



## **Fighting Yelp Negative Reviews**

*Published By Bruce Newmedia 2014-2015*

Yelp gets a lot of attention these, and unfortunately, it's not all good.

Many of your clients for Reputation Management and Repair end up with bad reviews that get published by Yelp.

In case you didn't know, Yelp is an online social networking site. *Yelp* had an average of approximately 120 million monthly unique visitors in Q4 2013. *Yelpers* have written over 53 million local reviews.

Some claim Yelp shows every bad review but filters the good reviews. So when a prospective client goes to look at the site, they may see four good reviews and two bad ones.

However, another three reviews that are good are all hidden – Yelp calls it filtering.

And you can't find a number to speak with someone at Yelp to find out their rational for filtering this way. One writer says Yelp tends to believe bad reviews and not believe good reviews! (they assume they are either false or solicited).

This year, Yelp is being sued by a number of companies who accuse them of protecting false, negative reviews from challenge. There are other suits pending, and the entire concept of online reviews may be looked at by different courts.

(see below)

Love it or hate it, Yelp and all of its reviews will be around for the foreseeable future. Its just too large a review platform to ignore.

For a consultant whose job is to improve a client businesses ratings, Yelp is a challenge.

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## YELP critics must be identified, court rules in online landscape altering decision

Decision could reshape rules for online consumer reviews of products, businesses



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Jeremy Stoppelman, chief executive and co-founder of Yelp.com, defends his Web site ... [more >](#)

In a decision that could reshape the rules for online consumer reviews, a Virginia court has ruled that the popular website Yelp must turn over the names of seven reviewers who anonymously criticized a prominent local carpet cleaning business.

The case revolves around negative feedback against Virginia-based Hadeed Carpet Cleaning. The owner, Joe Hadeed, said the users leaving bad reviews were not real customers of the cleaning service — something that would violate Yelp's terms of service. His attorneys issued a subpoena demanding the names of seven anonymous reviewers, and a judge in Alexandria ruled that Yelp had to comply.

### VIDEO:



Runtime: 01:10

[Yelp...Court Delivers Blow to Free Speech](#)

### PHOTOS: [Top 10 handguns in the U.S.](#)

The Virginia Court of Appeals agreed this week, ruling that the comments were not protected First Amendment opinions if the Yelp users were not customers and thus were making false claims.

"The Virginia statute makes the judge a gatekeeper to decide whether or not there's a common-sense reason for someone in our position to get this information," said [Raighne Delaney](#), a lawyer at the Arlington firm Bean, Kinney & Korman who represented Mr. Hadeed. "In order for someone like Joe Hadeed to find out who these people are, he has to explain his case, and if he can convince the judge that there might be a real lawsuit against this person, the judge can then say, 'Yes, you can get this information.'"

### PHOTO GALLERY:



It will be interesting to see where many of these legal challenges to Yelp end up. Definitely worth watching as it may set precedent for other review sites concerning what they can and cannot do...and especially how anonymous reviews are treated.


**Below is an example of a positive review on Yelp:**

 Your trust is our top concern, so businesses can't pay to alter or remove their reviews. [Learn more.](#) ×



**Heath G.**  
Frederica, DE  
0 friends  
2 reviews

★★★★☆ 4/25/2014

 Seated via OpenTable

My wife and I had a romantic dinner here the other night. The view was spectacular, the service attentive, and the food superb. I had the Chilean Sea Bass and my wife had the Tuna. The Sea Bass came in a soup, which I would not have ordered had I known, but which was flavorful, tender, and delicious. The tuna was tasty as well, though my wife likes hers more done than do I. The wasabi mashed potatoes were tasty too. If I go again, I might try the Brazilian lobster, which I saw plated for someone else, and which looked delicious.

One of the nicest things about Pattigeorge's, which isn't uncommon in this part of Florida, is the beautiful view of the inter coastal waterway and the view of the boats docked behind the restaurant.

The waitress did a fine job of being attentive but not bothersome.

I would visit Pattigeorge's again and I highly recommend it.

Was this review ...?

 Useful  Funny  Cool

...and here's not-so-good review...



