

Fake Reviews Controversy

Avoiding Bogus Testimonials

Recent news reports Re: the practice of writing bogus reviews for profit or to damage the competition is not new. For example, last year I interviewed a successful author who in answer to my question about the state of the industry revealed how a lot of time was spent unsuccessfully trying to remove blatantly false and negative reviews posted on Amazon.

A Few Alternatives

Every library has a slightly different system for accessing book reviews. For instance, you can go to the website of the main San Francisco Library and using their card catalog, type find summaries and possible links to reviews from *Library Journal* or the *New York Times*. Another option is to use the library's database Booklist. But be aware that using the database requires a little more work: skill with keyword searching.

Selected Book Review

databases include:

Booklist

Novelist

Literature Resource Center

Literary Criticism

Consumers being duped has been the focus of the controversy but entrepreneurs, at all stages, are consumers too. For example, buying and relying on a how-to book or hiring a service or product provider based on questionable testimonial can wreak havoc in the pre-or start-up stage for starters. As mentioned in *Changing Your Work or Career...*, a situation that can put someone out of business.

Consider the case of the mom inventor who hired a company to develop molds for her new children's safety product. She paid

the supplier tens of thousands of dollars, but what she received was so poorly made it was unusable. Fortunately, her husband went into their garage and rebuilt the product, but not everyone has that kind of backup plan...skill set or aptitudes.

Relying on service and product evaluations from nonprofit organizations is one avenue but perhaps the most important lesson in all this is that research requires more than merely reading online testimonials.

The level of time and energy spent on buying decisions will depend on the answer to the following question: what are the possible consequences, financial and otherwise, if you are basing your decision on faulty information?

Although I have focused only on one industry in this post, a practice can be found in many industries. On an upbeat note, the shady practices should create more business for those organizations with ethical business values. And perhaps create new opportunities for would-be entrepreneurs who want to enter the little known field with a better approach.

References

Fake reviews Amazon's Rotten Core

Forbes.com

<http://tinyurl.com/9g zr29o>

Midwest Book Review

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midwest_Book_Review

Bay Area Consumers Check Book

<http://www.checkbook.org/>

Consumer Reports.org

he <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/index.htm>

New York Attorney General

Announces agreement with 19 Companies

<http://tinyurl.com/q4ym3r5>

Bogus reviews practice expected to increase

<http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/216131>