



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Fall 2004 Edition

EVER MINDFUL, EVER VIGILANT

As we approach the third year since the horrific attacks on our nation, let us keep fresh in our memories and prayers all those who died on Sept. 11, 2001 and on every day since.

Also, let us remain on guard against terror from without and paranoia and suppression of liberty from within. Lincoln said it best: "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

THE ESSENCE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Beneath the packaging and promotional copy of direct marketing and sales campaigns, invariably there glows the essence of the campaign ... the offer. Campaigns are marketers' way of saying, "This offer has value! Here is our representation of the value. Here is why you should consider it and what we want you to do to get it." Therefore, the campaign also must powerfully convey the message, "Buy this product or service! Here's how!"

But in the hubbub of crafting and running campaigns, marketers and sales people sometimes lose focus: they miss the essence, weaken or omit the call to action, and deviate instead to the artifacts of the campaign. Prime example: "We recently sent you a mailing with a promotional offer. Did you receive it?" But it's not about the mailing! The mailing is the artifact! Asking about the artifact deviates from the essence of the campaign. The likely result: no sale. Much better: sell the offer!

Another example: "I'd like to speak with you about the white paper we sent recently regarding network security." Much better: "I'd like to speak with you about computer network security risks and two new approaches for avoiding them."

Best Advice: Review each and every campaign with your callers to assure they can identify its essence. Actually inspect and "dissect" the campaign materials prospects and customers received! Then write or rewrite the campaign call guide to emphasize and sell the offer. In conversations with prospects and customers, make the offer the centerpiece of the dialogue. And overtly ask the customer for the next-step commitment or the order!

Sidebar: If your prospect or customer responded to the campaign mainly to receive the free keychain or bobble-head or t-shirt, confirm they got it, and then redirect the dialogue to the value of the offer.

STATES OF BEING v. STATES OF DOING

Do not say: "Would you be interested if I told you ..."
Do say: "What are you doing and considering in the realm of ..."

Do not say: "What features would you want to have?"
Do say: "What would this sort of product need to do and provide to make it viable for you? Make it your first choice?"

Do not say: "One year of maintenance is included."
Do say: "You get a full year to enjoy it and not pay a dime for maintenance."

Best Advice: States of being bore. States of doing sell!

OUTSOURCING'S GREAT CHALLENGE

The "holy grail" of conducting in-depth phone calls on behalf of any organization is to understand and communicate the organization's "soul." And in my opinion you cannot outsource your soul. Only direct members of your organization can claim ownership and soulful understanding of your business message. The voices on the phone *represent* your company's soul, but not even the best service bureaus



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can *replicate* your soul. Yet outsourcing may be entirely valid for your purposes. What to do?

Best Advice: Go to your service bureau and educate them. Teach them what you want them to say that is unique to your company. Train them how to say it and make them practice until it sounds right. Product training is secondary. And then listen to them. Do not default these matters to the service bureau's management or staff. Do these things live and in-person yourself but not alone! Call me for guidance and assistance. **800 373-3966**

BUT ON THE OTHER HAND ...

Some within an organization are so close to the "soul" that they can't speak of anything else. They embellish their marketing and sales communication with the company's "internal glories" at the expense of customer focus. Example: "Mr\Ms Customer, here at Incredibly Superlative Industries we pride ourselves on ... " If you hear such, act quickly and decisively to refocus the rep on the customer "you gets."

ON CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Three recently published quotes merit analysis and comment:

"Feedback is for wimps." Feedback from customers is valuable when it is integral to the marketing-sales-service continuum. It has little or no value when it is solicited but then rejected because it doesn't ring with praise. Worse, if there is no *intention* to ask for customer comments, or take them seriously, or do anything about them, it is easier to say "wimps" than to admit the distressing truth. Ask your service people and your C-levels to react to this quote.

"The customer comes second. Employees come first." If employees are overloaded and/or treated poorly by management, how can they be expected to sparkle in their interactions with customers? This dichotomy is troubling some

organizations. For example, a well-known software firm recently laid off 25% of their technical support staff. The "survivors" are under pressure to shorten their calls while still delighting customers. It's not working. Customers and technicians alike are quitting. Net: if employees are sacrificed or abused, customers cannot win either.

"Some customers aren't worth having. Fire them." Although it tears at the emotions of customer-conscious business people, sometimes it is right and proper to sever a relationship. To help determine if the time has come, ask and answer these questions:

- Does the value this customer receives equal or exceed the price they are paying? Do they agree?
- Do the earnings from this customer exceed, by enough, the cost of doing business with them? Even if not, can you afford to lose them?
- Are you experiencing constant price and terms negotiations, customer obstinacy, muddled communications, late payments, disrespect for your employees, or similar issues?

After these clarifications, try once again to work things out. Then if you decide to "pull the plug," do it with grace and dignity, executive-to-executive. Then, rejoice and find a new, better customer!

I RECOMMEND

A new business-to-business marketing event is coming soon and it's going to be a good one!

The **Business To Business Lead Generation Summit** sparkles in October in Washington, DC and in November near San Francisco. If you are at all involved in acquiring, identifying, qualifying and developing sales leads, you need to be here! www.michaelabrown.net, click on *I recommend*

Be sure to vote on November 2!