

Door-to-door charity's \$300,000 boast

5:30 AM Sunday Feb 26, 2012



Chris Harwood of Legacy Marketing. Photo /

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A company that collects money door-to-door for charities boasted online of pulling in almost \$300,000 a week – even though it wasn't registered.

Legacy Marketing International is not approved by the Professional Fundraising Regulatory Association.

The company, which has offices in Auckland and Wellington, is already in hot water in Australia after its training practices were exposed.

Trainers were caught warning collectors away from “POYSN” areas (pronounced “poison”) because it was a waste of time trying to get money from “poor, old, young, stupid and non-English-speaking” people.

Trainers also told would-be collectors they could earn \$3000 a week and outlined how people in blue-collar mining towns had “more money than brains”.

Inquiries by the *Herald on Sunday* have found Legacy Marketing expanded into New Zealand last year. Setting up as Legacy Marketing International, it opened an office in Auckland and then in Wellington last month.

A Tauranga office was also planned.

The company's websites were offline soon after its training methods were exposed in Australia.

A version cached with Google shows claims of being “one of the fastest-growing marketing companies in New Zealand” and collecting “\$288,000 in just one week” in Auckland.

The companies here and in Australia are contracted on behalf of charities by multinational corporation Appco Group.

Fundraising association manager Karen Ward said membership was mandatory for charities that collected money door-to-door or on the street. She said companies contracted to collect would be registered as “associates” of the organisation.

But she said there was no record of Legacy Marketing International as a charity or associate. She said she would make inquiries to find out how it met the regulatory requirements.

“We expect all member charities who choose to engage an agency to ensure that the PFRA code of conduct and standards are upheld.”

Ward said 20 of the 22 member charities had filed accounts for the past year showing they had collected \$23 million by going door-to-door.

She said details of the training practices used by Legacy Marketing in Australia had prompted her to check how door-to-door collectors were trained here. The association stipulates a maximum payment to contracted collectors of 20 per cent. It means donors who sign up for the average five-year-long payment scheme can expect a year’s worth of donations to go to the private company hiring the doorknockers.

Legacy Marketing International was linked to a PFRA associate, Appco Group, through a group of direct marketing companies called Mt.Eden Sales.

The World Wildlife Fund confirmed yesterday it contracted Appco Group for collecting. A spokeswoman said Appco Group in turn contracted Legacy Marketing International, which in turn hired the staff. She said the staff were directly trained by WWF-employed staff.

Legacy Marketing International’s Chris Harwood referred questions to Appco Group.

General manager Sarah Ibbs said the Poysn acronym was not endorsed by Appco or any of its clients.

“The other comments quoted were made by one individual, in Australia, and that individual is no longer fundraising.”

She said the Legacy fundraising team here was run independently of the Australian team, which was no longer doing a training and assessment programme.