



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 2004 Edition

LOTS OF REACTIONS TO "OFFSHORING"

Wow! I have been publishing this newsletter since 1988, but never has an article provoked as much response as *The Offshoring Thing* in the previous edition. Here's what five of you had to say ...

- Thanks Michael, for taking the personal and courageous stand against aiding and abetting outsourcing of phone-services jobs.
- What really irks me about offshoring is that some of its biggest promoters are hypocritical CEOs who, out of the other side of their mouths, are all rah-rah USA and patriotism.
- You're standing in front of a moving train, Michael.
- The backlash is well underway! 17 states either have or are working on laws to prevent state contracts from being performed by overseas workers.
- Did you see the news story about (HP CEO) Carly Fiorina saying that Americans don't have a right to jobs? Somebody ought to offshore *her!*

THE PREMISE FOR MARKETING BY PHONE

If your company is conducting lead generation and qualification by phone, make 100% certain that every one of your callers is 100% clear about the business premise: their charter is to locate and develop viable opportunities.

It is NOT to conduct a satisfaction survey about what your prospects use now. It is NEVER "just gathering information" or "just touching base."

Your callers are ... or need to be ... making legitimate business inquiries and explorations. Their objective is to find out, by asking, what prospects are doing and/or considering that might make what you sell viable and desirable. Reinforce this concept often: it keeps reps focused and making better calls.

HOW MANY CALLS WOULD A PROSPECT TAKE IF A PROSPECT WOULD TAKE CALLS?

One? Two? Six? Zero? It depends, of course, on how well you conduct the first call and how well you sell the value of the next. That written, my experience says that three calls usually is the limit.

- First call: introduction, reason why a conversation is merited, and preliminary exploration of a possible fit. Most common next step: information fulfillment, web site visit, or product sample/trial.
- Second call: reactions to the fulfillment. Broader discussion of product applicability and of the process for further consideration. Also, qualify and determine the likelihood of funding. Next step: drum-up support.
- Third call: no-go, let's go, or not yet. If no-go, bow out gracefully. If let's go, either sell the product or pass the opportunity to people who can. If not yet, ask the prospect when and how (in which media) he/she wants you to stay in touch.

EARLY CHALLENGES v. LATER OBJECTIONS

Even when your callers do a great job selling the value of having a conversation, prospects and customers often remain skeptical. They believe it may be worthwhile to talk, but they want re-validation that they will not be wasting their time. So they raise "early challenges."

Early challenges are different from specific buying objections that typically come up later. Early challenges represent your prospect's unspoken question, "Is your product, service, and/or business proposition actually in the realm of possibility for me and my company?"

Best Advice: Train and direct your callers NOT to start "pitching" when they hear an early challenge. Neither should they roll out the outdated



Michael A. Brown's

Business To Business By Phone[®]

Second Quarter 2004 Edition

and patronizing “feel, felt, found” retort. Rather, I recommend these responses:

- *No interest, no need, or we're fine with what we have.* What do you predict three months, six months from now? When do you expect that (category) might come up for consideration? How about (another category)?
- *How much does it cost?* So far this year the smallest installation was \$n, the biggest was \$N. How would that range work for you and your company?
- *No budget, no money.* May I ask, how significant is (category) for you and your company? How are you going to address it?
- *We're a (competitor) shop.* As are many of our customers. Can we talk about (category) and see how we might match up?
- *Just send me something.* I'll be delighted! Once we have this preliminary conversation, we'll know exactly what would be best to look at.
- *I don't know anything about your company.* That's OK. If (product or service) does what you need and want, how willing might you be to consider \ learn about us?
- *You're too late ... we bought from your competitor.* Thank you for telling me. How might we earn your consideration in other categories?

WHEN GOOD CUSTOMERS WON'T TALK TO YOU ANY MORE

So you sold the product and it works great. Your customer is happy and so is their company. Only one problem: they have become un-reachable and non-responsive. How come? Well, perhaps ...

- They like the product or service, but don't like you and/or the selling and buying process. They bought despite, not because of, those things.
- Now that they own your product or have experienced your service, they believe they have everything “buttoned-up” ... that they have acquired permanent capability and absolute wisdom.
- You scare them. You do and say things they know

are correct, but that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened when said within their own organization. Or you uncovered “skeletons in their closet.”

- Management changed and the new bosses have different priorities and alliances.

Best Advice: To find out what happened, and whether there is an opportunity to re-engage, craft and send a personal letter, hand-written and hand-addressed with a fountain pen. Begin with a quick recap of your most recent communication, and lament that the communication has stopped. Tell them you have been paying attention to their company and offer evidence such as quotes from their press releases or news stories about them. Do not pitch anything or offer “please come back” discounts. Ask whether, and under what circumstances, it would be OK to renew the dialogue. Encourage them to respond with an e-mail message or a phone call. And finish with a PS: “I value your business and respect your opinions. I will communicate with you - or not - your choice. Please let me know.” Put a stamp on the envelope; do not meter it.

If they respond, you will have a mutual path forward. If not, do as the Beatles sang ... “let it be.” And move on.

A LITTLE HOMEWORK BEATS “TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS”

Nowadays, un-researched calls are unwelcome calls. So don't merely *allow* your callers to prepare, *insist* that they do!

- Use all your databases
- Visit prospects' web sites. It takes only 30 seconds to find out what the company does, what's at the site, what's not there, and what site visitors can and cannot do there.
- Subscribe to e-mail news services about your market segments and target companies
- Read the newspapers and your trade press