



Michael A. Brown's

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

Fourth Quarter 2003 Edition

### WHAT THE TELEMARETERS WILL DO NOW

More than 54 million USA consumers (and counting) have registered on the national "do not call list." After the brouhaha, the consumer telemarketing service bureaus will have only these choices:

- Shrink or close the call center
- Become direct mail and spam marketers
- Switch to business-to-business

I predict most will try B2B, which means they will call *you* trying to sell their services.

*Best Advice:* Send them away courteously but quickly. The reason: as a B2B marketing or sales executive, you live by segmentation, diligent account targeting, and asking before telling \ learning before selling. But they are purveyors of one-call-fits-all, dialer-driven pitches. Indeed, the B2C crowd has demonstrated time and time again that they have neither the ability nor the will to conduct proper, profitable *Business To Business By Phone*<sup>®</sup>. To begin understanding why, please read the next story.

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### GADGETS v. GOOD MARKETING

The gadgeteers who invented predictive dialers are at it again. According to David Myron in *CRM* magazine, one manufacturer is promoting a new device designed to reduce the lost calls caused by consumers hanging up when they hear the "dead air" between their own "hello" and the start of the telemarketing pitch.

To me, this represents yet another misguided attempt to supplant an intelligent contact strategy with a technological trick. So I wrote this response to Mr. Myron:

"What predictive dialer manufacturers and users don't seem to 'get' is that the telephone never has been, is not, and never will be, a mass marketing medium. Except for occasional conference calls, phone involves two individuals. That's why a one-call-

fits-all marketing strategy is inherently flawed. And that's why the tactical gadgetry for mass calling that you described will produce marginal lift at best, while contributing to consumers' growing contempt for all phone-based marketing.

And as wrong as generic telemarketing is in the consumer realm, in the business-to-business world where my companies focus, generic calling is anathema and produces quick, certain trips to the poor-house. I urge your readers not to buy any gadgets that subvert the thoughtful preparation and customization required for well-received, successful business calls."

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### THE NEXT BIG MONEY PIT?

Seen those print ads and TV commercials for on-demand computing and e-business? Here is what Christopher Koch wrote about on-demand in *CIO* magazine: "If CEOs buy on-demand the way they bought ERP and CRM – over 19<sup>th</sup> hole cocktails with consultants – the consequences could make the bloated expectations and cost overruns of the ERP and CRM era look like best practices by comparison."

Chief Information Officers know he's right, of course ... can they get CEOs to pay attention?

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### IMPROVE THE BELIEVABILITY OF LEADS TO PRODUCE MORE SALES

When I ask sales training participants, "How many of you have received qualified leads that weren't?" all the hands go up.

That response prompts my question to you: in your company, who *genuinely believes* the results of your lead generation and qualification efforts? If you are a marketer who wants to boost the credibility of your output, here is what to do.

Begin by forming a task force of marketers and sales people to address the leads issue, which is



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central to the success of both disciplines. Immediately expunge the words “qualified” and “unqualified” from the lead vocabulary! Most leads are not one or the other, but rate somewhere in between and usually change by time and circumstances. Then banish “hot, medium, and cool” lead descriptions, because no one believes those adjectives. Lose “A,B,C” also!

Next, mutually develop the list of qualifying criteria that *all* parties want to apply to leads, and assign points to each criterion. For example, decision-making authority is worth four points, first-person influence earns three points, indirect influence earns two points, information-gatherer earns one, unknown gets zero. Total the point counts to get the lead’s “rating,” which can rise or fall through your dialogues with the prospect. Establish a lead rating “release threshold” for passing opportunities from marketing to sales. One of my clients releases at 20 points on a 28-point scale. Their resulting sales have risen 31%!

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### BEFORE DIALING, REALITY-TEST THE CAMPAIGN CALL GUIDE

- Read it out loud: does it sound like you talk? Or like a pitch written for print media?
- Is it truthful?
- What is the ratio of questions v. statements? The ratio of open-ended v. closed-ended questions?
- How is the contact supposed to respond? e.g., short or long answers; individually or on behalf of the organization?
- Is the presentation “We offer” or “You get”? The former bores, the latter sells.
- What is the call to action? Is it clear? Definitive?
- Read it out loud to three people who don’t know anything about your company or the product and solicit their reactions.

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### ALSO BEFORE YOU DIAL ...

- What is the communication history with this prospect or account?

- What, if anything, precedes this particular call?
- **What do we want the prospect or customer to *do* as a result of this particular call?**
- **Why should the prospect or customer accept the call? *Really*, why should they?**
- Where do you want to take the dialogue? How do you want to leave it?

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Need a lead rating system? Expert call guide development? Training for your callers? Get in touch right away! Call **800 373-3966** or e-mail [mabrow2@attglobal.net](mailto:mabrow2@attglobal.net).

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### SOILED WHITE PAPERS

Business white papers are “a dime a dozen” nowadays. One almost expects to hear street-corner vendors in big cities hawking white papers along with their Rolex knockoffs: “Hey buddy! Need a proof of concept document to promote your stuff? Got ‘em right here!”

I am convinced that many white papers are produced or commissioned by people with a vested interest, most often the company that wants to use the paper to self-promote with materials ostensibly created by a disinterested third party. The result has been that white papers are less respected and therefore less influential than in the past.

*Best Advice:* Even if the white paper you intend to use is entirely legitimate, it likely will appear soiled to your justifiably skeptical prospect. Instead, make and win your case on its own merits, backed by true testimonials, case studies, and real news stories.

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### HOLIDAY WISHES FOR YOU!

Light the menorah! Deck the halls! Celebrate the new year! May mirth and merriment delight you, your family, and your friends! And may 2004 bring you good business and much happiness!