



Postal service rule target in junk mail fight

ACCORDING to the Postal Service's own figures, it delivers 1.9 billion pounds of unwanted mail annually in the U.S. This figure is based on a study of recipients who indicated that 25.6 percent of third class bulk mail was either objectionable or uninteresting.

As I learn more in my "Less Is Better" campaign against junk mail, I suspect these figures are low. The Direct Marketing Association suggests that direct mail advertising produces an average of two-to-three percent return, hence I wonder if at least 75 percent (or over 5.6 billion pounds annually) of bulk mail is unwanted useless refuse. Of course, none of us wants to bury this waste in our own back yard, to breathe the smoke from its incineration, nor to cut down enough trees to support this "habit."

I respect the fact that many people, including me, do enjoy certain items, like catalogs, and that bulk mail provides many jobs and important services. I believe any legitimate business has a right to advertise and every person has a right to receive

mail they enjoy. Advertisers do not have the right, however, to harass individuals, produce mind boggling unnecessary waste or destroy the environment in the process.

RESPONSIBLE advertising is the answer. With radio, TV or newspaper advertising, private citizens do have some recourse: They can drop subscriptions or turn off the noise. There's no way to stop the incessant deliveries to your mailbox, however, nor to avoid the physical act of disposing of the unwanted stuff. If we could eliminate 25 percent of bulk mail and recycle the rest, individuals would benefit without time consuming irritants and we could make a giant leap toward cleaning up our environment.

I propose, therefore, that the Postal Service be convinced to change its rule so that bulk mail can be returned at the sender's expense. That way, those who want advertising could keep it, while unwanted mail could be returned.

Since getting advertisers to remove names from their lists is sometimes a problem now, the double expense of paying for returned adver-



organizing
Dorothy Lehmkuhl

tising would surely force irresponsible mailers to maintain their lists more selectively. Errors could be made for mailings required by law.

The Rate Commission Office in Washington told me that changing this rule is a feasible idea, although it would necessitate increased bulk mailing fees.

CURRENTLY, WHEN third class bulk mail is given back, the Post Office throws it away. Postal patrons can have first class mail returned to the sender — this service is included in the first class postage rate and is not abused by the average citizen.

I believe that after an initial transition period, the same would hold true for bulk mail. Why should first class mailers be forced to pay for this service, while third class ped-

diers avoid this responsibility? While this might send a shock wave through the advertising industry at first (and would no doubt be vigor-

ously fought by them) it seems the net result would be less, but better targeted, bulk mail.

A famous person once said, "I wondered why somebody didn't do something, and then I realized I am somebody." If you are unhappy about junk mail, what can you do?

1. Make an effort to have your name removed from undesired mailing list. Many will happily remove your name on your first request.
2. Return unwanted first class ad-

vertising by marking it "Unsolicited - Return to Sender" (A rubber stamp would be handy).

3. Return postage paid cards that drop out of magazines with a request to stop sending unattached cards.

4. Support this campaign by returning the section below. If the response is great enough, I will petition the Postal Rates commission to act as an intervenor at its next hearing in Washington, D.C. to deliver your message.

condo queries
Robert M. Melsner

Q. Are local code restrictions regarding the number of individuals that can occupy a specific type of a unit enforceable? We are wondering if this is a way around family status restrictions of the new Federal Statute regarding housing.

A. You are, no doubt, referring to the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988. The act states that it does not limit the applicability of any reasonable local, state or federal restrictions regarding the maximum number of occupants permitted to occupy a dwelling. Therefore, local restrictions can be applied without committing a violation of the act. Of course, if you attempt to operate a subletting in a vested attempt to circumvent the protection of the Fair Housing Act as it relates to family status, you will not be successful.

Q. I am a landlord that has certain handicapped persons living at the project. I am wondering whether the handicapped person can require me to make reasonable modifications to the common area portions of an apartment complex.

A. In the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, the new act provides that it is unlawful to refuse to permit, at the expense of the handicapped person, reasonable modification of existing premises if the proposed modifications are necessary to afford the handicapped person the full enjoyment of the premises. The act defines the word "premises" as the interior or exterior spaces, parts, components or elements of the building, including individual units in the public and common use areas in the building.

Therefore, the act requires that a landlord make reasonable modifications to the public and common use areas of the building as well as to the interior, but, at the expense of the handicapped person. The handicapped person, however, does not have to restore the common areas back to their original condition. The obligation to restore is restricted to the interior of the tenant's unit.

Check warranty

You are ready to buy a home. The one you found is just what you've been looking for. The location is great, the home is only a few years old and the owners have kept it in top condition.

The price is right, you have the down payment and the mortgage company just called to approve the financing. You're ready to close — or are you?

Before you sign the papers, there's another important item to check. Does the home have a warranty, and if so, does this warranty transfer?

"If the warranty program is Home Owners Warranty (HOW), the unexpired portion of the builder's warranty/insurance protection package will automatically transfer to the new owner," said Gerald Kosmenschky, president of the Southern Michigan Home Owners Warranty Council.

"HOW provides many significant benefits to protect the home buyer."

HOW BUILDERS insure their work product against major structural defects for 10 years from the original warranty date. The builders warranty protects against defects in the wiring, plumbing, heating, cooling, ventilating and mechanical systems for two years. Under the first year of the warranty, faulty workmanship and materials are covered.

Not all builders can participate in the program.

"HOW carefully screens its builder members," Kosmenschky said. "Only those with high construction standards, good business practices and positive customer relations policies are eligible for membership."

HOW is the only new home warranty and insurance program endorsed by the National Association of Home Builders. It currently has more than 12,500 builder members and more than 2 million homes enrolled nationwide.

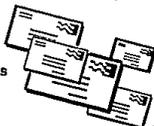
YES, I SUPPORT "LESS IS BETTER!"

1. I receive too much junk mail: Yes ___ No ___
2. The advertising that irritates me most is: _____
3. I do enjoy receiving: _____
4. I have tried getting off mailing lists: It did ___ did not ___ work. To get off mailing lists I wrote: _____
5. The advertisers who bother me most are: _____
6. I have these constructive ideas for solving the junk mail problem: (Use separate paper)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip _____

Send your replies to:

Less Is Better
Organizing Techniques
P.O. Box 330
Franklin, MI 48025



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