

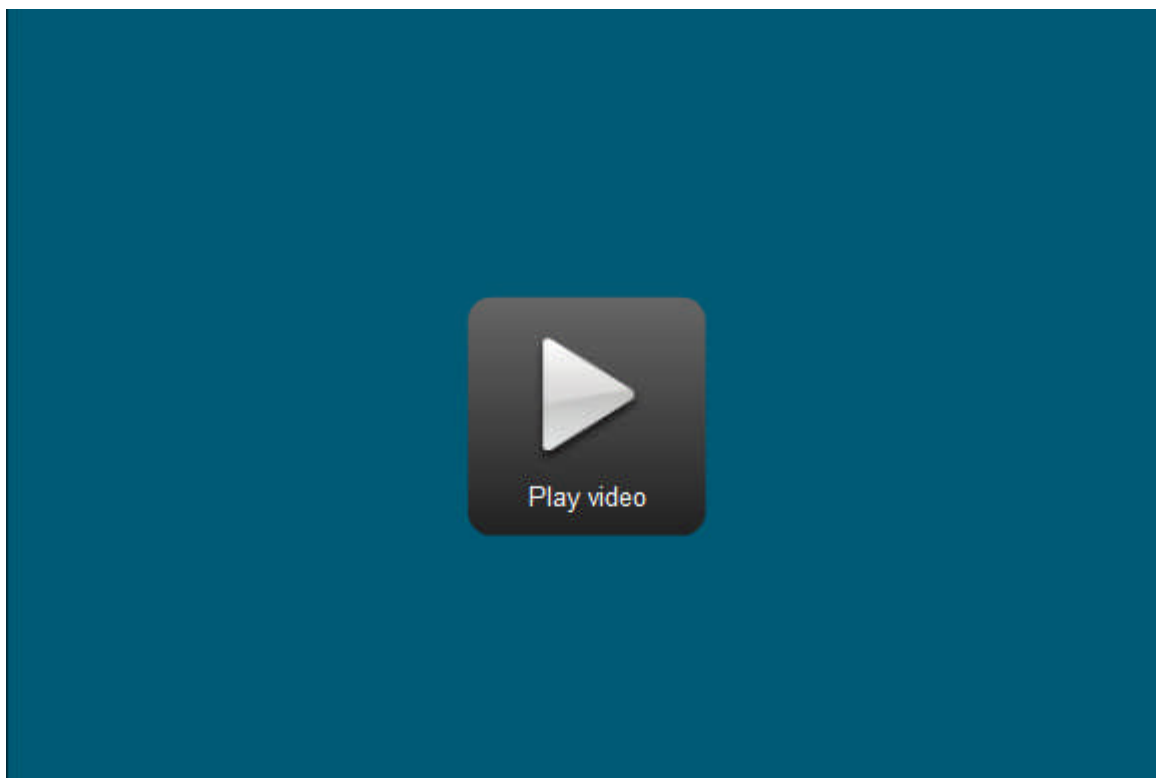


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[A Message from the President of CBBB](#)

Posted: November 18th, 2010 | **Author:** [admin](#) | **Filed under:** [Uncategorized](#) | [156 Comments »](#)



The executive committee of the Council of Better Business Bureaus held a special meeting to discuss concerns recently raised about the BBB rating system, accreditation process and sales practices. While we do not agree with all that's been said, we acknowledge that public trust in the BBB and its business reviews can be adversely affected by any business practice that gives even the appearance of being unfair. As a result, today, the BBB unveiled a plan to take specific actions, including:

- By next week, the BBB ratings system will no longer give additional points to accredited businesses because of their accredited status. While we believe that businesses that have been approved for accreditation and commit to abide by these standards warrant additional points, we have acknowledged that others view this as creating an appearance of unfairness. What matters most now is to make changes to address those concerns—which is exactly the steps we have taken. BBB will continue to issue ratings based on the other 16 ratings factors currently used.

- Immediately, BBB will make available on its website a streamlined process for receiving complaints on BBB sales practices and will implement procedures for investigating each complaint.
- BBB will conduct a review of its process for accrediting businesses, and as soon as possible, make changes that will apply system-wide.
- BBB will engage an independent third party to assist us in our review process.
- Finally, BBB will launch an immediate investigation into the Los Angeles-area BBB.

We are moving ahead with implementing changes right away. Some are immediate, others will take longer to complete. All will support our commitment to help consumers easily and quickly find trustworthy businesses.

