



Michael A. Brown's

## *Business To Business By Phone*<sup>®</sup>

Second Quarter 2005 Edition

### READY, WILLING, AND ABLE TO WIN THE BUSINESS!

Here are six actual situations that clients and I have encountered while marketing and selling to businesses by phone. How would *you* respond? At the end, you'll see my recommendations, all of which worked and led to sales.

1. You are making an introductory call to a prospect who visited your web site and downloaded a white-paper. The prospect says, "Send me some more information ... whatever you have."

- A. You agree to send the complete fulfillment package and call again in two weeks.
- B. You tell the customer that you have lots of different information and you want to be sure you send the right materials. Then you ask, "What did you see at the web site and in the white paper that's most relevant to your business? How come?"
- C. You make an "elevator pitch" about your company and your products and then drop the names of a few other customers.

2. You are making the second call to a customer to whom you sent corporate marketing materials and a catalog. At the outset of the call, you say:

- A. "Did you see the specials on the inside front cover?"
- B. "Have you had a chance yet to look at the information we sent you?"
- C. "I'm calling to hear your reaction to the materials you've been reviewing, find out what you like best, and see if we have a good business fit."

3. A customer who used to be called on by your field sales people is resisting converting to a phone-based business relationship. In fact, no field sales rep has visited the customer in more than a year.

- A. You explore what the customer perceives he/she is giving up in the transition. Then you address each issue by explaining how it is handled by phone and what the customer gains by doing so.

B. You explain that your narrowing margins and new pricing structure are forcing your company to control costs.

C. You describe how other companies and customers have made the transition successfully.

4. Much to your surprise, one of your phone customers tells you that a field sales person from your company stopped by yesterday. She wants to know what's going on and which of you actually is her rep.

- A. You think fast and describe how you and the field sales rep are a "team" covering her account.
- B. You assure the customer that you will inquire about the field rep's visit and report the results. In the meantime, you conduct your call as planned.
- C. You tell her you have no idea what the field rep was doing there but that you are her rep.

5. You have been working with a prospect who told you he is the decision-maker. But during your third conversation, he reveals that he is on a selection committee whose members represent various technical, marketing, and financial interests of his company.

- A. You continue qualifying the prospect and the opportunity. You also ask about the experience and preferences of the other committee members.
- B. You do all of "A," then gracefully pass the opportunity to your field sales colleague.
- C. You offer to conduct a conference call and on-line product demonstration with all members of the committee present.

6. By phone, you are pursuing a \$30,000 order. The prospect tells you that "if I'm going to drop 30 big ones on you, it's worth an in-person sales call plus lunch or dinner."

- A. You explain that the reason the order is only \$30,000 and not more is because you are doing business by phone rather than in-person.
- B. You tell her your company does business by phone and you can't go in-person.



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C. You tell her that if she places the order, she is invited to visit *your company* in-person and you will host her for lunch or dinner while she is here.

How do your responses compare?

1. B. Until you know what your customer has in mind, you don't know what to send. Sending generic fulfillment un-differentiates you with qualified prospects and makes no sense with unqualified prospects.

2. C. Pitching a special for openers sounds like tacky consumer "telemarketing," and puts business at risk. Asking the yes-or-no question with the word "chance" produces one-syllable answers and lowers the perceived value of your fulfillment package.

3. A. Get the fears, reluctance, and ego issues on the table and deal with them right away. You are trying to convince this particular customer that phone business is good for his or her business. Stories about other people and other companies miss the point.

4. B. Tell the truth, then get on with the call. Once you have checked out the apparent mis-step, you can address it positively in your next conversation with your customer.

5. A and B. Selling to a committee by phone is very difficult and can be risky. In one instance, my client's competitor was in the committee room during the client's phone presentation.

6. C. Good marketing, creative selling, and fun!

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### WHEN NO RESPONSE IS BEST

A widely-quoted stat about sales leads is that almost 23% of all inquiries are never fulfilled with materials or a sales contact. If the lack of response is due to carelessness or callousness, the vendor won't be around long. Conversely, deliberate non-response

can be very wise, indeed. In particular, if an inquirer is known to frequently request and posture but never order, non-response is a fine way to avoid nuisance and expense.

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### DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY WITH COMPETITIVE ANALYSES

While the "Wizard of Westwood," John Wooden, was coaching the UCLA basketball team, he and his staff spent much less time scouting other teams than the other teams spent scouting UCLA. The Bruins paid great attention to their own strategy and execution and put together a marvelous string of national championships. There is a parallel in business.

Some companies become so obsessed with gathering and analyzing information about the competition, they under-analyze themselves. Certainly, we marketers and sales people need to know who we compete with, our relative weaknesses and strengths, and our unique advantages. But if we spend too much time worrying about competitors, we risk investing too little time enhancing our own performance and positioning our own pluses.

*Best Advice:* Know the competition. Know your own business even better.

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### THE EYEBROW THRESHOLD

Add this question to your phone marketing and sales repertoire: "Mr\Ms Prospect, what's the dollar level on this (product category or project) where company eyebrows will go up and make things uncomfortable for you?"

Based on the answer, you can consider unbundling your product or service offering, phasing the delivery schedule, or getting people with big offices involved.