



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 2003 Edition

IF HIGH-TECH MARKETERS PITCHED HAMBURGERS

Corporate trainer and all-around good guy Herb Quilitzsch was “dining” recently when the promotional muse awoke and inspired him to write: “With our new Golden Arches Solution, we provide a wide range of integrated services through a modular suite of digestive applications. Our Hunger Solutions module is delivered with a proprietary sauce, pickle, onion, and is easily interfaced with a grain-based, circular sandwich presentation solution provided through our strategic partnerships with world-class baked goods enterprises.” Yum?

AFTER TRAINING 101, KEEP GOING!

Most professions require ongoing training. Airline pilots, surgeons, attorneys, accountants, and computer technicians all have to retrain and re-qualify often to keep their standing and advance their careers. So how come some marketing and sales organizations believe that performance training is something to do only once?

Best Advice: Plan and budget for ongoing training that parallels your business growth curve and the intended career development path of your reps. Conduct quarterly progress reviews and semi-annual refresher, reinforcement, and advanced programs.

Does ongoing performance training pay off? Absolutely! Take a look at some real numbers from a San Francisco client:

Tenure	< 3 Mo	3-6 Mo	> 6 Mo
# of Trained Reps			
At/above median GPM	1	6	68
Below median	4	5	25
# Not Trained			
At/above median GPM	2	4	16
Below median	4	5	12

Ongoing training also helps you keep your best people. Do it right. Call me! **800 373-3966**.

CLARIFYING THE METRICS

In the previous edition, I wrote that “most (contact center) metrics were straightforward, even if sometimes incorrect.” Several readers asked for examples of the latter. Here goes:

Call counts. We still see recruitment ads for reps willing to make 50 or 70 or 100 outbound dials a day. But how many dials means little until measured against results. So measure ratios not absolutes: connects to dials, conversations to connects, next steps to conversations, sales to next steps. Try for 15-20 substantive conversations per day per rep and make the number of dials required to do so, based on your marketplace and contact profile.

Talk-time. At some contact centers the mantra is the more talk-time the better: the longer you talk the more leads or sales you produce. Not necessarily. Some reps run up talk-time with technobabble that doesn't advance the sale. Some talk long because talk-time is their key metric. Others simply like to BS, which talk-time rewards. Much better: measure median (not average) conversation length to achieve the call objectives and sales targets. Reps ought to be within $\pm 15\%$ of the group median.

Closed sales as a percent of qualified leads. This is a valid metric for your sales channels but not for your lead marketers. The reason: once a rated lead has reached the release threshold and goes to sales, it is beyond your marketing callers' influence.

OUTSOURCING UPDATE

The for-hire call center world is going through its periodic reversal of fortunes.

As the economy soured, companies desperate for sales looked to call outsourcing as a way to find new business. Service bureaus took the money and called, but the results often fell short. To be sure, much of the “blame” gets pinned on the marketers for asking their outsource partners to work miracles.



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Trouble is, some of the service bureaus *promised* miracles, but when miracles didn't happen, clients bailed out. Here are several of the "lessons learned" ...

- Some service bureaus stung themselves by trying to be everything to everybody. In particular, more than a few consumer bureaus pretended to be good at B2B also, because that's where the money was coming from. But B2B is wholly unlike consumer, and the consumer agencies really ought to stay with what they know.
- Reputations travel fast. Everyone finds out very quickly which service bureaus have been fired by whom and for what reasons. Better perform!
- Even capable service bureaus may face a skeptical marketplace as they strive to recover. For example, one of my corporate clients has given up on outsourced phone entirely. Their sales VP told me, "We have been 100% disappointed with lead-related outsourcing and now will conduct our phone business ourselves."
- The good news is that other companies report very positive results from their outsourcing arrangements. Indeed, a few B2B service bureaus continue to sparkle for their clients and will enjoy the rewards of their solid performances and favorable reputations.

WANTED: A FEW GOOD PHONE BUSINESS CONFERENCES

It's hard to find them. The main reason is that we who conduct *Business To Business By Phone*[®] contribute less to the coffers of conference producers than some of their other constituents.

Yes, we pay to attend, and the fees often are quite steep. But the *real* money for the producers comes from call center equipment and software companies that rent booths in the exhibit halls, and

from publications that sell ad space to them. Fact is, publications *run* several of the phone conferences, with manufacturers sponsoring. This usually means that the exhibitors, advertisers, and affiliated "white paper" writers conduct most of the presentations. They tend to focus more on telecom and technology capabilities than on the business strategies that might warrant their application.

The second reason is that consumer telemarketing is bigger than business to business, which skews the conference content toward "mass" outbound and inbound and away from the segmentation and account targeting by which we in business-to-business market and sell.

Which events might you want to consider?

International Call Center Management runs at least twice a year in different cities. One of the *ICCM* content "tracks" includes business-themed sessions. www.iccm.com

Exhibitor Show. If your phone activities include trade show promotion and/or post-show lead qualification and development, you likely will find relevant sessions here. www.exhibitornet.com

DM Days New York. This show features lots of exhibit hall hobnobbing between vendors and their customers, but also an increasingly comprehensive array of seminars. www.dmdays.com

Direct Marketing to Business always delivers and I'm always there with the newest strategies and tactics for profitable **Business To Business By Phone**[®]. www.dmbshow.com

17th BUSINESS ANNIVERSARY!

June 20 is the date. You, dear clients, are the cause for celebration! Thank you for your trust and your business over the years. May we enjoy many more together! **800 373-3966**