

CHRIS'LL DEAL WITH IT

episode notes



EP 19 - Shaming A Suspicious Solicitor



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Last month, while working from HQ, I spotted a solicitor dropping flyers off through my neighborhood. On this episode, I share this odd story and strategies you can use to better identify red flags around suspicious sales tactics to protect yourself and your neighbors. And if you're a local business looking to drum up business door-to-door, heed the warnings within!

The Solicitor



Marv from Home Alone - close approximation of our suspicious solicitor

NOTE: On this episode I edited out any reference to the company or specific service - this isn't intended to be a hit piece on this specific solicitor.

1. Soliciting Is Suspicious

- **Soliciting = To approach with a request or a plea**
- Door to door soliciting may be against local town ordinances - check before you start distributing flyers or knocking on doors!
- It's become more difficult in modern culture to get right up on someone's property, introduce yourself face-to-face, and expect them to become a customer.
 - People have a wide variety of comfort regarding personal space, hygienic comfort (COVID), and the sanctity of their property.
- By going door to door you are TRESPASSING!
- The only people who should put things in or take something out of someone's mailbox are the mailbox owner(s) and postal employees. It is illegal to put anything

other than mail in a mailbox. It's also illegal for a non-postal employee to place something in someone's mailbox.

- Soliciting is way more rampant digitally too
 - The cost and physical barriers to spamming are significantly reduced.
 - Anytime I get a connection invite on LinkedIn, and IMMEDIATELY get a pitch via direct message - that person's blocked and I'll never do business with their company.
 - I do business with people I know - or at the VERY least with those who take the time & effort to get to know me and/or my business.
 - I have the expectation that someone trying to sell me something puts in the work to customize their pitch to my needs and/or situation.
 - I urge you to not settle for services that market like this: It just perpetuates the behavior and lowers our expectations of service.
- My advice here is simple: **DONT SPAM PEOPLE!**

2. Inspect Sales Collateral

- While the flyer I got had its weird elements - anytime a company hands you something mildly relevant or interesting, do a bit of homework to eliminate any red flags:
 - Are they asking for any sensitive or personal information?
 - Are they registered to do business in your state?
 - Go to the website for your state's Department of State or Secretary of State. They'll have a business registry lookup service.
 - Make sure it's a .gov website and not some other service.
 - Check when they were registered, does the information match the sales collateral you were given?
 - For my Suspicious Solicitor, the business name on the business card was listed as an LLC, and that same business name was NOT registered with the state of New Jersey. A similar one was. Now this might just be stupidity or ignorance: But if you've gone through all the effort to open a business

(and trust me, it's an effort) - why use a different name on the card AND a different name & logo on the crappy flyers/quotation

- Do they have a website that lists a physical address?
 - Is that address on Google Maps & associated with the business?
 - If they only have a Facebook Page, it's a
- Do they have proper licensing & insurance for the products/services being offered?
- You're looking for consistency in how they handle their business.
 - In this case, I was being asked to trust someone to do work on my property. I've worked too hard to open myself to unknown liability because of a poorly managed business.
- If anything is out of the ordinary with those questions - then avoid them!
- **AND DONT INFRINGE ON TRADEMARKS!**

3. Notify Authorities (if necessary)

- In my case with this flyer, I punched in the company name and another company showed up
- I called that company and they told me they don't do business in my county at all
- Turns out my solicitor was utilizing a business name similar to their trademark - this business followed up promptly with information related to the solicitor trying to use their name to drum up business for their own LLC
- Due to the bizarre flyer and "Marv" like tendencies... I went so far as to call our local police department... worried that this guy was actually scoping out the neighborhood under false pretenses.
- They took a photo of the flyer, description of Marv. They informed me soliciting was against town ordinances, and would keep an eye out... although there's little they could do.

4. Remain Cautious

- I double-checked my home security setup

- I let my neighbors know to ignore the shady flyers and what I learned about the situation
 - Did you listen to my recent Blizzard Wizard episode on the importance of connecting with your neighbors?
- If you're looking for contractors or home services, never use a solicitor.
 - Seek out bona fide recommendations from friends or family in the area
 - Search and seek out registered companies and contact them
 - If you're doing something for the first time: Be sure to get multiple quotes!
 - Not only will you level-set the market, you'll get different perspectives & be able to separate the trustable from the suspicious
 - Contractors will sometimes intentionally price something high because they don't want the work... but will gladly do it if someone's foolish enough to pay the crazy rate for it!
- This means if you're a local service business - focus on growth with positive client outcomes & word of mouth rather than canvassing like a fisherman.
 - For example: This could take the form of a referral rebate or future discounts. Have a method to inform customers, track their referrals, and most importantly: a mechanism to thank them for helping your business!

Episode 19 Quote:

From Derek Sivers' book *Your Music And People*

People send business to people they like: Even if it starts professional, get personal as soon as possible. Be a friend. That's how things are done.