



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

First Quarter 2002 Edition

WHAT SALES PEOPLE WILL DO IN THE RECOVERING ECONOMY

Sales people have been hurting. Notwithstanding their skills, in a down economy consumers and businesses don't buy much. Most sales reps kept trying to sell ... with increased intensity and often with clever twists ... but with little change in their basic sales behaviors.

Indeed, many selling behaviors have endured over centuries. On the individual level, some sales reps have been trained (indoctrinated?) in certain sales methodologies while others have developed their own patterns (dogma?) over time. On the corporate level, despite the advent of "customer-centric" and "humane" selling models, many of today's sales practices would be recognized in the ancient agora and on 1950s used car lots as well.

Now we are on the cusp of an economic recovery. Companies' recovery plans need to address marketing, of course, and also ought to spell out how the firms' sales reps are supposed to go about selling. But they seldom do. So why should we expect that sales behaviors actually might change this time? There are three key reasons:

Customers Insist The Old Ways Aren't Fun Any More Diminishing Returns

As a result, I predict that in the recovering economy, successful sales reps will:

- Sell into viable, pre-qualified account groups rather than geographic territories
- Spend much less time pitching, much more time "diagnosing" and then "prescribing"
- Reduce the buzzwords and hype and talk normal
- Get very good at establishing, sustaining, and proving their value propositions
- Sell "You get ..." rather than "We have ..."
- Refine the positioning and timing of their calls to action

- Work toward greater account depth and profitability rather than worrying about how many accounts they have
- Sell to multi-contacts at multi-levels
- Be authorized, if not directed, to walk away from unprofitable business
- **Make quite a lot of money!**



I help companies achieve all these things via consulting and training. Please get in touch and we'll make them happen at *your* business! 800 373-3966 mabrow2@attglobal.net

POOR OLD AT&T

I fired AT&T as my business long distance carrier. Then the "fun" began.

First they sent an impersonal postcard with big white letters on a red field: "Did you know you've been SWITCHED (their capital letters) from AT&T?" Their presumption, born of arrogance, is that no one would ever switch willfully ... I must have been "slammed" by one of their evil competitors. Their offer: if I switched back, they would credit any reconnect charges. Such generosity!

Once the postcard arrived I knew that an account recovery phone call soon would follow. And sure enough, about two weeks later they called. More accurately, their *predictive dialer* called. Such personalization!

The rep was courteous enough but was 100% constrained by her awful script. At no time did the script make me feel like either an individual human being or a customer, nor express any regret at having



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lost my business, nor ask what they might do differently or better to win me back. Rather, the questions focused solely on whether the switch was due to price or service. I politely declined to answer and the rep actually sounded relieved! "Thank you for talking to me," she said.

Two more weeks afterwards, another AT&T person called with the same script. I hung up.

Poor old AT&T. I doubt that they ever will "get it."

CONFERENCE WORTH ATTENDING!

Make your plans to attend the *Direct Marketing to Business* conference from March 25-27 at Orlando's Caribe Royale hotel. *DMB* is always a good, substantive event and I recommend it! Visit www.dmbshow.com for all the info and to register.

HOW TO BUY TECHNOLOGY

Even though I consider myself a business person and not a "techie," I do like technology. I *really* like technology when it helps us accomplish viable business purposes. For example, one of the best technology investments I ever made was for Lotus *SmartPics*, a business graphics package. *SmartPics* provides the poignant and often funny visuals that support and embellish the marketing and selling concepts about which I consult and train.

But I recommend we view with great skepticism, perhaps cynicism, tactical technology sold as strategic "solutions." In the world of phone-based marketing and sales, the most glaring examples are predictive dialers, automatic call distributors, and interactive voice response. These are devices and systems, not business strategies, and certainly not "solutions."

In the broader business realm, watch out for the converse: strategic technology being hyped when tactical products may be more appropriate and/or

more affordable. Examples include elaborate CRM systems when advanced contact management software could do the job perfectly, "all-inclusive" management software for a small business when a mid-range accounting package would fit the bill, and enterprise-level self-service e-infrastructure for big corporations when customers really want access to competent, courteous human beings.

Best Advice: You know your business, so define your own strategies. Don't let technology ... or competitors ... define them for you. Establish your requirements in context and with specificity. Then go shopping.

GOOD QUESTIONERS ARE HARD TO FIND, AND WORTH THE EFFORT

Jake Moebius, General Manager of Wykle Dental Products in Carson City, Nevada gets frustrated with sales rep candidates who seem to "ask questions as a courtesy."

Jake says that during phone interviewing, when he asks applicants to demonstrate their approach and skills, many of their questions lack context and continuity, or merely are "fillers" until the pitch. Next candidate, please. But when he *does* find a sales rep who can ask substantive questions effectively, that person usually wins the position. In other words, the dialog not the pitch gets the job.

To assure that all Wykle reps are questioning correctly, Jake records every single call on a very cool digitized system. Critique is immediate and powerful. Callers use the recordings in preparing for subsequent calls. Customer acquisition costs are way down and sales are up. Hooray for Jake and his reps!

BEST HEADLINE FOR THE NUDIST CALLER AD

"Know how to clothes but don't want to?"
Now that's funny! Congrats and thanks to Bernard Jones of the US Dept. of Commerce.