**chris m.**  
Brandon, FL  
0 friends  
40 reviews

★★★☆☆ 12/6/2013

Location beats the food. Broccoli Rabe was inedible. Fru fru hashed brussels would have been better roasted whole. Ahi steak had cold center - didn't request that. Prices are high even for longboat.

Very nice place and staff. If you have to get dressed up to dine I guess it's OK. I think I'd have a drink here and go elsewhere for dinner.

Was this review ...?

 Useful 1  Funny  Cool

## 5 Tactics For Improved Yelp Reviews

**1. Take ownership.** It's important to "claim this business," on Yelp. When you do this, you'll be able to respond to reviewers, or "Yelpers," who have given your

client business a poor rating in the forum. Future visitors can see that your client is working to amend any problems and isn't just ignoring issues and complaints.

**2. Don't Filter Reviews** -- show everything because the filtering doesn't work and presents a picture that's usually more negative than positive.

**3. Repair or Fix The Stated Problem.** After responding to negative reviews, it's necessary for the client business to make reasonable efforts to fix the problem(s).

This is obviously more complex for different kinds of complaints. The technique here is to show the business owner how important it is to rectify the problem whenever possible. Not just for the disappointed customer/client but for all the future negative reviews that may result. By claiming the business, as mentioned above, the owner can also state that the issue has been resolved for future customers, as well.

**4. Flag False Reviews.** You need to flag any false reviews. Yelp does not allow false reviews and lets the business flag them for removal. For instance, a false review could be a post that is pure hearsay (not actually experienced by the poster) or even one that is misleading or a lie. An example would be telling users that that the Mexican food at certain restaurant is not prepared properly when the business does not even serve Mexican cuisine.

**5. Create a Social Following.** This is perhaps the most important strategy. Build your client's reputation through other social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook. Your efforts to help the client build a social following on these other networks business can build a community and establish a 'firewall' against much of the negativity.

Yelp users are more likely to be lenient and go a little easier on negative reviews when they also see so many fans, followers and positive comments on other prominent sites.

Keep in mind that many of these 'review sites' like Yelp are still evolving. It's possible in the future changes may be made that prevent unscrupulous competitors and others from gaming the system causing negative reviews for many businesses.

The Online Reputation Consultants job is to work with the reviews situation as it is. Everyone is encountering these same problems and no business client is immune.

## **When Your Customers Get Filtered By Yelp**

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It seems that Yelp reviews get filtered out based on reviewers' lack of overall Yelp activity. This is as opposed to what the review actually says.

I've seen Yelp both filter and allow reviews that are long, very short, poor quality, full of keywords, devoid of keywords, useful and not. Appropriate reviews get filtered, and extremely crude ones be published.

So Yelp seems to look at how *active* a Yelper the reviewer is.

If the customer goes on your client's Yelp listing, and gives them 5 stars and a review, that's great. But if that same customer/reviewer does not write reviews for other businesses on Yelp, it's likely their review will never be shown!

First-time reviewers are at greatest risk of this problem. What can you do if your reviews have been filtered?

Based on my own research, the key to unfiltering Yelp reviews is to engage the reviewer.

Many reviews seem to get filtered because the reviewer created an account, left a review, then didn't use the site again. Yelp trusts reviews from its active users more than the inactive ones, so "activate" that reviewer.

Friend them. Reply to their review. "Like" their review. Send them a message through Yelp. Encourage them to review other businesses on Yelp. As the reviewer reviews more businesses, its not unusual to see his earlier reviews finally be published.

Also, reviews that appear can disappear if the reviewer, who was active, starts to become inactive, posting no reviews for a month or more.

## **When Yelp Filtering Is a Good Thing**

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While Yelp filtering of customer reviews can be a pain, sometimes it can be a blessing in disguise.

That would be when the review is a very negative one. If your client business is expecting a negative review(s) often from a former disgruntled employee, don't be surprised if Yelp filters it out. The reason would be the same as earlier mentioned, probably the complainer does not have a very active account. Just hope they don't get more active!

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As updates to this information become available, we will send them to you.