



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 1999 Edition

WHO SAYS EVERYONE WANTS RELATIONSHIP MARKETING?

Maybe people who write books about it, but certainly not all customers. Indeed, some business customers like transactions just fine, thank you, and have zero interest in "relationships" with us or our companies.

A Virginia business owner recently described to me several of her suppliers' annoying "relationship" pitches. She knows they are well-intentioned, but she does not want to waste her own time making them feel good about themselves. "What should they do instead?", I asked. "Approach me honestly, make a compelling case, do what they promise, and shut up about relationships." This from a nice, smart person with a good marketing mind.

And yet for other business people, a series of satisfactory but undistinguished transactions is not enough. They want attention! In fact, so many business relationships go unattended, that "*We were ignored*" is a reason given very frequently by businesses changing vendors.

Best Advice: Generally, the higher the level of contact, the greater the likelihood the customer demands and appreciates a viable relationship ... *in his or her own terms*, not necessarily ours. So presume nothing. *Ask* all customers how they prefer to engage with you and your company. Then reconfirm, amend, or perhaps overhaul your communication strategy, account by account.

LUCKY 13

June 20 marks Redwood's 13th business anniversary. I consider myself very fortunate to have all of you as clients! Thanks a million for your ongoing trust and business. May we all continue to prosper!

USE YOUR CRM PROJECT TO LIBERATE YOUR MARKETING AND SELLING

Field selling is a rigorous, demanding endeavor. Among its main limiting factors are time and distance. And yet, many providers of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software and systems fashion their premise and their products around the field sales model. I think this is a terrible misapplication and waste.

The real benefits of CRM should be the expansion and improvement of market and account coverage, bigger bucks, and better customer care. But despite CRM's cool technology, you can't achieve those goals with a field-based model. You need the phone, which is constrained only by time zones. And you need the web and e-mail, which are constrained only by message clutter. Therefore, CRM's thrust should be interactive phone, web, and e-mail, with field sales supporting those activities, rather than the other way 'round!

Moreover, businesses that want CRM to produce *real* results and profits first need to realign with reality. That means honestly evaluating where, when, how, and why we market and sell as we do. And this analysis has to happen *before* implementing CRM. Then, we must make absolutely sure that our intended CRM systems can and will enable and enhance our non-field-centric business model.

CRM vendors and their customers alike must realize that the software won't and can't do it all by itself. Indeed, CRM in an old business model produces lousy results fast. But CRM free of field-based limitations can be liberating and quite profitable!

I'm helping several companies realign to take greater advantage of CRM. How can I help you? Please call **800 373-3966** or via e-mail at michael@michaelabrown.net



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 1999 Edition

FIRE THE FIELD SALES FORCE?

Heck no! Rather, redeploy the field sales reps where and when it's ...

Necessary: To see the prospect's facility to make the right recommendations, or to sell to a committee.

Warranted: To make a formal presentation at a high level, or to respond to a specific competitive challenge (But not just because the other guys happen to go in person.)

Desirable: To recover from service \ performance failure, or to thank a long-term, valuable customer.

THOUGHT WHILE SHOPPING

The only blessing of retail is anonymity.

IF YOU TALK THE TALK ...

It's a fine spring evening, during a commercial break from the evening news. On the screen, one of those ominous TV ads by First Union, the North Carolina financial services conglomerate. Scary, dark-metal visuals, weighty narrative, lamenting the alleged confusion in the banking, insurance, and investment worlds. But just "come to the mountain" (them, of course) and all will be bright, beautiful, and oh-so-easy.

Now return to the news and, whoa ... what's this? The business segment begins with a report about First Union's severe fiscal downturn, major restructuring, and 7500 layoffs! Yes, the outfit that wants to manage our money apparently has a hard time managing its own! They got caught between their self-important, overblown advertising and harsh reality.

Best Advice: Advertise truthfully and without arrogance. Don't market your corporate ego. ... no one will buy it. Most important, be prepared, willing, and able to "walk the walk."

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE LIST

Save Your Money

Sales Automation trade shows

Most publications, organizations, or conferences with "Telemarketing" or "Call Center" in their names

Organizations

Few, if any, b-b phone groups with substance and vitality. If you know a good one, please tell us about it!

Conferences

Direct Marketing to Business, Sept. 23-24 at the San Francisco Marriott, and also in January or February next year at a warm southeastern location to be announced. www.The-DMA.org.

Publications

TeleDIRECT and *TeleProfessional* magazines

Sales & Marketing Management magazine

Sales & Field Force Automation magazine

This newsletter. Call 800 373-3966

WHAT I DO

Advise and train your marketing and sales groups to use the phone effectively to find, land, and keep customers, and grow your business.

Favorably differentiate your calls from consumer "telemarketing" and from your competitors.

Help you build and ramp-up your in-house phone team, or recommend the best outsourced call centers to conduct telemarketing and telesales for you

"Fine-Tune" your phone operations, steering you away from the money-pits and toward profitable best practices