

Brent
POPE

Just say no, OK?

Telemarketers must be stopped

The other night I answered the phone and heard these words: "Hello! Mr. Pope?"

Right away I knew something was fishy. When someone calls me "Mr." I know the caller is either:

A. A military recruiter asking what I'm doing with my life and if I would like the chance to get shot at.

B. Someone trying to reach my dad, who actually answers to "Mr. Pope."

C. One of my friends impersonating a telemarketer.

D. AN ACTUAL TELEMARKETER!

If you didn't guess D, then you probably don't have a phone, because these days telemarketers are constantly calling, offering almost anything at a "low, low price."

I'm not going to lie to you. I've bought stuff over the phone before. A smooth-talking salesman once offered me something I just could not refuse. It sounded great, but what I got was a cheesy Scooby Doo phone that made Mariah Carey sound like Harry Caray. For weeks I had the same nightmare that starred Mariah singing "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" with Harry's gravelly voice during the seventh inning stretch at Wrigley Field. It always ended with Mariah screaming "Cubs win! Cubs win!" I will never buy anything over the phone again.

If you enjoy those little expeditions, that's OK. Some people enjoy the chance to match wits and hopefully withstand the temptation of the "Jedi Telemarketer Mind Tricks." But there are a lot of people who just can't say no. If you fall into this category, don't despair, I'm about to do you a big favor.

(HINT: You may want to cut out the rest of this and keep it by the phone for quick reference.)

If you are one of those people with a low resistance to phone salespeople, here is the easiest way to get off the phone without buying anything:

Just tell the caller right away "I'm not interested" and hang up before they can respond with one of those



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oh so witty rebuttals. (If you insist on hearing the deal being offered, listen on, but beware. You'll probably wake up the next morning wondering "Why the hell do I need a garden weasel?")

You might be asking yourself "Hey, what do you really know about this subject? Why should I listen to you?"

Well, I have a confession to make. This is hard for me to admit, but I am a recovering telemarketer. That's right, just a few months ago I may have called you up and begged you to buy my pathetic product (I'll spare you the gory details) at a special discount rate. But since I did manage to escape with my sanity, which is rare, I find it necessary to reveal some of the secrets of the trade.

First of all, people seem to think that the way to make a telemarketer mad is to hang up right away. Wrongo! They know that they will be rejected most of the time, and the fact that you hung up so quick just gives them more time to bug other people.

If you really want to tick them off, act really interested. Say things like "wow" or "very interesting" or "my feet reek" (no, wait, don't say that). Then, when they're just about to ask you to buy, you use one of the following phrases: (Feel free to make up your own.)

1. I'm 11 and my mommy and daddy aren't home.
2. I don't live here, I just broke in to use the toilet.
3. I'm sorry, were you saying something? (Or, if you're really mean)
4. Uh, could you repeat all of that again? (Just keep doing this until they hang up on you.)

Next up is the secret of the ASSUMPTIVE CLOSE. Here's how it works: (Telemarketer's voice): "Blah blah blah...great deal...blah...lowest price available...blah...and all I have to do is get some information from you and we can send you our product tonight, OK!?"

The idea behind this selling technique is that when they say "OK", naturally you will be dumb enough to answer "OK". Please don't fall for this elementary trick, OK!?

Here's one last insider tip, which just happens to be the most dangerous telemarketing tactic of all: THE SEXY PHONE VOICE. Men are especially vulnerable to this one. (Deep sultry voice): "Why don't you give it a try? Surely it can't hurt to just give it a try. Everybody's trying it". This is usually followed by seductive laughter.

Don't ever, ever buy something on the phone just because someone's voice sounds sexy. That alluring voice is being paid to get you to say "yes." And if you do say "yes," you'll probably kick yourself in the morning, and wonder what the hell you're going to do with five gallons of watermelon flavored foot ointment.

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