likely business fit. The caller then contacted her client's regional sales manager and told the story. He said, "Thank you! I'm on it."

Happy ending: a successful sales call, a new member of the business alliance, and an energized caller who knows how to be ready when they are!

WIRELESS COMPANIES STRUGGLE TO SUPPORT OVERLY-COMPLEX PHONES

CRM magazine quotes a J.D. Power study that "customers (of wireless phones) now contact their provider an average of 1.94 times per issue by phone." As a result, the wireless companies' CSRs cannot keep up with call volume or phone complexity.

J.D. Power recommends more training for the CSRs, and assigning CSRs to specific sorts of inquiries. That may help, but there are bigger issues.

First, the wireless providers misread the business marketplace. They constantly add new gizmos that few business people really need. Most of us want good, reliable phone communication. Period.

Second, business subscriber "churn" normally is due to dropped calls and/or poor customer service, not lack of gizmos. Overloading the CSRs, trained or not, will drive away even more subscribers.

Best Advice: The 1.94 is more a strategic symptom than a tactical training problem. Fix the bigger issues the right way, and *then* train the CSRs.