We are taking these steps to better serve consumers and small businesses and eliminate any attempts to question BBB's fairness. Any attempt to question the integrity of the entire BBB organization is completely without merit. On behalf of the great BBBs in communities across the nation that are providing valuable services to protect consumers and promote ethical business behavior, I thank you for your support.

Thank you for visiting our site.

Steve Cox
President and CEO
Council of Better Business Bureaus

156 Comments on "A Message from the President of CBBB"

1. 1 Greg, BBB said at 2:47 pm on November 12th, 2010:

Hi,

I'm one of the moderators of this comment section. We look forward to hearing from you!

2. 2 Ed Rufo said at 4:58 pm on November 12th, 2010:

Letter to the Editor of the Leaf Chronicle

Since the ABC 20/20 story hit the news, I have received several calls concerning my association with the BBB and image of the organization as a whole. Most know that I am a proud 20 year plus volunteer with the BBB system serving as a Member Company, Board Member, Board Chair and have been recognized as a BBB Community Ambassador twice as well as Recipient of the Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics.

I find it appalling that ABC and 20/20 would take such position and unfairly attack the BBB organization.

I feel Brian Ross has cheapened himself and delivered a disservice to the BBB's and his viewers by desperately trying to undermine and discredit an almost 100 year old organization that has spent it's career promoting good business practices, trust and integrity in the marketplace, voluntary self regulation, protecting consumers and businesses, monitoring advertising, and reporting on phony charities.

Throughout my time volunteering on different BBB Boards, I happen to know that over the years BBB's have feed ABC, NBC, CBS and many other local and national news reporters and medias with stories content, help in reaching out to victimized consumers and businesses by BBB diligent work -all the while- not asking for one thing in return and not even receiving credit for the excellent work performed.

I feel this is despicable reporting using sensationalism for ratings.

I will continue my faith and support in this organization which strives to improve our marketplace by placing the spotlight on the good businesses and discourage consumers from falling prey to scammers and bad business practices.

I hope that we all will do the same.

Edward R. Rufo
"Because Trust Matters"
Clarksville, TN

3. *3 Leila Ayad said at 8:38 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

My husband has worked for the Council of Better Business Bureau for over 9 years and his view is that the BBB is very honest company and the work it's doing is good for the market place. The BBB will emerge from this stronger and better.

Thanks

4. *4 John Cox said at 9:44 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

I am one of the managers that has received calls from the BBB that in as few words states we can raise your score if you buy a membership. The BBB is a complete joke. It is only interested in making money. The BBB has pulled off one of the biggest scams ever on the American people. "Trust us" they say unless you are a business then we will do our best to screw you unless you pay us not to.

5. *5 Colleen said at 10:21 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

Just so the readers know....

This story on 20/20 is ABSOLUTELY true. I am the office manager for a successful auto repair company. NUMEROUS times the BBB rep would call claiming that we needed to "act now" to become accredited. Our current grade is an A- for ONE complaint out of FIVE THOUSAND repair orders a year that this company handles. I watched this episode in complete amazement that someone actually stood up and said something. It's about time!!

Shame on you BBB for claiming to be non-profit, yet you scam small business owners for your own greedy gain. You should be ashamed.

As an office manager, I would be happy to step it and help you get your company in order. This publicity has outed you, and without a MAJOR change of standard operating procedure, your credibility has now graded as an "F", and rightfully DESERVED!

6. *6 Eric J White said at 10:22 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

As a small business owner all my life, and a victim of theses scam attempts, I gotta tell you; ABC got it exactly right.

While it's not as well know by the public at large, Dunn & Bradstreet is EXACTLY the same way. Come On ABC, get them Next!

7. *7 Stephen Garmey said at 10:25 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

Sorry, but I lost any trust in your system of ratings after watching the 20/20 show. It seems your BBB is just another organized corporate criminal group extorting from the little people for a better rating. All to fill the coffers of the high executive crew. Shame on you, isn't there any honest people out there anymore.

8. *8 c.r. said at 10:26 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

i used to work for a bbb in ohio and was taught to tell companies that their grade would be higher if they were members. that in my opinion goes against what the bbb has stood for, but that was how we were trained at that location to boost memberships. then all they'd receive is maybe a grade up and a sticker. nothing else for the amount they had to pay. that office was all about money and that's it.

