



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

First Quarter 1996 Edition

WHAT'S DIFFERENT BESIDES THE MAILING LABEL?

Some marketers still send or say *the very same thing* to everyone on their mailing or calling lists. That's "individualized mass marketing," not custom direct or database marketing. Indeed, if the only thing different about the call or mail piece is the person's name attached to it, we damage our marketing efforts through *un-differentiation*. Conversely, if we build our lists based on known and to-be-known factors, *account by account, prospect-by-prospect*, we can (and should) customize our mailings and calls.

Is the difference important? Judge for yourself when you get home and look in your mailbox. Carefully consider how you make the "keep or toss" decision for each piece you receive. Then consider how your customers and prospects make decisions about your mail and calls. If you want help with "*Favorable Differentiation Through Customized Contact*," call me right away! (800) 373-3966.

CONFERENCE REVIEW

Direct Marketing To Business, 7th Annual, New Orleans. 1200 attendees heard and saw some "back to basics" approaches interspersed with several bold new strategies. Examples: the importance and "how to" of "recency, frequency, monetary value" analysis; cautionary tales about Internet marketing; major account management by phone instead of field sales. Lots of new faces, many at functional levels from companies whose executives came last year.

CAUTION: 2 MORE TRAPS AHEAD!

"*Just send me some (or some more) information.*" This is the phone marketing equivalent of football's draw play. Uninterested suspects lure you into premature action with what

appears an overt expression of interest. However, the word "just" is your tipoff that what they *really* want is to get you off the phone. Don't take the fake. Respond instead by saying, "I want to make sure I put exactly the right materials in the envelope. Let's try to identify the 2 or 3 most important things our product or service would have to do for you to make it viable."

If you get the clarification you need, seal the deal by saying, "Now I know precisely what to send. And all I'll ask in return is that we can have a conversation a week from now to discuss the materials. Will that be OK?" If the answer is "yes," you have a *legitimate prospect*. But if you hear "just send everything" or an ambiguous response, or if the person won't agree to a second call, mail instead a cover letter and a 2-sided summary brochure in a 32-cent envelope. Don't blow your collaterals budget and un-differentiate yourself by sending the complete fulfillment package to an undifferentiated suspect.

"*We want a demonstration, or an evaluation copy.*" This is the high-tech version of the draw play. Some suspects ask for the demo with no real intention to install it, much less put it through its paces merely on speculation. You're much better off positioning the demo or product evaluation *later*, rather than earlier, in the buying cycle.

Early on, use your printed materials and phone questioning techniques to learn the requirements and promote interest. Once you have qualified the prospect, and established value and anticipation, tender the demo or evaluation as *proof of performance and a closing tool*.

THE TIME LIMIT FOR PROBLEMS IS SHRINKING

Even with the economic recovery, "right-sizing" still is a national epidemic. Everyone who remains after re-engineering is overloaded with



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work. Thus, managers and executives are exhibiting short attention spans, short tempers, and little willingness to agonize over any one issue for more than 15 minutes.

Often, this results in serious matters being defaulted to people who can't do anything about them. For example, a former Fortune 200 company couldn't get its area managers to attend to inventory control. So they passed the problem to headquarters staff who were powerless to sell the stuff or return it. The result: a \$20 million writeoff.

Best Advice: If you must resolve an issue yourself, take the time to do it right. If you delegate, grant financial and implementation authority as well as responsibility. Accept the risk that comes with doing so. Recognize that the next problem will be here in one quarter hour. And if you're *selling* to "full-plate" people, keep it short, target and emphasize specific benefits, and net out the payout.

ARE TRADE SHOWS WORTH IT?

Some clients are reporting diminishing returns from exhibiting at trade shows. Their booths still draw visitors, but the quality, if not the quantity, of resulting leads is diminishing.

I believe that several factors are at work here. First, shows are bigger and more frequent than ever, so the "mindshare" you capture is proportionately smaller. Second, some attendees use trade shows to confirm product and service decisions which already have been made, rather than to explore new options. Third, fewer decision-makers are attending shows, preferring instead to send their "designated hitters," who often don't know why they're really there.

In one sense, trade shows and industry exhibitions are throwbacks to a bygone era. They represent mass marketing in an age of database-

driven direct marketing. And although the old saw about raising eyebrows by *not* exhibiting has been dispelled, I think it's healthy to re-evaluate trade show participation.

Best Advice: Ask the big questions, such as "Can we show and tell in a better way?" "How else might we acquire leads?" "If we go, how can we optimize our participation?" "What must the booth staff know and do to make our participation profitable?"

To help you answer these questions, I'm offering a new program called *Trade Shows: How To Participate Successfully And Actually Like It*. Call for details. (800) 373-3966.

QUOTABLE

"Business to business by phone? Heck yes! If they're professional, I save time and effort and don't even have to clean up my office!" MIS Director for a Texas manufacturing company.

WHAT I DO

- Advise and train your marketing and sales groups to use the phone effectively to find, land, and keep customers, and grow your business.
- Favorably differentiate your calls from consumer "telemarketing" and from your competitors.
- Help you build and ramp-up your in-house phone team, or recommend the best outsourced call centers to conduct telemarketing and telesales for you
- "Fine-Tune" your phone operations, steering you away from the money-pits and toward profitable best practices.
- 800 373- 3966 www.michaelabrown.net