

# Court Gives Green Light for Entertainment Career Connection Case Against Better Business Bureau of Southland to Proceed

[Market Wire](#) , [April, 2008](#)

A Los Angeles trial court ruled January 4, 2008 that a case alleging that the Better Business Bureau of the Southland (BBB) is engaged in deceptive and other illegal practices may proceed in a case brought against it by Entertainment Career Connection, Inc. Entertainment Career Connection provides educational apprentice programs for the entertainment arts including the music recording , radio , film and television industries. A new trial date is pending, but expected on or before August. The 24-year-old Los Angeles-based business offers certificate programs in all aspects of filmmaking, radio broadcasting and audio engineering. More than 6,000 students have graduated from Entertainment Career Connection programs, creating a vast alumni network worldwide.

The BBB gave Entertainment Career Connection its worst possible rating -- an "F" out of a scale from "AAA" to "F." The lawsuit alleges that the rating is unfair and is the product of unfair practices employed by the BBB, including using a separate but undisclosed more favorable rating system for businesses that pay for costly BBB memberships.

The BBB filed papers asking the court to dismiss the case on the grounds that it was protected from lawsuits of this nature, but the court ruled that the BBB operates, in many respects, as a commercial enterprise and is subject to suit for its actions. According to papers filed with the court, the BBB generates more than \$9 million per year in membership sales and those sales make up more than 90 percent of its revenues.

According to papers filed with the court:

-- The BBB provides consumers with a rating for business from "AAA" to "F." But the BBB falsely represents that it makes no difference for ratings purposes whether or not a business has paid for a BBB membership. The fact is that businesses that pay for memberships are automatically awarded more points under the BBB's rating system. The BBB charges businesses as much \$9,000 per year for memberships.

-- Similarly, the BBB does not tell the public that it uses a separate, more lenient rating system for larger businesses that pay larger membership fees. The result is that a small, non-member company like Entertainment Career Connection can have a small number of complaints against it with the BBB -- small in terms of raw numbers and as a percentage of its customers -- and get a bad rating; but a big dues-paying BBB member

like Cingular, with more than a thousand complaints against it, receives one of the BBB's top ratings.

- Although the BBB claims that only legitimate businesses can become members, the fact is it gave memberships and ratings of "Members in Good Standing" to an auto repair shop and a sushi restaurant -- neither of which actually existed. It required only that the purported "businesses" provide payment for memberships, i.e., the BBB did not check to see if they really were businesses. The address provided for one of the alleged businesses turned out to be someone's apartment.
- The BBB lowered its rating of Entertainment Career Connection to an "F" in retaliation for the company challenging what it believed to be an unfair rating. In fact, the BBB's president, William Mitchell, personally directed the BBB to change its report on the company to include allegations of misleading advertising when, in fact, no consumer had ever made such a complaint.

According to the Orange County Register, the BBB was the subject of past investigations relating to allegations of improper ratings.

Entertainment Career Connection's Founder and Chief Executive Officer James (Jimi) Pettula said, "We continue to lose substantial business on a monthly basis as a result of this unfair and unwarranted bogus rating. Our school deserves to compete in the marketplace fairly." By 2010, the global entertainment and media industry is projected to be a \$1.83 trillion industry -- up from \$1.33 trillion in 2005.

Other companies listed by the BBB of interest include Google, who has a "C" rating and zero complaints against them, yet they are not a member of BBB. Warner Brothers Entertainment, Inc. has an "F" rating, while they have two complaints against them, and they are not a member of BBB. Loews Theaters, now AMC Theatres, officially known as AMC Entertainment Inc., have a "B" rating, zero complaints against them, and they are not a member of BBB. Cingular Wireless (AT&T) has a "BB" rating, 1284 complaints against them and they are a member of BBB. CyberDefender Corporation has a "BBB" rating, 25 complaints against them and they are a member of BBB.

Once courses are completed, a large number of Entertainment Career Connection students go on to land jobs in their chosen industry.

Businesses who have had similar experiences with the BBB may contact Brian Kraft at 1 800 295 4433.

About Entertainment Connection, Inc.

Founded in 1984, Entertainment Career Connection, certified by the National Private Schools Accreditation Alliance, has provided educational apprentice programs for the film, radio, television and the music recording industries in more than 100 U.S. cities in all 50 states. The schools, where graduates find their dream careers, provide the entertainment industry with apprentices. Entertainment Career Connection offers a complete financial aid package from Sallie Mae the nation's leading provider of student loans, and other financial aid programs.

Entertainment Connection has a reputation for having the finest radio school, music production and film making schools in the entertainment media industry. Unlike any other school, students learn from successful mentors in real world situations including active recording studio sessions, on real film sets and at actual on air radio stations as opposed to simulated classrooms where the pressures of client interaction and real deadlines do not exist. Applicants who wish to learn how to be a DJ , or talk show host, or radio announcer are screened and then re-screened by the mentors. Entertainment Career Connection's programs can be completed in approximately half the time of degrees obtained from other schools.

The company is headquartered in Hollywood, by the historic Walk of Fame in Los Angeles, California. Visit [www.recordingconnection.com](http://www.recordingconnection.com) , [www.radioconnection.com](http://www.radioconnection.com) or [www.film-connection.com](http://www.film-connection.com) . For additional information, please contact Brian Kraft at 1 800 295 4433 or 310 592 3780.

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