



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

First Quarter 2005 Edition

SEVEN IMPERATIVES FOR PROFITABLE PHONE-BASED MARKETING & SALES

Senior management's active endorsement and involvement. If you have the big office and you want the phone to be a money-maker, make it one of your own performance criteria! It is OK to delegate responsibility for implementation, but do not default the phone enterprise to strictly operational oversight. Many good, workable phone strategies have failed for lack of top-level endorsement.

With ongoing executive attention, phone marketing's structure, corporate positioning, and results almost always improve. Structure includes program design and organization, and making sure the phone enterprise is properly funded. Don't try to run a phone initiative on the cheap, particularly if you are expecting million-dollar results.

Positioning refers both to phone's citizenship within the organization and your marketplace, and to its location in the building. Phone is best positioned strategically, i.e., integrated fully within your marketing mix, not run as a preliminary or "distant cousin" activity. And while your phone marketers don't require space in your executive suite, don't stick them in the basement dungeon either.

Big minds not big heads in the marketing and sales organizations. Marketing managers who come from product or marcom backgrounds often view phone as something apart from the media mainstream. Many sales managers come from field sales, and consider phone subordinate to the field. In such companies, fear of change is disguised as tradition. To get past it, please see Imperative No. 1 above. Then assure that everyone actually makes and takes live calls with real prospects and customers. Reality equalizes head size while it expands minds.

Synchronize sales and marketing. You may never get your sales and marketing organizations to love each other even if they both report to you. But you can – indeed, must – coordinate their efforts. For

starters, get the groups together to define or refine your lead qualification criteria. Then, as your phone marketers talk with prospects, they can apply the criteria to rate lead quality on a point-count system. Leads rated above your agreed release threshold go to sales or channel partners, whose quick action on them is no longer optional but required. Below the threshold, keep the leads in marketing and continue to develop them. Such synchronization costs only egos, but pays real dollar dividends.

Adequate and appropriate technology. Is everything in place for your callers to do what you want them to do efficiently and effectively? Good **Business To Business By Phone**[®] requires comfortable digs, a really good database, application software to make the database easily accessible to and from the calling stations, plus appropriate computer-telephone integration. This stuff doesn't have to bust your budget, but without it you're at a distinct competitive disadvantage.

Do beware the gadgets and schemes of consumer telemarketing: predictive dialers, "universal agents," and such are bad for business.

Super people, well-trained. "Train them? If I have to train them I wouldn't hire them," proclaimed a sales manager who seemed pretty smart until he said that. If you want your marketers and sales people to perform well and to improve continuously, you have to invest in them.

First, hire people who actually *want* to do phone. Miscast callers seldom sparkle. Once you have them, budget about one percent of their annual burdened earnings for ongoing phone skills training. Then motivate them by inclusion, sustain them with recognition, and reward them for results.

Measure the right things, right. Measurements from consumer telemarketing are not right in B to B. For example, call count focuses only on quantity, and leads to mindless, heads-down "drone-phone." Talk-time also is wrong because it



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implies that longer equals better, which often isn't the case. Here are two much more valid metrics:

- *Measure ratios not absolutes.* For example, conversations v. connects and leads or sales v. conversations are much more meaningful than 70 dials a day.
- *Measure medians (mid-points) not averages.* Medians show reality more accurately and are less susceptible to peaks and drops. Example: Ten \$10 orders plus one \$100 order means your average order is \$18.18. True but misleading. The median or "typical" order is \$10.

Monitor, coach, and counsel. Write or amend management's charter to include those verbs. Direct the first-line supervisors to be in the reps' cubes at least 25% of every business day. Then observe: Are reps asking more than telling? Are they spouting features or selling the "you gets?" Make it clear that this is not an interruption of management, it *IS* management! You, the managers, your callers, and your company will benefit. **800 373-3966**

AN IMPORTANT HEADS-UP FOR BUSINESS TO GOVERNMENT MARKETERS

"Career executives in all the Federal agencies average 55 years old, and many are eligible for retirement. The overall average age of Federal employees is 47. These are factors to consider when crafting your marketing materials: we are not marketing to a young audience." From B to G expert Mark Amtower's excellent book, *Government Marketing Best Practices*. www.federaldirect.net

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM CUSTOMER SERVICE TO SALES ... OR NOT

One of my clients, in New Jersey, has perhaps the world's best customer service rep. Jayne is unfailingly polite, very knowledgeable, and speaks beautifully. Her customers love her *and* she can up-

sell and cross-sell like you wouldn't believe. But if you assigned Jayne to initiate outbound marketing or sales calls, she would quit today.

Jayne's sales colleague Mark, on the other hand, is a proactive go-getter who revels in seeking out new opportunities and turning prospect reluctance into live business. If you told Mark to wait until the inbound phone rings, he would quit today.

Best Advice: Some reps can sparkle at both inbound customer service and outbound marketing or sales, but most truly prefer one or the other. Before switching your people between those functions, or mis-hiring and suffering the business consequences, *ASK* them where their heart is. And if you need to change the phone position itself, i.e., convert inbound service into outbound account development, be prepared to bring on some new reps.

DEALING WITH "PHONE RESISTANCE"

The annoyance and quantity of bad calls cause some business prospects and customers to "opt out" of phone entirely. And although we who try very hard to conduct phone business properly did not create the problem, here is how to start resolving it:

- Do not conduct "stand-alone phone." Coordinate your phone effort with all aspects of your marketing and sales initiatives. Phone calls are much more welcome in a multi-media context.
- After stating "the reason for my call," *ALWAYS* confirm that it is an OK time to talk.
- Test your call openings, questions, and "you gets" on your own senior execs. If your strategy and verbiage are good enough for them, *then* call some prospects and customers.

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