



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Fourth Quarter 1997 Edition

QUOTABLE

From Chris Savage, of Georgia Power Company: "If you compete on price, you're at the mercy of your dumbest competitor."

THOUGHT WHILE FLYING

What's the plural of "caboose?"

TRADE SHOWS: BEST BE ON YOUR BEST BEHAVIOR

At the recent *Sales Automation Expo* in San Jose, some companies whose software enables sophisticated direct marketing were doing quite the opposite.

Their show staffs acted like carnival hawkers, inviting, enticing, and in one case, pulling passersby into their exhibits. Totally undifferentiated. Totally un-targeted. Totally *mass marketing*. Totally out of place. Marketers behaving badly.

Many trade shows remain valid and vital. But the show staff's behavior must enable and encourage positive interaction just as good direct marketing does. Specifically, booth staff must recognize why they are there, and be instructed, coached, and counseled how to perform. And just as important, they must be cautioned what *NOT* to do.

Booth staff's first obligation is to create a welcoming, interesting, and non-threatening ambiance. Second, they must engage in a cordial dialogue, *asking before telling*, to determine whether the visitor's stop at the booth was casual or purposeful. And third, they must attempt to create an "I will \ you will" arrangement with the visitor ... a mutual "next step." Absent these proper behaviors, trade shows are money pits yielding incredibly expensive, often bogus "leads."

Best Advice: Reconsider why you do trade shows. If you decide not to exhibit, the world will still keep turning and you'll be able to afford better, more focused customer acquisition processes. If you decide to exhibit, test a smaller space, and apply the savings to direct marketing. Also, put your people through our program, "*Trade Shows: How To Participate Successfully And Actually Like It.*" You'll enjoy a better ROI.

DIRECT TO THE BIG EASY

Way down yonder in New Orleans ... that's the place to be from Jan. 26-28 for the *Direct Marketing To Business* conference. Previous *DMBs* have been so good, I told the producers they have to keep inviting me because I'm coming anyway. You should, too. Call for details, (800) 373-3966.

GREAT SLOGANS, NO JIVE

Today's best corporate slogan is Lucent Technologies' "*We Make The Things That Make Communications Work.*" No "solutions" or "leading" or "world-class" hooey. Rather, the most succinct "who we are, what we do" statement in a long time.

And here's another excellent one, from Transcat\EIL of Rochester, NY: "*The Best Worldwide Source For Test, Measurement, and Calibration Instruments.*" No fluff about "customer-driven" or "state-of-the-art." Instead, a well-crafted corporate identity that grandma can understand just as well as industry insiders.

Congratulations to both companies for telling it like it is!

My tag line, *Business To Business By Phone*[®], was born at 37,000 feet while describing what I do to a delightful 83-year-old (she told me proudly) grandma. Because she "got it" immediately, I knew I had my slogan.



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THE I.S. MANAGER'S PRAYER

From Microsoft: "Grant me the strength to resist fads, the wisdom to recognize legitimate plans, and the sheer blind luck to know the difference."

GOOD SERVICE? ASK YOUR CUSTOMERS

If your company writes its own definition of good service and sets its own service standards, you will always provide good service. More accurately, you will always *believe* you are doing so.

That's why it's so important to have your *customers write their definition of good service*. Only when you meet or exceed your customers' criteria are you, in fact, providing good service.

Best Advice: Ask 'em! An ounce of customer opinion and guidance is worth a pound of Baldrige and a ton of ISO certification.

MORE MARKETING LAMPOONERY

Last summer, I wrote an article for *Direct* magazine about marketing words and phrases which are overused, meaningless, or just plain silly. Well, I must have hit a nerve! Several readers have forwarded their own "least-favorites," to which I apply tongue-in-cheek definitions:

"Drill down": term from the oil and gas industry, flung about by "macho" seminar presenters as they recite technical detail to a non-technical audience. Seldom spoken by dentists because they know people don't like it.

"Granular": the yucky stuff you find after drilling-down.

"Bandwidth": overweight musicians

Got any more? Let me know. Also, call, e-mail, or fax if you'd like a copy of the *Direct* article with more "definitions" of marketing drivel.

THE OTHER 23%

A widely-quoted stat about sales leads is that almost 1/4 of all inquiries are never fulfilled or followed-up by sales contact. To be sure, if the lack of response is due to carelessness or callousness, the vendor won't be around long. Conversely, deliberate non-response may be very wise, indeed. For example, if an inquirer is known to request and posture but never order, non-response is a creative way to avoid nuisance and expense.

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

HOLIDAY WISHES FOR YOU!

May the memories of grand holidays past glow for you again, with added sparkle from this year's happy season!