



The Daily Gleaner

February 23, 2008

A Paper(less) Trail

In North America we seem to live in a world of abundance. If you need to buy something, it is not far away. And while you're there, chances are you will also buy something that you don't really need.

If you think about it, marketing schemes aren't really "schemes" at all. Ad campaigns convince us that we need something, and we buy it. Literally. How do they do it? By any means possible -TV, radio, newspaper, Internet ads, emails, telephone calls, and mail. Advertising spending across all Canadian media will increase from \$19 billion in 2007 to more than \$23.3 billion in 2011, according to research by the Canadian Marketing Association. Overall direct sales from ad campaigns are expected to reach \$203 billion by 2011 - a 33% increase from today's levels.

Print advertising, or what most of us like to call "junk mail", is extremely wasteful and only produces up to 2% of actual sales of advertised products. A recent Canadian Marketing Study quoted in the Flyer Distribution Standards Association newsletter indicates that 67% of Canadians are not interested in flyers and advertising that comes in the mail, and that 25% of Canadians discard the flyers without reading them.

So what do we do with this unwanted paper infiltration in our mailboxes? I throw mine in my grey box, that is, until I heard of the Red Dot Campaign. This campaign tells us that we can say "no" to junk mail through Canada Post's eco-friendly Consumer Choice option. Canada Post uses red dots to flag households that have said **NO to Junk Mail**. The Red Dot Campaign reminds you of your choice to say "NO" to unwanted advertising. The intention of the Red Dot Campaign is to urge advertisers to re-allocate their advertising investments into socially responsible initiatives.

Go to <http://www.reddotcampaign.ca> and follow the steps under "Take Action: Easy Ways to Stop Junk Mail", or simply put a "No Junk Mail" sign on your mailbox. Or maybe you have this sign up and are still getting junk mail? Unfortunately, a significant portion of junk mail has your name on it. This is because your name has been included on a purchased mailing list or you have provided your contact information for promotions. Register on Canadian Marketing Association's "Do Not Contact" registry, found at <http://www.the-cma.org> and follow the registration instructions. The "Do Not Call List" registry will be up and running in the Fall of 2008.

In many ways, bills are a lot like junk mail – except it is important that you open and pay them! They come consistently and there doesn't seem to be an end to them. But you can stop them – at least in print! Banks, phone and Internet services, and utilities now offer online billing, as well as online payments, so you can save your cheques and postage. Think of the savings – it costs between 75 cents and two dollars for each document to be generated and mailed, and \$1.25 for each paper cheque produced and mailed. In

an article entitled Paperless Billing: What's the Payoff? (Sep 15, 2000) "A reduction in just one day of the total billing cycle results in savings of more than \$200 million economy-wide."

So please consider saying no to junk mail and paper bills, and think not only of the economic savings, but all the paper (and trees!) being saved too. And less paper clutter in our home that has to be put in our recycling bin – for most of us that's enough reason to change!

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