

Telemarketing: It's alive!

Want to know how to make a quick \$500? Squeal on a telemarketer, that's how. Entice a phone solicitor to call you and, in the process, break one of the many anti-telemarketing laws that are popping up, and — WHAM!!! — hit 'em with a lawsuit and collect your blood money.

A company in Utah will tell you how to do it. It will provide you with step-by-step instructions — just send a check or money order for \$14.95.

There are snares aplenty for today's telemarketers, including the increasing number of state laws restricting phone sales. Those state laws, combined with a federal law requiring companies to maintain a list of "no-call" consumers, might make you wonder if telemarketing is dying. Is it yesterday's way to make a sale? Tired? On its way out?

It really works

Telephone solicitation — as much as some of us don't like it — is thriving and remains a vital tool for the Green Industry, especially for professional lawn care companies. In fact, I'd bet that the telephone has been responsible for more lawn care sales than all other sales tools combined. And it's still being used effectively.

For example, Joe Campanella and his partner, Tom Kelly, have had great success with telemarketing in building up Lawn Dawg, their four-year-old lawn care company based in Nashua, NH. They saw telemarketing as an excellent way to build their customer base, and they were right. They now have operations in Albany, NY, Woburn, MA, and Portland, ME.

For telemarketing to succeed, says Campanella, you need to plan and organize a campaign way ahead of time. He starts putting together Lawn Dawg's marketing plan months before the winter selling season begins.

As Joe sees it (and not everyone's going to agree), it's not the phone calls that give telemarketing a bad

rap, it's telemarketers. Most are too aggressive, and when they try to sell on the first call, the person on the other end of the phone starts looking for a way out.

"The soft sell approach works best," says Campanella. "You have to make that first contact quick and friendly. The person is not expecting your call and it may be an inconvenience. The homeowner is generally relieved if you get to the point right away."

Not for everyone

Is that to say that telemarketing is for everybody who wants to grow their business in a big hurry? No way.

"Telemarketing is not fun," admits Campanella.

And there are other valid reasons that phone solicitation may not be for you, the most obvious being that many of you get all the business you want without telemarketing. That's great. You've developed systems to keep a large percentage of your customers, and you can attract enough new customers to continue growing without telephone canvassing.

But have you considered calling a customer and offering an add-on service like a grub treatment or a renovation? You may call it "upselling," but it is telemarketing.

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