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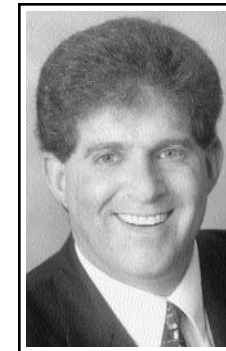
BREAKING UP SHOULDN'T BE HARD TO DO

I lost a customer the other day.

Eventually, it happens to everyone in a service business that is a vendor to another company. In 23 years of writing and designing newsletters I've

lost a few customers, nearly all of them because they've either discontinued the publication or taken it in-house. That's just the way it is, and as small business people we accept it.

The first time it happened was in January 1992. My customer took me to a nice restaurant, where she told me that she loved my work and enjoyed doing business with me, but the budget had been cut and the newsletter had been eliminated. She thanked me several times and told me she had taken me to lunch because



JEFF RUBIN

she didn't want to give me the news over the phone or in a letter.

Classy lady.

The other day, though, was not so classy. I never heard from my customer, despite leaving several voice mails, a few messages with her assistant, and sending a handwritten note. I found out through a third party that this organization had published a newsletter without my services for the first time since they hired me in 1997.

Now, I have no problem with a customer making a change. That's their option. It's the way these changes are made that troubles me.

I draw a parallel to my dating life, which was pretty extensive, since I didn't marry until I was 48. When you date you subject yourself to all kinds of rejection, which in retrospect, is pretty good training for being in your own business. This ran the gamut from unreturned phone calls to lame excuses ("I've been really busy") to the three dreaded words every suitor hates to hear, "Let's be friends."

> **Inside**



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