

No Means No

Texas A&M students find dealing with solicitors on campus is far from no-risk, no-hassle

BY EMILY PUDEK
The Battalion

health and silent as a jungle cat, the predator stalks his prey. After analyzing the target, he decides on an effective strategy.

Careful not to alert the victim of his presence, the hunter suddenly lunges out, prising his prey.

"Would you like to sign up for free long tance? We have the best rates in town!" During the first weeks of school, the C, Commons Lobby and Sbsia Dining II are crowded with tables of men and men selling newspapers and magazine subscriptions, promoting telephone services and credit cards — each passing outers and tons of freebies.

Students accept the hordes of salespeople as part of the first week of school, that does not mean they have to accept salesmen without a struggle.

Jesi Harvey, a sophomore agricultural journalism major, said solicitors on campus quickly overstay their welcome.

"They are annoying," Harvey said. "They might be nice people, but what they're doing is just annoying."

Harvey said sometimes she must put her manners aside when she is approached by a persistent salesperson.

"I don't like to be rude, but sometimes you can't help it," she said.

"If I tell them I'm not interested and they keep it up, then I feel like I have to be rude."

Jennifer Johnsen, a junior biomedical science major, said solicitors on campus are simply irritating because they are not courteous enough to students.

"They act like all they want is extra commission, the credit of selling the products," she said. "They don't care about the consumer."

Johnsen said not all solicitors are stereotypical pushy pitchmen.



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

"If they seem like they care about their product or if they seem honest, then I am more likely to listen to what they have to say," Johnsen said.

Johnsen said she tries to always be polite to solicitors, but sometimes it is hard to convince the salespeople that no means no.

"My reaction depends on the mood I'm in when I pass them," Johnsen said. "If I'm in a bad mood, then all of them are going to annoy me."

Johnsen said her strategy for avoiding the salespeople is to ignore them and make her escape.

"I avoid eye contact and power walk

past them," she said. "I hate trying to dodge them."

Freddy Blair, a local newspaper solicitor, sympathizes with the students he stops in the MSC.

"I hate telemarketers and door-to-door salesmen," Blair said.

"When I see booths like these, I don't

go up to them. So I just try to be polite to people because I know what it feels like."

Blair said this week was his first and last experience in sales.

"I make good money, but it is just not what I expected," Blair said. "I'm still embarrassed. The only thing really OK about my job is that what I am selling is a good deal. It's not a scam. It's good for college students who are strapped for cash."

Contrary to Harvey and Johnsen's reactions to solicitors, Blair said Texas A&M students never react harshly to him.

"The students are not rude," Blair said. "They're real friendly here in Texas."

Christine Tran, a junior finance major, is a solicitor for a small telecommunications business, and she said she has had positive responses to her sales pitches.

"If they stop at the table, lots sign up," Tran said. "If they listen to our sales speech, they usually sign up."

Tran said her employers hire motivated people to sell their services.

"There were no qualifications they were looking for," Tran said.

"You have to be really self-motivated."

Unlike Blair, Tran said she enjoys her job. She said she wanted a job in sales not only for the commission she could earn, but also for the interpersonal skills she would gain.

"I was really shy at first, but after the first day [at work] I relaxed," Tran said.

"When I saw all of my colleagues handing out free stuff and talking to people, I started doing it too. After all, I have nothing to lose."

Both Blair and Tran would recommend their jobs to students for the money, experience and connections they could make with other people.

"The money you make depends on how much you want to work," Blair said. "I would definitely recommend this job for out-of-state people. I got a two-week paid vacation this way."



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