9. *9 admin said at 10:27 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

Eric, John and Colleen:

I'm sorry to hear you've had a bad experience in the past with BBB. We are here to help protect the public. If you have time, please share with us your story so we can investigate it on our end. E-mail us your concern at wecare@bbb.org

Greg, BBB

10. 10 Brent said at 10:34 pm on November 12th, 2010:

sounds like you needed to get caught before you started to get your act together SHAME..... F grade for Wolfy Puck and Disney

you've lost alot of respect; I'll no longer use your ratings to judge a business

11. 11 J. Foss said at 10:37 pm on November 12th, 2010:

I am very disappointed in hearing this report on 20/20, yet not surprised by greed. It doesn't seem to stop. Everywhere you look people are taking advantage of any situation they can. It is time we stand up to this kind of shakedown and bring honesty back to mankind. Your President's statement is nothing but a run-a-round the truth. We all know what is going on. How can the consumer trust you now?

12. 12 jeff repka said at 10:38 pm on November 12th, 2010:

Tell us it ain't so! Hamas? Racist organizations paying for "A" ratings? A MISTAKE? Here's the mistake: overpaid, incompetent CEO & administrators. Cut their salary, send em packing, do what you gotta do if you want to survive as a company. THERE IS NO EXCUSE! Who would'a thought...the BBB is an illegal extortionist shakedown organization!!! Just what this country needed to hear now...damn shame...

13. 13 Jennifer Candea said at 10:38 pm on November 12th, 2010:

I hope to see a future story on 20/20 as to the improvements to the BBB.

14. 14 admin said at 10:40 pm on November 12th, 2010:

Jeff:

We've protected consumer interests for nearly 100 yrs. Working hard to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Greg, BBB

15. 15 Colleen said at 10:42 pm on November 12th, 2010:

Greg,

Thanks, but no thanks. The BBB has done enough to bury itself. If, in the future, I get a call from a customer inquiring about the A- grade my company has, I'll be sure to tell them to google bbb and 20/20.

One other thing Greg, while I have your attention... The rep that called us told us that our name would be listed in the 2011 BBB guide. The owner found this interesting, as he just picked up a copy of the 2011 guide the very same morning. When questioned, the rep simply stated that there are numerous guides for different regions and we would get in the next one.

Again, I am happy that this story was aired, and unfortunately, even with the BBB, the old adage applies; buyer beware.

Wolfgang Puck?? You can't be serious!! I've eaten at his restaurant in the Borgata Hotel in Atlantic City and I assure you, there is no possible way he deserves an F.

Thanks for your time.

16. 16 *Angieslist said at 10:45 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

go to Angieslist.com and register– there you can leave feedback on any business you'd like.

17. 17 *Migdalia Ramirez said at 10:53 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

I have a concern on your approval of Quicken Loan. After checking Quicken Loan on BBB site I started a new Mortgage Loan with them. Two weeks later I have stopped doing business with them. How did they get past you? Did they buy your approval too? I am out \$500 now. Your not doing right by approving this site. Now I check with Consumer Affairs.com and Quicken Loan has a list of complaints that are similar to mine by different consumers. How can so many people have the same complains that Quicken Loan is out to make money on appraisals and up front money. You approved that. I want someone to explain the approval of Quicken Loan by the Better Business Bureau.

18. 18 *admin said at 11:02 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

Colleen:

What market is your local BBB in? We would like to look into this matter.

Greg, BBB

19. 19 *Steven said at 11:53 pm on November 12th, 2010:*

Very funny news piece. The best part is when Mr. Cox walked, or rather ran, away from the interview. All that did was further prove the BBB is a scam. If you expect to salvage the reputation of the BBB, I suggest you let ABC finish the interview instead of running away like a scared child. Hate to tell you but these were not isolated instances and more proof will be forthcoming in the very near future. The BBB is currently accrediting a business that is a scam. The local BBB has been made aware of this, but refuses to take any action, or at the very least, look into the allegations against this company. Well, our local news, thanks to ABC, has agreed to look into this matter. The ABC news segment, viewed by millions, is just the tip of the iceberg. Good luck Mr. Cox. Judging by your interview skills, you're gonna need it. All you accomplished tonight is to make the BBB look even more guilty. Score this as a BIG win for those of us that are fed up with the unscrupulous and unethical practices of the BBB.

