



Association of Directory Publishers

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San Francisco: Aftermath and Future

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To: All U.S. Members

Fr: Larry

Re: Lessons from the San Francisco Land Use and Economic Committee Hearing

On Tuesday, ADP HQ distributed a release from the San Francisco Yellow Pages Coalition, reporting that the City's Land Use Committee had voted 3-0 to recommend to the full Board of Supervisors passage of President David Chiu's opt-in ordinance.

Rather than to rehash those details, suffice it to say that I strongly believe two truths came out of the hearing: one, that the industry has done everything within its power to defeat the ordinance to this point and, two, that their actions have proven that neither truth or facts mean anything to the politicians currently controlling policy in San Francisco.

In my 14 years as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association, working with the U.S. Congress, Federal regulatory agencies, state and local governments, and environmental and other advocacy groups, I have never encountered such a dishonest and devious political process or unprincipled cast of elected officials as we found in San Francisco.

The industry is now analyzing three potential paths of future opposition to the ordinance, which could be invoked separately or together. Because it is imperative that the industry not tip its hand, that's all I'll say at this time.

When I analyze what has happened to date, I saw a couple of rather immediate lessons emerging from this flawed experience that would guide me if I were still a Publisher:

- I would make certain that my directories were listed on www.yellowpagesoptout.com and that the URL and a local telephone number were printed on the front cover of all my books. Being listed on the site is an immediate defense against those politicians, consumers, and bureaucracies who are demanding a mechanism which allows them to not receive (opt-out of) any or all the books that might be delivered to them. Exposure through the site seems to me less risky than to be left totally defenseless when attacked.
- I would understand and accept, no matter how grudgingly, and, regardless of my current numbers regarding opt-out, that the question is not whether this issue will impact me but when. Be assured that there is a whole network of like-minded people forming across the nation, and indeed around the globe, who will expect nothing less than source reduction (fewer books), elimination of unwanted directories laying in open view (blight, in their words), and control over what unsolicited products they are willing to receive – or they'll expect our heads. Dump and run will be terminal to the industry over the long term. Design your plan of defense (or attack) in advance!

I would not presume to suggest what you should do. But I do think one of my responsibilities is to inform and advise the membership, and share my considered opinions, with your best interests in mind. That's what I've tried to do in this update.