

Common tactics adopted by dubious business entities - Scenarios

Timeshare/ Timeshare-related industry

Scenario 1

Mr Tan* received a call from Entity A to attend a presentation. Entity A knew that Mr Tan had previously bought a timeshare membership from Entity B, and that Mr Tan had been facing problems with Entity B. Entity A offered to help Mr Tan dispose of his timeshare membership for free if he attended the presentation. Mr Tan attended the presentation and was told to sign an agreement and pay a sum of money (usually thousands of dollars) before Entity A would assist him. The agreement could be one for Entity A to help him to dispose of his timeshare membership, or one to buy a new membership, or one to trade-in his existing membership and top-up more money to purchase a new membership with Entity A.

Scenario 2

Anna* received a call / email from a business entity to attend a presentation, with the promise that she would receive a free gift at the end of the presentation. She attended the presentation, and when she asked for the free gift, she was told to first pay for the 'shipping and handling charges' for the free gift to be delivered. Anna paid up but did not receive the free gift as promised. After weeks of repeated calls to the business entity, she finally received her 'free gift' and found that the value of the gift is worth lower than the amount she paid for 'shipping and handling charges'.

Beauty and Wellness industry

Scenario 1

Nana* registered for a free beauty trial or ordered a very cheap facial session from a business entity. When she went for her session, she was pressured by the consultant/therapist attending to her to purchase an expensive beauty package before she could get the free trial or cheap session. Nana only received the free trial or cheap session after she agreed to purchase the expensive package.

Scenario 2

Shirley* opted for a facial treatment from a business entity at a very low promotion rate. At the business entity's premises the consultant did a skin analysis for her and told her that the promotional facial was not suitable for her skin type, and recommended another more expensive facial package instead. Shirley had no choice but to leave without enjoying the promotional treatment, or to purchase the more expensive facial package.

Electrical and Electronics industry

Scenario 1

John* purchased a handset for his mobile phone from an electronics shop. After making payment for the purchase, the sales staff, while still holding on to the purchased handset, informed John that the handset needs to be unlocked, or required some programs to be installed in it before it could work. After this had been done, John was told to pay hundreds of dollars for the services rendered. The sales staff refused to release the handset until payment had been made. John could either negotiate and pay a part of this additional sum to receive the handset, or refuse to pay the additional charges and leave the shop empty handed.

Scenario 2

Madam Ng* was shopping in a shopping mall when she was stopped by a sales staff offering to give her a free pot on condition that she completed a request form for the company to conduct a demonstration of a household appliance at her home. Madam Ng completed the form and collected the pot. The sales staff arrived at her home a few days later to demonstrate the functions of the appliance. After the demonstration, the sales staff refused to leave until Madam Ng made a purchase. She could not leave the house and was unable to get the sales staff to leave. In the end, she succumbed and paid for the appliance just to get the sales staff to leave.

**Not their real names/ surnames*

Please also refer to the useful information provided on the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) website (http://www.case.org.sg/general_advice.html) on some of the things to look out for when dealing with business entities across different industries.