



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

First Quarter 1999 Edition

SERVICE BUREAUS RESPOND TO "THE BLOOM IS OFF THE ROSE"

The article about the for-hire phone business in the Q4, 1998 edition of this newsletter provoked these responses from 2 service bureaus:

Laura McGuire, President of Saligent, Colorado Springs, writes, "A tightly woven, mutually-committed partnership between client and provider is required to deploy ever more complex marketing programs. Clients and service providers alike are under extreme pressure to take full advantage of and master the tools that are now in our marketing arsenal BEFORE the competition does. Reputable and expert service providers DO exist and DO have extraordinary impact supporting their clients, especially when the commitment and vision are mutual."

From Mike Wallen, President of DMG in Austin, "You really hit a hot button of mine. It is extremely important to me that what I sell is what we actually deliver. I am constantly running into client-side folks that have been burned by service bureaus and (having to) convince them that we are different makes me loathe the companies that have over-promised and under-delivered."

Big thanks to Laura and Mike! Both run honest, well-performing companies. (I didn't hear from the other kind.)

SPALDING DEFEATS HIGH TECH AT BRANDING BASKETBALL

Want to shoot some hoops? Attend a technology trade show!

For some reason, possibly lemming-itis, a number of high tech marketers set up half-courts right on the exhibit floor. Sink a free throw or two, and win a shirt or hat with their logo. Oops, excuse me ... their *brand*.

I have now seen these basketball gimmicks at Comdex, the Sales Automation Expo, and the Austin

technology show. But I honestly cannot recall the brands or products of *any* of the technology companies sponsoring the basketball games! However, I can distinctly recall the brand of the basketball itself: Spalding. That's because Spalding has spent many years making and selling good equipment ... it's a *genuine sports brand!*

The high tech firms running the basketball games also may be well known. Certainly, they *want* to be well known. But their brand, if any, got lost somewhere around the free throw stripe. Even if they had put their logo on the ball, I'm not sure it would have made much difference. I don't think high tech can create brand recognition or equity in the sports category. For example, 3Com Park always will be Candlestick to lots of us.

Best Advice: Decide if you really want your marketing medium, even if it's a basketball, to carry someone else's name. Please don't confuse sponsorship or advertising with brand. (Indeed, did you watch corn chips or football during bowl games? And how many blimps have you bought?) Above all, excel in your own category and make sure you market your own stuff right!

INVESTMENTS IN TRAINING

Sales & Marketing Management magazine reports that "top level sales people spend 29.6 days a year honing sales skills and product knowledge. New reps, 73.4 days." How about yours?

BEWARE THE ELEVATOR SHAFT!

I phoned a call center manager in Houston, on a direct referral from her VP. The manager told me it was a convenient time to talk and I asked my first question about an issue her VP had mentioned. But instead of answering, she said, "Just give me your elevator pitch." I was tempted to tell her that I don't sell elevators, but discretion and courtesy demanded otherwise.

I asked her a second question: "What do you



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want to hear?" She replied, "I don't know. You called me. So give me your elevator pitch." I said, "Instead of a pitch, might we have a conversation to discover whether and how we match up?" She said "No" and hung up. Better to hear that now than later! I'll try again next quarter and let you know what happens.

Best Advice: If you work for Otis, develop a good elevator pitch. If you work anywhere else, recognize that elevator pitches are random acts of marketing: without focus, merit, or value. And usually without payout. Don't fall into the elevator shaft.

PITCHING TO THE "DESIGNATED HITTER"

In baseball, the DH only bats. Never fields. In business, the DH only talks. Never buys. In fact, *CAN'T* buy. The DH may decide, but can't act. May negotiate business, but can't consummate it. Some DHs *don't even know what they're not authorized to do* until, with every good intention, they run afoul of the "ground rules."

The DH is questionable in baseball. In business, the DH is frustrating, but doesn't have to "stop your show." Here are some helpful questions to ask the DH and advance the buying\selling process:

- *"If you like what you see and hear from me, what happens next?"* Reveals the process and usually the participants.
- *"The last few times you've presented this type of proposal or project, what happened?"* Reveals the DH's won-lost record and helps you assess the likelihood this time.
- *"As you go forward with this proposal or project, who will support you? Who will oppose you?"* Reveals the political climate and the DH's standing with others.

- *"On a scale of 11, with 11 the highest, how confident are you that we can make this happen?"* Truth or dare time.

BUSINESS MARKETING CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO, MAY 16-18

This one, at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare, promises to be really special! New session formats mean you gain greater flexibility in customizing your experience. For example, you can mix and match full-day, half-day, and 75-minute sessions to create a program expressly for you and your company.

Plus, you'll enjoy some cool, provocative, fun sessions such as "point-counterpoint" with experts "debating" and audience participation. Also, the Sunday-start means you fly in on Saturday and save a bundle on air fare.

Check it out on-line at **the-bmc.com**. Or call me for details, **800 373-3966**. I'll be there. You should be, too!

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

www.michaelabrown.net 800 373-3966