



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

First Quarter 2010 Edition

BULLFEATHERS 2.0

Recently at LinkedIn, a man in Toronto asked, "What is Sales 2.0 really? I am trying to see if there is agreement on what Sales 2.0 really is. Do you have a definition that is clear, descriptive, and no longer than one paragraph, specifically 250 words or less. If you do, please share it."

Some of the answers were silly, others flat-out wrong. Most oozed with self-serving pitches by self-proclaimed Sales 2.0 "experts."

I responded quite differently: "Sales 2.0 is bovine post-digestive matter. In practice, the term is used mostly by technology vendors trying to convince us we *simply must* have their gizmos and software in order to find, land, and keep customers."

The Canadian's great reply: "Frankly I think you are bang on, I just like to see the ooze flow."

The whole 2.0 thing started innocuously. Web 2.0 was a short, easy term for two-way interaction via the web ... a major advance from the one-way, information-only sites of the early Internet. But then some tech and marketing services folks got carried away, pitching Sales 2.0, Prospecting 2.0, and the newest über-ooze, Sales 3.0. In their zeal, they would have us believe that human-based marketing and selling are passé, which of course is not the case.

Best Advice: to paraphrase the Wizard of Oz, "Pay little attention to the 2.0 \ 3.0 man or woman behind the curtain."

WHEN TO PHONE, DRIVE, FLY

You can market and sell almost everything and manage customer accounts entirely by phone, right? Although my specialty is *Business To Business By Phone*[®], I will be the first to say, *not always*. There are economic, human, and positioning factors to consider.

Economic

Multiply your median order size by your closing ratio and compare the result to your cost of each sales call. For example, if your median order is \$187 and your field sales call costs \$250, you can't afford to send an outside rep, even if he or she closes on every single call. You have to market and sell via phone, the Internet, and postal mail.

Now suppose your median order is \$18,700 and your best field reps close 50% of the time. You can afford it, but should you gas up the car or buy a plane ticket? It depends on one or more of these factors:

Human

Determine if an in-person visit is necessary, warranted, or desirable.

- *Necessary.* When you must see the customer's physical plant to respond appropriately to their needs, you go. There is a famous sales story about an Ohio warehouse that bought pallet racks based on e-mailed drawings rather than on-site observation and learned too late and very expensively that the racks would not fit near the rear of the building, which had a sloped roof.

Also, if you are late in the sales process and new decision participants suddenly appear, go quickly. You need to watch the faces on the committee: who is there, who is not; who talks, who listens. Not even a video conference will suffice: you need the live human dynamics.

- *Warranted.* When the customer insists that the cost of the product or service validates an in-person visit, even though the entire sales process could be conducted by phone, you go. By going, you and your customer can sell internally and present a cohesive approach. The visit may be more emotional than rational, but sometimes you have to do it. Try converting to the phone later on.



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- *Desirable.* If technology such as e-mail ... and for that matter, the phone ... have taken you out of touch with your customer or you need quick, high-level recovery from a service failure, go in person. You may recall a United Airlines TV ad that depicted this scenario very convincingly.

Positioning

Your sales reps' time and your prospects' attention are in short supply. So it is crucial to sell and confirm the value of an in-person meeting by positioning it as an important event, not a drop-in.

Here are examples of powerful positioning benefits that produced substantive, successful in-person sales calls for three of my clients:

- You'll be able to see, touch, and experience the machine in your own environment because we will bring it with us. Judge for yourself, *live!*
- You'll have all the right people in the room at the same time. You can put all the hidden agendas and politics on the table, resolve them, and get this thing going.
- You prove to the nay-sayers that you know what you're talking about, because the woman who literally wrote the book on the subject will join us for the meeting.

With positive positioning and your prospect's agreement that an in-person meeting likely will advance the cause, go ahead and make your travel plans.

BEWARE THE DISCLAIMERS

Mick famously sang, "You can't always get what you want." He was right. Before checking the price of anything, inspect the disclaimers to see what is excluded from the offer. That is because nowadays, disclaimers rule.

Recent actual examples:

- The come-on: "All suits on sale. No exceptions."
- The disclaimer: "This offer not applicable to Italian suits or camel hair blazers."
- The come-on: "All services are custom-matched to your unique business needs."
- The disclaimer: "New business customers must subscribe to both video cable and high-speed Internet service for two years."

We all know what these vendors are doing and it's not right. Once burned by their disclaimers, we may remain permanent non-customers. Plus, we tell big bad stories to our colleagues and friends.

Best Advice: No disclaimers. Tell it and sell it like it is.

CAN'T GET NO ... SATISFACTION

Hey Mick! From Accenture, reported in *CIO* magazine: "Technology has improved customer service but consumers still aren't satisfied. They want:

Easier\more convenient service 74%
More knowledgeable representatives 67%
Faster service 66%
More options for obtaining service 64%
Special services for good customers 39%"

FUN WITH MARKETING!

The price to attend an executives' marketing conference was \$695 before Jan. 15 and \$795 after that date. Their first promotional announcement arrived by postal mail on Jan. 21. Do we get \$100 for not going at all?

I received three identical copies of a brochure for a seminar on *Merge/Purge Strategies for Mail and Phone Lists*. Will they show us how how how?