



And You Thought Your Kids' Phone Bill Was Expensive...

\$11,000?!? For one phone call?!? No, this is not a warning to parents of teenagers with wireless phones. This is a heads up for businesses engaged in telemarketing sales calls. And yes, you read that correctly, \$11,000 for one phone call. If you telemarket and that doesn't interest you in what the Telemarketing Sales Rule requires, congratulations, you have more money than you need.

Most Americans are aware of the National Do Not Call Registry, a database of both land-line and wireless telephone numbers. A business may not initiate a call for the purpose of inducing a charitable contribution or the sale of goods or services to any number in this database without first obtaining written authorization from the owner of that telephone number. But, did you know that whether you call a number on this list or not during your telemarketing, if you haven't first purchased and obtained the list, you're violating the law? And yes, that's \$11,000 per call. (cha-ching!)

Many businesses know that if they're going to telemarket, they're going to have to transmit their business' phone number through caller identification. However, did you know that, if your telephone carrier also allows you to transmit your business name, you must do that as well? Failure to do so is also a violation and another \$11,000. (cha-ching!)

Did you know that close to half of the states in the U.S. have their own laws regarding telemarketing that must be followed as well? Some of these states require that you register with the Attorney General's office before you even begin calling their residents. Another, \$11,000, you ask? Nope, some states fines run as high as \$20,000. Some even provide criminal penalties (cha-ching... ka-klink!)

In addition to these rules, the Telemarketing Sales Rule has specific requirements for how long you must let the phone ring unanswered before you may hang up, how you may collect payment from your purchasing customers and even what must be disclosed to the customers within the first few moments of the call. Do you feel confident that you're following all of these rules? Are you willing to bet \$11,000 on each call? Would you be willing to make the same wager as to whether every member of your staff knows these rules?

Speaking of your staff, it is important to know that the Telemarketing Sales Rule hasn't forgotten them either. The Rule lays out very specific prohibitions with respect to their conduct towards the individuals they call and even how long you must keep each staff member's contact information on file once they've left the company.

Understanding and complying with the Telemarketing Sales Rule is no small feat. But if you or anyone on your staff is making *any call intended to induce the purchase of goods, services or a charitable contribution*, you can't afford not to take understand. We can help.

These rules are complex and comprehensive, and this is not a complete treatment. Before you embark on a telemarketing venture, take time to learn the rules.