



Michael A. Brown's

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

Third Quarter 1996 Edition

### PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS

The scene is the reception area of a major division of a major San Francisco corporation. I ask the woman behind the desk if I might use the restroom while waiting for my client. "I'm sorry," she replied, "you have to be escorted. It's in a secure area." I pleaded urgency. "There's nothing I can do. You'll have to wait." In a minute, you'll learn what happened. But first, consider the business implications.

Why would an otherwise smart company make a dummie the first person people encounter? Receptionists are an organization's first-line Department of Public Relations!! They should report directly to marketing or sales, not to administration, and especially not to human resources. And they should *never* be temporary employees, who are clueless about an organization's customers, business, products/services, positioning, or rules of common courtesy.

*Best Advice:* Hire the best receptionists you can find and pay them a bundle. Good ones are absolutely worth it.

And now, the rest of the restroom story. As if on cue, a man exited the "secure area" and I dashed through the door. When I returned, the receptionist flashed "how *DARE* you" eye-daggers. Upon hearing this story, my client had two responses. First, the temporary receptionist must have been unaware of the nearby "unsecured" restroom. And more important, her "You can't\I won't" approach needs conversion into "here's what I can do for you." He's taking care of both.

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### DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY WITH COMPETITIVE ANALYSES

While the "Wizard of Westwood," John Wooden, was coaching the UCLA basketball

team, he and his staff spent much less time scouting other teams than the other teams spent scouting UCLA. The Bruins paid great attention to their own strategy and execution and put together a marvelous string of national championships. I think there's a parallel in business.

Some companies become so obsessed with gathering and analyzing information about the competition, they under-analyze themselves. To be sure, we need to know who we compete with, our relative weaknesses and strengths, and our unique advantages. And we need to equip our sales people with competitive comparisons. But if we spend too much time worrying about competitors, we risk investing too little time building and enhancing our own pluses.

*Best Advice:* Know the competition. Know your own business really well.

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### HUH?

"If you're in a high risk environment where the potential rewards are only offset by the stress of the risks in getting them (maybe selling while skydiving?), then here's a way to manage the manic. (*Company name withheld*) offers a 'systematic process which focuses the specialized skills and knowledge of the development team. It blends technical expertise, performance technology concepts and adult learning theory by applying a series of team building and product management protocols.'" Huh?

No, I didn't make it up. It's from a real product (or service?) announcement in a real magazine. And they want us to buy one. Just one question ... buy one *what?* I have no idea what *it* is, what *it* does, or how you or I might benefit from *it*.

This glaring example of "stuffing, not selling" reminds us to answer the "what's in it for



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me?" question before writing marketing messages. As the late Howard Cosell used to caution, "Don't obfuscate the obvious with a plethora of sophomoric verbosity. Just tell it like it is."

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### ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

"Groupware = artificial teamwork." Patrick Mulligan, Albuquerque software engineer quoted in *WebMaster* magazine.

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### THE CASE AGAINST AND FOR COLD-CALLING BY PHONE

There's a guy on the seminar circuit who shouts, with the fervor of a revival preacher, "Don't do cold phone!!" For the most part, we agree. However, a compelling case can be made for introductory phone contact under the right circumstances.

A "relevant action" taken by a company may indicate a matchup between the company and your product or service. In my business, for example, a firm's recruitment ad for inside sales staff may imply a matchup between their intentions and my services. Please note: *MAY*. Their actual intentions, and which of my services may match, are yet to be learned. The point here is that the company's newspaper appearance, it's "relevant action," differentiates this company from others and establishes a valid reason for my inquiry. Indeed, it is the *inquiry*, not the presumption of a matchup, which legitimizes the introductory call. Here's how it goes:

"Mr\Ms Prospect ... Michael Brown the *Business To Business By Phone*<sup>®</sup> guy. I'm reading with great interest your ad in the (paper) about growing your inside sales organization. I help business marketers do exactly that via advisory and training services. So this is a call of inquiry to see how well we might match up. Is

this a good time to talk with you?"

Most prospects have welcomed such calls because they are positioned as business opportunity exploration, not as an assumed sale. Usually, we engage in a substantive conversation, determine what to do next (most often a custom information fulfillment), and set a phone appointment for our second conversation. If there's no match, there still may be a referral. If we have a possible match whose time hasn't come, we know exactly when and how to stay in touch. When we do discover a good match, we can get down to business quite quickly.

*Best Advice:* "Relevant action" plus the phone-mail-phone sequence sure beats cold phone! Try it!

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### 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](http://www.michaelabrown.net)