



Michael A. Brown's

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

Third Quarter 1997 Edition

### NEW AREA CODE REMINDER

As of August 2, Redwood's area code is **650**. Our local direct voice line is (650) 364-2527. Fax is (650) 369-0250. Please amend your database accordingly. Toll-free voice remains (800) 373-3966. E-mail is michael@michaelabrown.net.

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### QUOTABLE

From Prof. Robert Silensky at the Univ. of California, "We've heard that a million monkeys banging on a million typewriters will eventually reproduce the entire works of Shakespeare. Now, thanks to the Internet, we know this is not true."

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### CALLER I.D. IN CALIFORNIA

Long-time clients and readers of this newsletter may recall the flap about Caller ID, call blocking, and *blocking* call blocking. Well, Caller ID came to California just over one year ago and according to the *San Jose \ Silicon Valley Business Journal*, the result has been "a big yawn."

Only 2 percent of RBOC Pacific Bell's 16.5 million customers have signed up for the service. Predictably, the reasons depend upon whom you talk to. Sellers of caller ID devices claim poor marketing and promotion by Pac Bell. The phone company, meanwhile, blames the California Public Utilities Commission for overly-stringent rules, overseeing its caller ID advertising, and generally acting like the regulatory agency which it is.

As always, customers decide whether something is right for them. In this case, the decision appears to be "not yet."

### AN ORDER OF INFORMATION, AND DON'T FORGET THE REAL STUFF

Some people in Silicon Valley and Washington have been predicting unlimited economic vitality based almost exclusively on the creation and movement of information. Whether the information does anything for anyone seems irrelevant.

Sure, it's possible to compile and sell every imaginable type of information, such as prospect lists. But without real products and services to promote to the businesses on the lists, where's the information's value? And even if information *does* have value, it's usually transient, not enduring ... prospect lists become outdated very quickly.

Last spring, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that sales of U.S.-based services overseas, especially information, were among the few pluses in our record negative balance of trade. However, many foreign countries still enjoyed a favorable trade position because the money they earned here selling real products surpassed the cost of the information they bought from us.

Now, the *Journal* reports surging overseas sales of U.S.-made capital goods. I think this is terrific news! Because if we rely too heavily on information production and movement to sustain economic momentum, we'll continue processing and storing the information on real products such as computers and furniture which are made elsewhere. *Best Advice: Seek balance.*

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### THOUGHTS WHILE FLYING

How did the word "syllable" get three?  
How did "monosyllabic" get five?



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### "SO WHAT?" v. "WOW!"

When companies release a new advanced product or service, there's a tendency to want to talk about all the clever, cool attributes. But caution your reps against doing so. Features recitations are called "product dumps" and they foul the conversation and damage the business process. For example, "Our new system comes with a 56k modem." "SO WHAT?"

Instead, how about selling a *targeted benefit* based on the customer's answers to your rep's probing questions: "Mr\Ms Customer, you told me you're using the web much more extensively than when we first spoke. The good news is now you can communicate and transact web business twice as fast by 56k modem!" "Wow! ... I like that!"

"Product dumps" are especially prevalent when selling to very technically-oriented customers such as engineers. Often, in the belief that "techies" do buy technical features, the sellers spout as many features as possible. But *not even "techies" buy technical features*. They buy the performance capabilities and/or the "bragging rights" earned as a result ... *the benefits* ... of the features.

*Best Advice:* Ask before telling. Learn before selling. Sell benefits first. "Wow!" out-sells "So what?" every time.

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### DIRECT MAIL FUNNY

One of the dullest, most boring pieces I have received recently is for a seminar titled "How To Design Eye-Catching Brochures."

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### PSYCHING-UP FOR RETAIL

Do you "psyche-up" before entering a retail establishment? I do. With precious few

exceptions, the 1997 retail experience is awful.

Here are some tips for dealing with the stuff that's likely to happen in the store:

- **Indifference:** walk behind the counter and strike up a conversation with the clerks about their pay and hours. They'll think you're senior management and sharpen-up.
- **Rudeness:** ask them to repeat their comments into your pocket cassette recorder so you can share them with the local radio talk-show host and TV consumer reporter.
- **Lack of knowledge:** ask to see the product instruction sheet. Then tell the clerk you forgot your eyeglasses and ask him\her to read the instructions to you.
- **Attitude:** "May you keep your job forever and never figure out why."
- **Big Attitude:** Don't try to reform the hired-help. Immediately call for the manager or owner. Or simply leave and tell 8 friends.

Monty Python's retail sketches are funny. Actual, bad retail isn't. But to avoid getting upset about it, play with their heads. Then, go back to your home or office and do your business by phone, fax, or internet.

And when you *do* experience good retail, such as Nordstrom, Mens Wearhouse, and the Disney Store, let 'em know!

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### PHONE PHUNNY

The caller asked me, "So what does your company do?" I replied, "We help business marketers do profitable **Business To Business By Phone**<sup>®</sup> via consulting and training." Three second pause, then a sigh, "Oh man, my very first day on the job and I have to call *you!*"