

The evil, deceptive telephone solicitor

Being in business is interesting; you get a lot of cold-calls from salespeople trying to find ways to suck away a portion of whatever's left over after you pay rent, taxes, health care, freight, industry fees, advertising, charitable contributions... the list goes on.

20 minutes ago I'm told someone's calling from "[Money Man 4Cash](#)", telling one of my staff that they called yesterday and I told them to call back today.

Nobody called yesterday. It was a cold-call tactic to try and get past normal screening procedures to speak to someone in charge of the money. I don't fault my staff for letting the call through; they told me it sounded funny, but as tactics go, telling someone that you're returning a call from so-and-so is probably the best shot at getting past the iron gate to the owner. So I took the call, knowing full well that it was a fraud (since I didn't speak to any such person yesterday), let her speak her pitch briefly before interrupting her and asking why she lied to my staff and told her I asked they call back today. She said I did, at which point I told her that's a poor way to do business, thanked her for calling and hung up.

It's very sad to think that people have to make a living that way. She may have that job because she's got kids to feed and it was the only thing available. I wanted to ask her why she would allow herself to have to stoop so low, to have to be so dishonest in search of a dollar, but, how would I respond if she answered honestly? What could I say if it were (as likely could be) the case that she's desperate, and would I rather have her begging on the streets? Still, what her employer is doing cannot help but demean her sense of self-worth and the fact that what little commission she does make comes from lying is teaching her a lesson that does not favor a desirable outcome.

When I started writing this I was feeling righteously indignant. But now I'm conflicted; I'm seeing the other side of the equation and the pain that comes with economic displacement. I treated the situation with the respect it deserved, but not the person. Not at all unlike the frustration one feels when dealing with an overseas call center for an issue with your DSL or cable modem connection, and you get someone whose grasp of the subtleties of English is questionable and cannot deviate from the script. It's not their fault that they were hired by someone not willing to pay the expense to properly train people for the task at hand. Someone at a call center in India is deserving of just as much respect as someone trying to help you in Chicago. The company behind them... that's a different story entirely. --Mike--