



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Third Quarter 2010 Edition

SOFTWARE MARKETING CONFERENCE

Mark the dates and get budget for CapCon 2010, the premier live event for software firms wanting to improve their marketing, sales leads, and business generation results. Sep. 15-17 at Washington, DC's National Harbor. It's going to be GOOD!

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"HAS LINKED-IN FLAMED-OUT?"

An important and timely question, posed by veteran marketer Dick Lee, in Minneapolis. He elaborates: "As recently as six months ago, I reliably reviewed new discussion threads for a number of select groups capable of sustaining great dialogs. Today, I don't bother looking at more than half. The level of discourse is lower in quality and higher in volume."

Mr. Lee also asks: "Aren't all B2B social media channels subject to this risk? And is there an antidote?" My responses: "Yes, they are subject to the same risk, largely because they are still like grade school 'show and tell.' The antidote? A more robust economic recovery so the people who generate the 'noise' can find gainful employment instead."

EVIDENCE OF THE "FLAME-OUT"

Recently, I posted a straightforward question at LinkedIn's Inside Sales Experts group: "How many calls can a caller call?" ... as in number of daily dials, ratios of conversations to dials, and so on.

The responses started out equally straightforward. But the professional, substantive back-and-forth quickly degenerated into an unpleasant argument and personal attacks amongst three very opinionated participants who apparently have way too much time on their hands. Wisely, the group moderator closed out the discussion.

Unfortunately, such episodes are entirely too common throughout LinkedIn. Other misbehaviors in LinkedIn groups include flagrant pitching, deceptive "surveys" that hide pitches, and rants by self-proclaimed "experts" who, in reality, are simply people with axes to grind.

I certainly don't advocate prior censorship ... eventually, these things tend to self-correct. But as with the Internet as a whole, the über-ego\stupid\bad folks have hijacked social networks. We who want to use on-line professional networks for legitimate purposes have to find or create our own niches and leave the pretenders to wreak havoc on each other.

REMEMBERING JOHN WOODEN

Kareem Abdul Jabbar tells the story of an especially frustrating practice during his basketball days at UCLA. "We just weren't clicking. Coach Wooden chewed us out. He said, 'Goodness gracious, gentlemen, that's not how it's done!'"

That's how the late John Wooden got it done ... with guidance, teaching, patience, and genuine love for his players. To be sure, he was tough as nails, demanding top conditioning and flawless team execution. He also insisted that his guys behave as decent, honorable young men on and off the court. Compare and contrast Wooden's enormously successful approach with latter-day chair throwing, tantrums, and verbal abuse. John Wooden was more manly and much smarter.

I had the great pleasure of interviewing Coach Wooden while I was a college journalist at San José State. Wooden's UCLA Bruins were about to play in the Final Four. Yet he spoke with me by phone for about six minutes, providing really good answers, analysis, and humor.

Coach Wooden's *Pyramid of Success* is applicable and noble in sports, business, and life. May he rest in peace.



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THE ESSENCE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Beneath the packaging, web graphics, and promotional copy of direct marketing and sales campaigns, invariably there glows the essence of the campaign ... the offer.

Offers are marketers' way of saying, "This product or service has value! Here is our representation of the value. Here is why you should consider it and how you can get it." Therefore, the campaign also must powerfully convey the message, "(Please) buy this product or service now!"

But in the hubbub of crafting and running campaigns, marketers and sales people sometimes miss the essence, weaken or omit the call to action, and deviate instead to the artifacts of the campaign. Prime example: "We recently sent you a mailing with a promotional offer. Did you receive it?" But the mailing is not the campaign! The mailing is the artifact! Asking about the artifact bypasses the essence of the campaign. The likely result: no sale. A much better approach is to sell the offer!

Another example: "I'd like to speak with you about the white paper we sent recently regarding network security." Much better: "I'd like to speak with you about computer network security risks and two new approaches for avoiding them."

Best Advice: Review every campaign with your callers to assure they can identify its essence. Inspect and "dissect" the campaign materials that prospects and customers received! Then write or rewrite the campaign call guide to emphasize and sell the offer. In conversations with prospects and customers, make the offer the centerpiece of the dialogue. And overtly ask the customer for the order or at least the next-step commitment!

Sidebar: If your prospect or customer responded to the campaign mainly to receive the free keychain or bobble-head or t-shirt, confirm they got it, then redirect the dialogue to the value of the offer.

PLANNING TO OUTSOURCE PHONE? ASSURE THAT ...

The outsourcer actually can do what you need done

- If your strategy calls for sustained opportunity development and lead nurturing, avoid outsourcers that mostly conduct stand-alone campaigns.
- They can demonstrate knowledge and experience in b-to-b. They are not merely b-to-c outfits shut out by National Do Not Call Lists.
- Their labor market, education base, and turnover rates will support the right types and levels of calls to the kind of people you need to reach. For example, they don't hire recent high school grads to contact C-level prospects.
- Their reps can understand and be understood ... no language issues. Do not "off-shore."

You apply marketing and sales due-diligence and maintain direct oversight

- Attend professionally and personally to the outsourcer selection process. NEVER default such to purchasing and NEVER issue generic RFQs.
- Your would-be outsourcer forecasts-to-staff, and does not staff-to-forecast. With the latter, you get a "crap-shoot." The former almost always yields a more dependable group of callers.
- Establish a 30% maximum of temporary callers. You need a corps of permanent, "real-deal" employees to provide continuity.
- Monitor and critique caller and outsource management frequently.

Remember that they are a business also

- Besides serving you, the outsourcer also has their own business to run. They have to turn a decent profit, exactly as you do. Beat 'em up over price and you will pay the price.

The good news is that all these are quite "do-able" and I will help you do them right! 800 373-3966. michael@michaelabrown.net