



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 2006 Edition

CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS

If you had asked me in 1986 to predict what I would write on the occasion of my business's 20th anniversary, I would have been at a loss for words. Now June 20, 2006 approaches, and the words come easily ... THANK YOU! Dear clients, you are the best! It is my privilege and delight to help you and your companies prosper, and to prosper in my business by doing so. Hooray for all of us! Onward!

CLEVER LINE ... OFTEN CORRECT, TOO

CMO magazine's editor Rob O'Regan defines *customer satisfaction* as "a metric that skews customer feedback in the most favorable terms for your next presentation to senior management."

OUTSOURCING UPDATE

CRM magazine quotes a *Datamonitor* report that "there will be a 7 percent drop year over year in U.S. companies outsourcing (phone marketing) to Asia and India." Among the cited reasons: travel expense and nuisance, culture differences, mismatched business methods and models, customer resistance.

These problems with long range outsourcing should have been obvious all along. But the negatives mattered little to some American firms motivated only by the "costs-out" promises and lies.

CRM also reports that European marketers experienced similar issues and now are looking into "near-sourcing" (good grief) as a remedy. On the continent, near-sourcing means moving phone functions to eastern Europe rather than India or Asia.

My opinion: Why re-learn the same lessons over and over again? Why not be cost-effective at home rather than cheap and bad elsewhere? And why invent silly new buzzwords for failing strategies?

#1 CALLING MISTAKE THUS FAR IN 2006 IS

Mismatch of the "reason for my call" with the business premise for making the call. Example:

- Premise: find out, by asking, what they are doing or considering that might make what you sell viable and desirable
- Mismatched reason: "You recently registered for our webinar and I'm just calling to see if you have any questions."

The remedy: before every call, clarify ...

- What *is* the business premise: what is the rationale for making the call?
- What do you want to achieve?
- Why should your contact want to talk with you? *Really* ... "what's in it for me?"
- What do you want your contact to DO ... observable, measurable DO ... as a result of this particular call?

Then, write and rehearse the opening:

- "Mr/Ms Prospect, the reason for my call is to thank you for participating in our webinar, hear what you found most relevant, and determine if we have a good business fit."

INVENTED TERMS v. REAL WORDS

What does "enterprise search" mean? "Content management?" "Integrated marketing?"

Marketers invented these terms to describe a new concept, product, or process, or to differentiate an existing one. But even the people who invented these terms and those who say them often have a tough time getting prospects to understand what they really mean. That's because invented terms consist of nouns and adjectives that normally do not go together.

The difficulty with saying invented terms on



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the phone is that they confuse people, and confusion is the enemy of response and of sales. The caller must parse the invented term into individual words and then augment the term with explanatory verbs. This makes the customer *work* to understand, and takes time, both of which put the call's success at risk.

The high tech world is the source of many invented terms, some of which have multiple meanings. For example, "content management" can mean technology for keeping a company's web site pages current ... or, the technology for coordinating and enforcing a company's processes and rules. "Enterprise" to a dry cleaner means his or her shop. To a giant corporation, "enterprise" means their empire. No wonder prospects can become confused!

Best Advice: Do not expect your prospect or customer to know what a new invented term really means. Rather, explain what your new product or function *does*, and *then* apply the invented phrase. For example, "Mr\Ms Prospect, coordinating your marketing and sales activities yields greater efficiency and profit ... it's called integrated marketing."

SELLING COMPETITIVELY

Never make the prospect or customer feel like a bystander to you vs. your competitors. Especially, do not praise nor criticize your competitors. Merely acknowledge them. Do not ask, "What do you like about them?" or "What would you change about them?" Instead, always keep the dialog focused on the prospect or customer. Ask about his\her requirements and preferences and explain how your product or service addresses them best. Sell the "you gets."

WOULD YOU WANT TO BE YOUR OWN CUSTOMER?

When I ask this question (often) as a consultant, the most common response is, "It depends." The ensuing discussion puts significant

strategic, operational, and political issues on the table where clients can start dealing with them.

Other outward-oriented questions include:

- Who *ARE* our prospects and customers? Did we find them or did they find us? How?
- What do they want and not want?
- What do we have for them, and what can we do for them, than nobody else can touch?
- Where, why, and how should they communicate with us? We with them?

Then we turn the questioning inward:

- What are we willing to do to acquire, keep, and grow business?
- What can we afford?
- How far apart are the previous two answers?

Finally,

- Are we being truthful and effective in our marketing messages?
- Are we remembering and fulfilling our sales promises?
- Are we always accessible in the customer's preferred medium?
- Are we doing unto others as we would have them do unto us?

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PHONE PHUNNY

From Ernestine the Operator (Lily Tomlin), "Have I reached the party to whom I'm speaking?"