



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Fourth Quarter 1994 Edition

TWO TO AVOID: PREDICTIVE DIALERS, UNIVERSAL AGENTS

Predictive dialers (PDs) are specialized computers which cycle through a contact list and automatically dial customers' and prospects' phone numbers according to programmed parameters such as average call length. Hence the name "predictive."

When someone answers, the PD displays the customer record or script on the sales rep's computer screen. The sales rep then is supposed to think clearly, conduct a substantive sales conversation with zero preparation, and make a bundle of money for you by raising "productivity" and keeping your "head count" low. What nonsense!

Predictive dialers have absolutely no place in business to business applications. Indeed, if you don't like receiving calls from PDs, imagine how your customers and prospects would feel if the call comes with your company's name on it! Imagine how your sales management and sales reps would perform in an environment where the programmed technology takes precedence over customers and over clever, creative sales and marketing thought.

Some PD firms, and others, are also promoting the notion of Universal Agents; phone-based "jacks-of-all-trades" who supposedly can handle sales, marketing, customer service, product and technical support, inbound, outbound, you name it. Just one problem: no one can do it all. No one even wants to.

Please recognize that Universal Agency is neither a panacea nor, for that matter, a new idea. The reason you haven't heard much about it until recently is that it *almost never works as advertised* and it can cause you grief you don't want or need.

Best Advice: When someone tries to pitch you predictive dialers and/or Universal Agents, turn them down flat.

DON'T MISS IT!

Direct Marketing To Business. Jan. 30 - Feb. 1 at San Antonio. (800) 373-3966.

YOU'RE ON THE AIR!!

You earn your living on the phone, with your voice, your ears, and with what's between your ears. You're communicating one-to-one with your customers. So although you're "narrow-casting" rather than "broadcasting", *you're working in radio!*

Your medium is entirely audio. Your colleagues in the field may be "TV" people in the sense of their physical, visual presence. But *you* are the stars of the audio world. And you can be as good at it as you wish.

Sales reps: each and every one of your sales or service techniques depends on your verbal communication skills: listening, speech clarity, inflection, modulation, pacing. That's why I strongly recommend you practice, rehearse, tape yourself and listen to your performance. All the audio greats do it, from Mick to Madonna to Pavarotti. *Managers:* sit with your people and actually listen to, coach, and counsel their live calls. Remember, *you're "on the air."*

CONFERENCE REVIEW

Business To Business Database Marketing. 530 participants at Nashville's Opryland Hotel for the *BBDM* inaugural tell the success story. The big message: database marketing is much more than a trendy sales enhancement tactic. Rather, it is a customer relationship strategy which, done properly, alters *everything* about a business's structure, organization, and operations.

Lots of interest in creative database applications and marketing ROI, less about technology per se. Congratulations to producers



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Target Conference Corp. for a top-flight event. And thanks to all of you who attended my seminar.

SPHERICAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the previous edition of this Newsletter, I criticized "flat" organizations. The concept of the company as a *sphere* makes a lot more sense. And although it's tough to do 3-dimensional modeling on a piece of paper, I invite you to consider this vision.

Customers are at the center of the sphere and they also surround the sphere. Marketing seeks to bring the "outside" customers to the inside. Sales handles the transition. Operations such as installation, customer service, technical support, etc., care for customers once they're inside the sphere.

Each of the company's functions resides on the inside surface of the sphere, in contact with the marketplace outside and equidistant from the customers inside the sphere. Therefore, departments relate not bilaterally, but *multilaterally* in terms of how they affect customers. Organizational levels are defined by their customer interactions, not by internal hierarchy.

However, *there is no matrix management!* Managers have clear responsibility for specific functions and people. As a result, the organization isn't "flat." It's shaped like, and works like, a ball rolling quickly and smartly around the marketplace.

How can we and why should we adopt the "spherical" model? We *can* do so by orienting *every* company function to the acquisition, servicing, and retention of customers. We *should* do so because it's profitable both short- and long-term. Indeed, many of the economic and operational problems stemming from two-dimensional business models go away. Plus, the inclusive sphere environment is much more

pleasant than rigid corporate pyramids or unmanagable "flat" wastelands.

A SHORT LESSON IN 800 NUMBERS

When I was ordering our 800 number, the phone company asked if I wanted a number that's memorable or one that's easy to dial. I chose memorable. Big mistake.

800 3-REDWOOD *is* easy to remember, but some people leave off the 3 and dial elsewhere ... a Sacramento lumber yard, I think.

Worse, the numbers that make up 3-REDWOOD used to ring into a financial services firm on the east coast and before that to the Washington State Forests. I still get (and have to pay for) their calls. My favorite was from a woman who said, "I want to go camping in the woods!" I replied, "It's OK by me! Have a great time!"

Best Advice: Use the numbers. Call me at (800) 373-3966. Thanks!

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