

Every spring they appear like leaves in the fall. Unwanted, they sit at the end of the driveway in the muddy-muck left from winter. Landscapers, contractors, handymen, and asphalt companies have all latched on to a marketing technique that bears some discussion.

Here's how it works: Print up a cheap flyer on yellow or green paper, grab some gravel or a single rock, stuff both into a plastic bag, and tie it closed. Then head for my neighborhood and litter every driveway in sight.

This unsolicited marketing usually ends up in the trash without even being opened. My informal survey on morning walks with my dog shows that this driveway spam is nearly universally ignored. But these rebellious marketers continue to do it.

Now, as we approach the driveway spam season, here are a few lessons we can learn from these Ziploc strategists:

- Unsolicited messages get ignored. You might have a magical message. But if your marketing is unsolicited, it's a certainty that your message will be roundly ignored.  
**The lesson:** Make sure your marketing messages go to clean lists.
- Know your market's sensibilities. If you're a landscaper, messing up the landscape with your marketing is not a good way to get customers.  
**The lesson:** Don't do something in your marketing that goes counter to your business or your values.
- Don't do the same things over and over again and expect a different result. They say that's the definition of insanity. If your marketing isn't working, doing more of the same won't fix it.  
**The lesson:** You're doing something wrong. Stop, learn and move on.

Maybe some of these flyers are successful. Perhaps a few people desperate to get their lawn mowed or driveway paved open them up and give a call. But I doubt it. I think these marketing muddlers would be better off giving incentives to their existing customers to spread the word or learn more effective social media techniques. For example, a mechanic I know sends a \$10 bill (not in a baggie by the way) every time you refer a new customer. But he knows what he's doing — both under the hood and as a marketer.

I've found many of my service providers (including my mechanic) through a referral. It's the best way.

So, instead of throwing bags out of their car windows, I suggest these driveway spammers ask their existing customers to refer new ones. The world will have less litter and we'll all be happier.

Now, if only spring would arrive.