

Creative Living

Mario McGee editor/591-2300

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[O]TE

organizing
Dorothy
Lehmkuhl

Q. I have two questions: Why did you start your "Less is Better" campaign against excessive bulk mail, when intrusive telephone sales calls are so much more irritating? Also, what can be done about telephone bullies?

A. Several people have asked me the same questions. I became interested in the bulk mail problem in the early '80s when I began teaching my time management and organizing seminars. Since the beginning, every time I mention mail handling — especially junk mail — the feedback from my audiences is loud and clear: They growl, mumble, roll their eyes — anything to convey they consider junk mail a royal pain in the neck. Although I teach 12 to 15 hours of material, this is the only time within my seminars that I receive such a strong reaction. Despite the positive effects touted by advertisers, my audiences have confirmed my belief that bulk mail is a very real irritant to many, many people.

Yes, I too consider invasive telephone marketing calls an even greater irritant. I chose not to address that issue for two reasons: 1) I wanted to focus on one specific problem without diluting it into two entirely different areas. (That is also why I did not address radio, TV or newspaper advertising, as a few others have questioned.) 2) Other people are working on the telemarketing problem. For instance, the National Association of Attorneys General, along with the telephone companies, are supporting the Federal Trade Commission to control these calls.

According to the FTC, consumers lose \$1 billion annually from deceptive peddling of goods and services over the phone. Besides just hanging up, about the only thing you can do with unwanted calls is to say, "Sorry, I'm not interested. Please remove my name from your calling list." Here are some tips to protect yourself against fraudulent calls:

1. Ask the caller's name along with the name, address and telephone number of the firm calling. 2. Be extremely cautious about giving your credit card number over the phone. 3. If you want more information, ask to have it mailed to you. If the caller resists or insists on immediate action, be suspicious. 4. Be wary of offers for free merchandise or prizes. Handling fees may be higher than the value of the stuff. 5. Ask for names and numbers of satisfied customers in your area or check with your state or local consumer protection office if you have doubts.

To receive Dorothy Lehmkuhl's booklet of 36 Hot Tips — Organizing for Success, send a self-addressed envelope with 45 postage and a \$2 check to Organizing Techniques, 6165 Worthington, Birmingham, MI 48010.

condo queries
Robert M.
Meisner

Q. A friend of mine was recently attacked in a fast food store and was wondering whether or not he can sue the owner of the establishment. I'm wondering if you could give me any advice concerning the law in this subject.

A. Michigan courts have recently confirmed the proposition that the owner of a commercial establishment is not an insurer of the safety of the occupants of the establishment, particularly with respect to criminal acts or conduct of patrons. Obviously, the owner of a commercial establishment has some reasonable duty to maintain safe premises in regard to those things which are freely reasonable, including keeping the floors free from debris, etc. On the other hand, the owner of a commercial establishment is not liable, in general, for an armed robbery or an assault perpetrated on a patron, unless the owner had notice of the fact that this would likely occur.

Q. The wife of my next door neighbor insists on hanging her undergarments outside of her condominium unit overnight. I think she tends to be an exhibitionist, and her husband does not seem to care. The condo association board is not willing to get involved being comprised of five men. What can I do about the situation?

A. There is generally a prohibition on the hanging or the drying of personal property and/or clothes on the common elements in most condo documents. And if that provision is not contained in your documents, you should request the board of directors to seek an amendment of your documents and/or promulgate the rules and regulations concerning the same. To the extent that your board is unwilling to take any action, you may wish to write a letter to your neighbor requesting her to keep her personal attire to herself, and that you believe that it diminishes the quality of the condominium. I would not necessarily recommend, however, that you avail yourself of self-help.

New cornstarch usage could aid farmers

weeder's guide

Earl
Aronson

The corn surplus is estimated at 137 million tons, not counting the 1987 crop. About 3,000 pounds of corn are used to make a ton of cornstarch, says William M. Doane of USDA's Research Center in Peoria, Ill.

Wing says that an encapsulated pesticide could mean less pollution of ground water, lakes and streams because it would be less subject to being washed into streams or leached deep into the ground by rain than are pesticides sold as liquid or solid concentrations.

According to Doane, starch-based processes from USDA research will lead also to biodegradable plastic mulches and soil stabilizers to stop erosion.

"By inventing new processes for starch — a commodity that sells for about 10 cents per pound — we're endeavoring to add value to it and perhaps improve farming efficiency," he says.

Doane adds that a 1974 invention, "super slurper," a starch derivative that absorbs 1,400 times its weight in moisture, is still finding new uses.

"AS A COATING FOR seeds, super slurper absorbs water and increases the number of seeds that germinate. That helps farmers and

gardeners," he says.

Super slurper is currently used in body powder, diapers, sanitary napkins, electrical conductors in batteries, and medical and recreational cold packs. It is also used in filters for removing moisture from industrial fuel tanks and in a slurry to prevent roots of small transplanted trees from drying.

Chemists in Doane's Plant Polymer Research group are developing starch-based soil stabilizers to prevent the erosion of topsoil by wind and water. He says the stabilizers

bind sand, silt and clay into larger granules that improve soil's ability to resist erosion and absorb rainwater.

Doane expects that highway departments and construction contractors will use the new starch-based soil stabilizers before they become commonplace on farms. They can speed the establishment of soil-bugging grasses.

(Earl Aronson is the Associated Press garden writer.)

'If a pesticide is encapsulated in starch, farmers or gardeners could apply less of the pest-killing chemical.'

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READERS ASK:

By Andy Lang
special writer

Q. I plan to finish my attic soon. I intended to use gypsum board for the walls, since I had heard it was cheaper than most other wall materials. I now have been told I should use plasterboard instead. Is that information correct?

A. There may have been a slight difference in plasterboard and gypsum board many years ago, but the terms have meant the same thing for a long time. If you have never used gypsum board in the past — and your query indicates this is so — be sure to have your dealer supply you with a brochure on how to handle the material.

Q. We have a large stain on our living room floor, which is made of oak. We don't know how it got there, but we have tried all of the usual methods without being able to remove it. Is there some drastic treatment that might work with an especially difficult stain?

A. You probably will have to use wood bleach. Use it very carefully to avoid discoloring the wood that is not stained. Wear rubber gloves when applying the bleach with a damp cloth. Let the bleach stand for a few minutes, then wipe with a damp cloth which has no bleach on it. You will have to refinish the area to blend in with the other surface. Sometimes this means wiping on a finish more than once until you get a reasonably good match.

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