



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

First Quarter 2001 Edition

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Congratulations to Mr. Penley McQueen of Vignette Corp., Austin, Texas, who was first to correctly answer The Great Telephone Riddle. The number always at the end of the telephONE is *ONE!* Thanks to Penley and all other riddle guessers.

STAFFING TO FORECAST v. FORECASTING TO STAFF

Some phone service bureaus do the former, others the latter. And their choice of methods can have a major impact on how well the agency serves you and your business.

If the agency staffs to their sales forecasts, their "stable" of callers and the callers' quality will fluctuate widely. That's because the agency hires and lays-off based on present and anticipated campaigns. Their management typically spends more time recruiting and interviewing than attending to your project. Moreover, the callers very often come from temporary staff providers. In my experience, these providers are awful at screening for phone talent, especially for business-to-business positions. As a result, the phone agency's ability to sustain an ongoing or sophisticated project is questionable at best.

Conversely, forecasting to staff generally yields a more dependable group of permanent callers, meaning a greater likelihood of continuity and success for you and your campaigns and projects. This is especially important for multi-call, multi-contact marketing. Also, forecasting to staff helps avoid the "feast-or-famine" cycle that bedevils many service bureaus, and enables controlled growth.

Best Advice: Know what you're signing up for. Ask how they do it, and about their ratio of temporary to permanent staff. If it's higher than about 30%, find another agency. Beware any service bureau's business models and practices that appear at odds with their performance promises.



SITTIN' ON THE DOCK OF THE BAY

... in San Francisco, Mar. 14-16. Come watch, listen, and participate with direct marketing's best practitioners and advisors at the famous *Direct Marketing to Business* conference. All the info is at www.dmbshow.com.

How much would you expect to pay for this superb event? Wait! Don't answer yet! (as they say on late-night TV) Here's a special offer for *Business To Business By Phone*[®] readers ... when you register by phone at **800 927-5007** and say **Secret Code VS1**, they'll knock \$150 off the admission! What a deal! I hope to see you there!

And now, back to your regularly scheduled newsletter.

TO THE TUNE OF "THE WHO'S" CLASSIC WE WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN

They were the darlings of Wall Street
Armani shoes upon their feet
But the riches they were seeking are all gone
And the ones who funded it all
Well, they got out before the fall
While others who were used to money
now have none

Well, what became of the e-revolution?
Venture capital is no substitution
For actual customers and genuine profits
There's still a lot of e-hype
But reality will top it
Dot coms falling like leaves upon the ground
Former e-millionaires the pavement now must pound

And they'll be sending out their résumés
Today, like yesterday
Forgive me, but I have to say ...
We all got fooled again!

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EASE UP ON PHONE MAIL INSTRUCTIONS

Everyone in the industrialized world has had phone mail and left phone mail messages for at least two decades. So we all know how to do it! But how many times this week have you had to wait through those infernal instructions? *Turn 'em off! We figured it out!*

And how about the self-evident "I'm away from my desk and can't come to the phone right now..." *We know that!*

I wonder if anyone has done a study about the time and money wasted reiterating the obvious and instructing the already skilled.

Instead, may I suggest a courteous but simple, "Hi, this is (name) at (company.) Thank you for calling. After the tone, please say your message."

HOW TO PREVENT THE OTHER CRM: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MALPRACTICE

- *If you talk the talk, then walk the walk.* Customers don't care what you call it, they care how you *do* it! Pay attention to them. Make things easy for them.
- *Make sure the emperor is wearing clothes.* If the big bosses think that CRM is software and/or easy to do, risk being labeled a heretic and go tell them the truth. Or hire me to tell them.
- *Under-promise and over-deliver.* Don't pitch "relationships" while screwing up transactions.
- *Recognize that CRM is **your** thing, not theirs.* Don't over-rely on technology or make human contact difficult. And don't make customers answer your CRM questions before getting what they want.
- *Welcome and honor your customers.* Ask them and heed them. Grow wealthy doing so.

WHO LET THE LEADS OUT?!



Mike Wallen, president of The Lead Dogs, a phone marketing service bureau, offers this "top-level list of lead-related activities during which marketing and sales should participate together:"

- Definition of target lists and key accounts.
- Development of lead qualification questions and scoring criteria.
- Review of initial copy and design ideas for direct marketing.
- Initial feedback session once leads begin rolling in.
- Inclusion of a representative from marketing in Monthly Sales Meetings.

A ROOM FULL OF NICE NON-PROSPECTS

Along with about 180 other people, I recently attended an executive luncheon and seminar sponsored by a technology client at an Austin hotel.

There were four other guests at the table with me. I asked them this business motivation question: "Of all the seminars you could attend, *how* did you decide to come to this one?" Their answers are instructive for my client, and perhaps for you too!

- Bob, a small business owner: "I've heard of these guys and wanted to find out what they're all about. I think their stuff is way beyond our league, but I wanted to check them out anyway."
- Rose, a purchasing manager: "My boss asked me to attend. I'm not exactly sure why."
- Tony, a sales director: "We're a pure-play e-business marketplace for real estate transactions. We need to consider the next level of infrastructure."
- Walter, an advertising executive: "A free lunch at Four Seasons? Count me in!"

Net: if the ratio holds, only 45 of 180 guests are viable prospects. Segment first, invite second.