



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

2011 Summertime Bonus Edition

SOCIAL NETWORKS

At Focus.com's Marketing Group, a member asked: "What are the negative impacts of social networks on businesses?" My response:

"The greatest risk is when otherwise astute marketers act as if the social media / networks void all other forms of marketing. They throw lots of money at the former, and underfund and downplay the latter. Not wise. Social networks certainly augment, but do not replace or invalidate, established marketing and sales media or strategies.

Of course, proclaiming that new media nullify old media happens all the time. Some marketers predicted that the Internet would be the end of TV, that TV would be the end of radio, that radio would be the end of newspapers, and so on. The new social media will not end anything either.

I like and respect the social networks and use them for what they are ... media ... but still rely on content, experience, and live interaction with human beings to find, land, keep, and grow business."

"MAY I ASK WHY YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED?"

That's the bad line I heard during a brief conversation with a rep from a company that should know better.

American Express Small Business caller: "Hi, Mr. Brown! We're promoting a special extended payment offer for purchases over \$200 on your Amex Card. May I tell you about it?"

"Well, I don't use my Amex card for extended purchases, and choose to pay in full every month."

Caller: The inappropriate line.

Clearly, Amex very much wanted to sign me up and validate the campaign. But besides the fact that I

already explained why the offer was not relevant to me, the line sounded abrupt and borderline rude. What could we / what should we say instead?

Best Advice: Respond cordially and affirmatively, with, "Thank you for letting me know! What types of products or services might be a better fit for you going forward?" Adjust subsequent campaigns and calls to that prospect or customer accordingly.

PUT DOWN THE PHONE
AND LET'S GO EAT!



My 2011 restaurant recommendations ...

The Bull Run, Shirley, Mass. "Serving the tired, thirsty traveler since 1740." And they are really good at it! Excellent prime rib, lots of fresh local veggies, and honest drinks. Live music venue as well.

Strega, Authentic Italian on lively and cool Hanover St. in Boston's North End. Friendly, frenetic atmosphere. Killer bouillabaisse, and our waiter was actually from Italy!

Hoover's, Austin. Chicken fried steak and other country comfort food, with genuinely nice people serving it. On Manor Rd. near the University of Texas.

Goode Co. Seafood, Houston, on Westpark near Kirby. Same-day-fresh oysters and swordfish. (Texas coast is clear of the oil-spill area.) The place is built-out from an old railway dining car. All aboard!

Moon Bay Coastal Cuisine, Gaylord Conference Center at National Harbor, Washington, DC. Although there are other nearby places after a day's meetings, you certainly will enjoy this very nice eatery right there in the hotel atrium. Terrific Chesapeake Bay crab cakes! Later in the evening, head to the top-floor Pose nightclub for good drinks, music, and a spectacular view of the Nation's Capital!



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"THE TROUBLE WITH SaaS"

That is the headline on this article in *CIO* magazine: "Given all the hype software as a service (SaaS) has garnered, you might think every category of software will be delivered predominantly from the cloud at some point. Not so says a Forrester Research report.

SaaS faces major obstacles in four broad sectors of software. They include: lower-level elements of the stack, such as operating systems and databases; software for internal IT management and data management; legacy, entrenched process applications; and vertical applications, such as securities transaction processing systems, Forrester says."

Several clients and associates are actively involved with cloud computing and likely would concur with the Forrester assessment. And if Forrester is correct, then both SaaS and installed-software vendors should focus on markets where their offerings match-up best and not try to force-fit anything.

KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS ON THE REAL CUSTOMERS!

Lots of companies still hang on to the outdated and harmful concept of "internal customers" ... the notion that people within businesses have constituents whom they must serve as "customers." This view holds, for example, that IT has client departments just as the company itself has external customers. Sometimes the companies even do internal budget manipulations to account for interdepartmental services.

This is flat-out wrong and here's why: companies and the people within them have only one kind of customers ... REAL CUSTOMERS. The kind who buy things and, we trust, pay for them ... the revenues from whom cover salaries, commissions, benefits, the building, equipment, lights, A/C, and everything else.

Plus, real customers can fire us! And we can fire them! Try firing your IT department.

In no way am I promoting adversarial behavior amongst colleagues. Quite the contrary, the best way to *avoid* internal friction is by aligning everyone toward real customers. Do not allow the "internal customer" thing to mislead your staff into thinking that their colleagues pay the bills.

WHERE TO NURTURE LEADS: IN-HOUSE OR AT A THIRD-PARTY VENDOR?

A software company was swayed by the "not-your-core-competency" pitch and hired a call center. When the board of directors learned that certain officers considered customer acquisition beyond their "core competency," they acted quickly to correct the misperception.

On the other hand, outsourcing often has been the right choice for companies wanting to determine which organizations in the market-at-large merit adding to their funnel of target opportunities ... a "pre-screening" effort so to speak.

Several of my clients that used to outsource are bringing lead nurturing back in-house. One CEO expressed it this way: "Almost anyone can capture the data, but we want more than the data. We want the wisdom of the calls to accrue to us, not to an outside service bureau."

At Eloqua, the [marketing automation](#) firm, Amber Stevens is a Marketing Program Manager: "We manage our nurturing in-house. It's beneficial for us because we have the power to make adjustments on the fly, watch the behavior of the contacts and use that trend data to drive other program efforts. Our sales team can also add new contacts directly into the nurture cadence and see the folks in their territory who are being nurtured, which helps to increase their confidence and strengthen the alignment between sales and marketing."