



Michael A. Brown's

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

Third Quarter 1999 Edition

### "EMPOWER" v. BETTER VERBS

Hooray for Thomas Petzinger for writing in *The Wall Street Journal*: "'Empowerment,' the most patronizing business buzzword to come along in years, perpetuates the backward and harmful notion that an all-knowing management anoints workers with purpose and initiative."

I second Petzinger's opinion, and I offer a couple of amendments, too!

First, while management most certainly is *NOT* all-knowing, it still is management. Management's obligation ... it's duty ... is to *direct* and, when necessary and appropriate, to *command*. "Direct" and "command" may appear politically incorrect verbs, but they are exactly what good managers often must do.

Second, because "empower" is ambiguous, most employees have no idea what it actually means. Many don't want to be "empowered" ... they want to be *told* what to do. To others, "empower" implies the right to bully and abuse customers. (Remember Northwest Airlines last winter in Detroit?)

*Best Advice*: Do the right verbs. For managers, the right verbs include: listen, mediate, observe, monitor, direct, command, negotiate, support, coach, counsel, report. For executives: lead, reason, innovate, inspire, tell the truth. For employees: focus, perform, fulfill. For everyone: earn, think, learn, sell, make customers successful and happy, earn more.

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### GOOD ADVICE ON AUTOMATION

Dick Lee, of Minneapolis' High Yield Marketing, writing in *Sales and Field Force Automation*, cautions against believing promises of rapid implementation: "Every SFA software system comes with embedded concepts of how you ought to do business. Without that, the software wouldn't

have sufficient structure to stand up to operational demands. The trick is to re-engineer your process first, then select software that supports your new system. And that's not rapid implementation anything."

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### "MUST SEE" MARKETING EVENT: DMB-SF

*Direct Marketing to Business*, Sept. 23-24 at the San Francisco Marriott. This fine event goes west for the first time, offers 2 solid days, and gives you a great excuse to stay the weekend in "everyone's favorite city." See you there! [www.dmbshow.com](http://www.dmbshow.com).

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### PURSUING NEW ACCOUNTS BY PHONE? SOME COMPANIES CAN'T AFFORD IT!

Examples include a business tax service whose typical client pays \$500 every April, and a printer of medical forms, whose physician-customers can use perhaps \$400 of forms during an entire year.

*Acquiring* low-volume and low-ticket customers can involve the same time, energy, effort, and **money** as bigger opportunities. You still need careful market segmentation and behavioral lists. However, targeted direct mail, the Internet, and hands-on trials at trade shows may be better options than outbound phone to woo and win small accounts.

*Keeping* smaller accounts is where you definitely need the phone, especially inbound. For example, most office product suppliers run inbound call centers for all customers, but do outbound to their corporate accounts only. Also, many office product catalogs now are on-line and the suppliers are trying to migrate their customers to Web transactions with still-lower costs.

*Best Advice*: If your annual account values are under \$1000, or your sales per account are limited to 3 figures by the accounts' natural capacity for your product, re-visit "the numbers." Look at



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your typical "calls-to-close" a new account. Compare account acquisition and growth costs v. "duration value." Be willing to adopt and apply alternate, lower-cost contact media.

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### HOW TO RE-SELL THE VALUE OF PHONE

#### Field Sales

4 Visits\Day x 220 Days\Year = 880 Visits  
(How many do your field reps actually do?)  
880 x \$520 visit = \$457,600

#### Phone Sales

15 Conversations\Day x 220 Days\Year = 3300  
(15 is absolutely "do-able")  
3300 x \$35 conversation = \$115,500

3 times the customer interaction at 1/4 the cost = **Advantage Factor 12 just for the phone!**  
Web + e-mail drives the results up even higher.

Numbers this nice attract positive attention!  
But don't pitch cost savings. Rather, promote greater market coverage, share-of-account, and control of working capital. *That's what CEOs are talking about.* You should, too!

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### THOUGHTS WHILE FLYING

Airlines should establish a "no drumming" section, so we who do not drum could be free of those who bang on the tray table behind our seats. Also ... a "use your own seat for support" rule, so people wouldn't grab *our* seat (and sometimes our hair) as they move in and out of the row behind us.

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### LOVE THE LANGUAGE! USE ALL OF IT!

We have so many wonderful words and turns-of-phrase to use. Let's bring 'em out and start exercising them! For example, let's *invite and*

*encourage* our customers to *refresh, renew, invigorate, revitalize* their business relationships with us. There! Doesn't that sound better than the oh-so-boring, "we're updating our database?"

*Best Advice:* Coach your reps to get rid of dull verbal "stuff," and light up the phone lines with **bright, exciting** verbiage. Get them thinking in, and talking from, the **colorful "theater of the mind."**

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### AMAZING HEADLINES!

July 11: the U.S. women's soccer team wins the World Championship. July 12: Sergei Khrushchev, Nikita's son, becomes a U.S. citizen. These not only are interesting times, they are **UNBELIEVABLE!!**

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### ONE FINE MORNING IN ORLANDO

It's 8:59 a.m. at the entrance to Walt Disney World's *Liberty Square*. I'm watching the great anticipation and happiness on the faces of hundreds of families, especially my own.

9:00. Paul Revere drops the rope and the visitors race to their favorite attractions ... to the vigorous cheers and applause of dozens of Disney "Cast Members" who line the pathways. It's the first time I can ever remember customers' receiving an ovation, and it remains a highlight of our trip.

Cynics might say the cheering was contrived, even corny. To me it was absolutely classy and thrilling! It's why they truthfully can call it *The Magic Kingdom*. Thanks, Walt!

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### HOW DO YOU LIKE THE NEW LOOK?

Please phone or e-mail with your reactions to the updated layout! Also, please recommend article topics. **800 373-3966** or send an e-mail to [michael@michaelabrown.net](mailto:michael@michaelabrown.net)