



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Third Quarter 2001 Edition

EASY TO DO BUSINESS WITH ... OR NOT

In the Q2 newsletter, I sold you the benefits of the “benefits first” approach to selling and marketing. After we have sold our product or service benefits, customers still want to know, “Are the benefits worth the difficulty of getting them?”

Both in business and as consumers, we make buying decisions based in large measure on the ease or difficulty of *doing* business: the process *matters* to us. Indeed, we all know of businesses where we would *NEVER* buy anything, no matter how good the product or how much we may want it, because it's too much hassle. Perhaps they have arrogant, pushy sales people, or rude, officious “customer service” reps, or business prevention policies such as “no e-order returns accepted at stores.” For example, I received a direct mail offer for what seems an attractive credit card plan. But although my business supposedly is “pre-approved,” the application looks more like a Form 1040. No, thanks.

In short, if a company is hard to do business with, we won't! That's why I recommend we “*performance test*” *our own companies' processes* from time to time from our customers' perspectives. Not by conducting surveys, but by actually experiencing!

- Start by dialing your main number. Do you hear a cold, confusing recording ... or a live human being with brain and heart?
- Do your promotions offer straightforward “you gets” or are they full of disclaiming asterisks?
- Are your CSRs stiffing customers with “our policy” rather than saying, “Here's what I can do for you”?
- Is your front desk receptionist a clueless temp or your company's very best public relations person?

Best Advice: Make doing business with your business so good and easy that you can sell it as a benefit!

HERB'S COOL NEW SOLUTION

From San Jose, Calif., friend and colleague Herb Quilitzsch writes:

“As I browse the web and see what people are making money at these days, it is clear that my next business will be selling SOLUTIONS.

There must be a lot of need for solutions because everyone is in it and it's growing all the time. Here is one I came across today: ‘We specialize in providing solutions to OEM customers. We are Solutioncentric in all of our endeavors. We have a reputation for creating and advocating solutions to support our customers.’

Wow! Solutioncentric! I think I'd like to be that. It will be really exciting to tell my grandma about my new business.

“Well Gram, it's like this ... I sell SOLUTIONS.”

“Oh?” she says. “But what do you really do?”

“Well ... Solutions ... I'm Solutioncentric!”

“Oh,” she replies. “And what do you solve?”

“Well, you see ... it's ... well ... solutions!”

“I'm very proud of you, dear.”

Not everyone is Solutioncentric yet. For example, take Alteon Pharmaceuticals. These guys obviously don't get it. How can they expect to sell anything by telling people what they actually sell? They don't even talk about a SOLUTION.

And here's what they say they do: ‘Discovering and developing new pharmaceuticals for treating the pathologies of aging and diabetes with an initial focus on cardiovascular disease.’ What? No solution? How are they ever going to make it?

Since I am Solutioncentric, I think I can help them. First the name - it has to be Pharm.Com. or e-pharm.com solutions. Next the statement - ‘We provide solutions to our customers through Solutioncentric processes that solve the problems



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caused by other companies' solutions because they are not Solutioncentric like we are.'

I'd like to keep writing, but it is time for a solution ... a hunger solution. Think I'll drive over to a nice hunger solution enterprise in my surface transport solution. Afterwards, I'll probably watch a little entertainment solution and then sack out in my sleep solution. Bye!"



WHEN, IN THE COURSE OF MARKETING EVENTS



... the *Direct Marketing to Business* conference convenes, you need to be there! Please join us from Sept. 11-13 at the Philadelphia Marriott ... right up the street from where the Declaration of Independence writers convened! Get *DMB* smarts. Get some history. Get a Philly cheese steak. Get to the site and register today: www.dmbshow.com.

"WHO DOES GOOD 1-1 MARKETING?"

... a magazine editor asked me recently. Here is my response.

The outfits that come closest to the 1-1 model are those that *have to* do it as a legal and ethical requirement: my financial advisor, attorney, tax accountant, physicians, dentist, and so on.

Among business marketers, I think a good local example is Kwik Kopy in Austin, where Bob and LaDonna Enochs and their staff do my printing. They pay attention, remember my preferences, make helpful suggestions, perform admirably, and are genuinely nice people. Does this constitute a "relationship" in the 1-1 marketing sense? Perhaps. But in reality, it's more a series of above average, cordial and friendly transactions. That's exactly what I want from my printer and that's why I intend to stay with them.

Among the bigger companies, 1-1 marketing

is tenuous at best. IBM tries, sending relevant but not individualized small business news and promotions, and not sending mammoth mainframe stuff. AT&T communicates only by mass mailings and is especially difficult to talk with. They have an infuriating, automated call router that all but prevents live communication ... the very service they sell!

Net on 1-1 marketing: Great concept, poor execution thus far. But keep trying!"

BEST POETIC JUSTICE IN A LONG TIME

As reported in the *Wall Street Journal*

"Kansas City, MO. – After a big barbecue in St. Louis to celebrate its acquisition of Trans World Airlines, American Airlines flew its executives and Missouri dignitaries to a similar bash here at TWA's sprawling maintenance base.

The party was timed to attract live coverage on the 6 p.m. local news, and American's wide-body 777 was on the ground at 6:02 p.m. But the tug that was needed to tow the plane to the hangar broke down. More than an hour passed before a replacement could be found and the plane could be maneuvered into line with the red carpet that awaited it. By then, Kansas City's mayor had to leave for another engagement.

One American executive quipped that maybe the plane's door would be open in time for the 10 p.m. news. Donald J. Carty, chairman and chief executive of American's parent, AMR Corp., fidgeted. 'We've been on the ground an hour and a half. It's nuts.'"

Hey Don! Welcome aboard!

KEEP WINNING 'EM, KEEP WOWING 'EM!

Check out my new seminar, *Customer Acquisition and Retention in a Tough Economy*. www.michaelabrown.net or call **800 373-3966**