



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 2001 Edition

MAKE MORE MONEY! SELL BENEFITS FIRST!

One of the most enduring but flat-out wrong sales and marketing doctrines is the “feature-advantage-benefit” approach. FAB goes something like this: point out a feature (an attribute) of your product or service. Then describe the “pluses” of having v. not having your feature, or of your feature over the competition’s. And finally, tell the prospect or customer, “ ... and what that means to you is ...”

What a yawner! Not only is FAB old-fashioned and boring, often it’s the “kiss of death” for phone-based marketing and sales because it’s exactly ***DRAWKCAB*** from what the customer wants to hear! While a feature *may* be of interest, its value hasn’t been established yet, so the customer “tunes out.” Conversely, the customer almost always will listen to “what’s in it for me?” So train your reps to sell “what’s in it for you” *first* with an active verb, using the phrase “because of” as the link back to the feature. For example: *you get, gain, improve, reduce, protect, win, advance, beat (the competition), profit.* In context:

“Mr\Ms Customer, you ***expedite*** your NT and e-business initiatives and ***enhance*** their value to your customers and company without the expense of human monitors, ***because*** our software monitors, learns, predicts, and self-corrects automatically.”

Make absolutely sure that your reps don’t simply spout random benefits, or those they happen to think are coolest. Selling “benefits first” works best when it directly addresses the needs and preferences that the customer expresses in answering your reps’ thoughtful, open-ended questions.

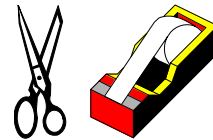
Best Advice: Selling “Benefits First” is the hardest skill for many phone-based marketers and sales people to master. It’s also the most profitable! To reinforce it with your reps, send me an e-mail or call **800 373-3966** and we’ll make the arrangements. What’s in it for you? **You and your reps get to make bigger bank deposits more often!**

MAKE EVEN MORE MONEY! MARKET BENEFITS FIRST, TOO!

Right after you finish reading this newsletter, while you’re actively thinking about “benefits first,” log on to your company’s web site. What will you see? Probably features.

Then, please pick up any product brochure. Most likely, the features are bullet-pointed on the left side. The benefits, if elaborated at all, are on the right. ***DRAWKCAB!***

To be sure, the people who create your web sites and brochures are smart. But like sales people, many are trapped in the FAB legacy. So here’s what to do. Get out your low-tech, high-output scissors and sticky tape ...



... slice those brochures down the middle and swap the columns! Then go show the product managers and brochure writers how to market “benefits first.” They may “push back” at first ... until more business starts to roll in. Then you will look very smart indeed. (How’s *that* for a “you get!”)

Regarding your company’s web site ... no scissors or hacking please. Rather, enlist actual customers to help you make the case for “benefits first” with the marketers responsible for your web site content. Customers know “what’s in it for them” at web sites and usually are very willing to tell you.

PHONE PHUNNY

“Redwood Trainin’?” the Texas-accented wrong-number caller asked. “Why *Redwood*? I’ll tell you whut ... bein’ as y’all are in Texas, y’all might wanna change the name to Mesquite or Cactus.”



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SNEAKY MARKETING AT THE GAS STATION



If I say to you, “good, better, best,” where is “better” positioned? In the middle, of course. So how come at more and more gas stations, the mid-grade gas is either on the left or right at the 3-pump island, while higher-price high test gas occupies the center position?

I think it's because most customers figure that mid-grade will be in the middle! So if we simply don't look, we inadvertently fill up with a higher octane, more expensive fuel than our cars require ... and spend about \$3 more per tank than necessary. The oil companies and the station franchisees enjoy higher-test margins as a result ... as much as 20 cents a gallon more!

Best Advice: Slow down. Look carefully. Buy the gas you actually want and need.

THE TEST OF A GOOD TEST

Two clients have asked about the kind of post-training test they should administer to their callers. The answer: direct the reps to make calls according to the training. As they do, monitor how well they perform what they have learned and measure the results they achieve. Any other kind of test misses the mark.

Perhaps because of our collective history with school tests, such directness seems to trouble some marketing and sales managers. Their first inclination is to conduct written tests of “knowledge” rather than assuring that their callers can demonstrate actual phone performance where they *apply* the knowledge. But in business, the test of a good test is that anyone who can pass the test can do the job, and anyone who can do the job can pass the test.

A story from another profession illustrates the point. Some years ago, the US Army's helicopter maintenance final exam included this item: “Describe in writing how to remove, repair, and replace the servo-actuator.” (It's a device that helps control the pitch of the rotor blades.)



Of course, the mechanic's job is to *fix* the servo-actuator, not to write about it. So the only valid test is to actually *fix* one properly, which is what the Army now requires. And soldiers certainly prefer flying in helicopters maintained by master mechanics, not by writers.

Best Advice: Establish explicit performance criteria, train your callers accordingly, and provide practice. Then listen to their calls and hear the sales happening!

FAST HANDS HELP FEND OFF AUTOMATED TELEMARETERS

Unfortunately, predictive dialer (PD) use is on the rise. PDs are those annoying machines that dial your phone automatically. When you answer, you hear “dead air” while the PD tries to access your record in its database and display it on a rep's computer screen. Usually, this takes 2-3 seconds, so you have only that much time to bail out.

Best Advice: Start finger-sprint training today. Practice reaching for, finding, and pressing the “disconnect” button within two seconds.

PARTY TIME!

June 20 marks our 15th business anniversary. Big thanks to “y'all” for making it possible!