20. 20 *Steven said at 12:19 am on November 13th, 2010:*

This is further proof that Mr. Cox and the BBB are a bunch of crooks. I guess he was wrong about the mainstream media picking up on this. The following is a leaked email from none other than Mr. Steven Cox. The BBB has been aware of the tactics outlined by ABC since March of 2009.

BBB PR: For BBBs – Investigative Web site Critical of BBB System
Cox, Steve scox at council.bbb.org
Thu Mar 19 10:54:02 CDT 2009

Colleagues,

Bottom Line: You need to be aware of a Web site call “bbb Roundup” -
<http://www.bbbroundup.com/>.

Background: Following is as much information as we have about the site at this time. We are continuing to research the site, and will provide additional information as it becomes available.

- * The site is principally an attack on the BBB system – and specifically cites some BBBs by name.
- * The site specifically attacks BBB Ratings along the lines of inconsistent/illogical grades, and not necessarily points for accreditation (although that issue is raised in parts of the site)
- * The site also specifically attacks our member-funded business

model

- * The site also includes a host of other BBB system criticisms that span a range of topics
- * The site operator/editor uses the pseudonym “Jimmie Rivers” and claims to be a former journalist
- * The domain was privately registered on March 4, 2009
- * The Web site is hosted abroad in Singapore/Australia
- * The site lists a 310-497-4806 phone number which is in Santa Monica, CA – the number appears to be a cell number from Sprint

Assessment: While it’s always concerning to see public criticism, the value and credibility of this site is greatly diminished by the use of the pseudonym and inability to verify sources. Essentially the site is not legitimate or transparent: its creator is unwilling to publicly disclose identifying information and, for this reason, I do not expect mainstream or legitimate digital media to use or reference the site.

This said, we will certainly be keeping a close eye on the site to track whether the site is being marketed in any way (to this point, it is not), and whether the site is gaining any traction in online communities.

Media Relations Guidance: This site represents one of those issues that we must literally communicate with “one voice” on. With this in mind, I would ask the following:

- * If questioned about the site by any media, please refer them to me for comment.
- * Recommend you inform your Boards of the site’s existence – i.e., let’s ensure our internal audiences are aware of the site, but ask them to consider such information confidential and not for external audiences
- * Please do not personally publicize the site to any external audiences – i.e., do not distribute any press releases attempting to refute comments from the site – and do not refer to the site in any interviews. Use caution in forwarding electronic messages concerning the site – once you forward something, you lose the ability to control where the message may go from there.

We’ll provide more information as it becomes available.

Steve

Stephen A. Cox | Vice President, Communications

<http://www.bbb.org> | Start With Trust

21. *21 scams xposed said at 12:36 am on November 13th, 2010:*

On the blog I write I recommend the the BBB be used as a resource. I Still recommend the BBB. Until there is an alternative rating system that is foolproof, there is no better source.

However, the BBB is not a perfect system. The information is useful to help make a decision but should not be the only source of information. Do not rely on the rating itself but read deeper and look at the statistics and decide if the rating is correct.

There is a ton of information available to the consumer today. There is no excuse for not taking advantage of multiple sources to corroborate one source against another.

Its your money, Keep it!!!

22. *22 lj said at 12:50 am on November 13th, 2010:*

It is truly a sad day when firms such as Wolfgang Puck gets an F rating simply because it will not pay for a rating....and also sad blatant sales people clearly were guilty of “pay for rating” scams! At this rate BBB will go the way of the “so called excellent” motels approved by AAA!

23. *23 Bonnie R. said at 12:52 am on November 13th, 2010:*

I believe that there MAY be areas of the BBB that are beneficial to the consumer (I say MAY because I am still on the fence on even what little is left) but the rating system is CLEARLY a sham... Come on, BBB, someone dropped the ball on this one... this system was NOT working and it was lining the pockets of so many people that no one wanted to rock the boat by saying so!! As far as the piece that 20/20 did... I trust what I see people... I believe they showed the truth!!

24. *24 admin said at 1:08 am on November 13th, 2010:*

LJ:

We made mistakes, but the bottom line is that good ratings are not for sale.

You can learn more here about our ratings and accreditation process here:

https://www.bbb.org/bbbinformationcenter/?page_id=76

Greg, BBB

25. *25 Steven said at 1:10 am on November 13th, 2010:*

I see now that comments are being censored.
Not good.

26. *26 Paul Fredericks said at 1:16 am on November 13th, 2010:*

you should be ashamed!!....what you doing is no better than the New York Mafia.....very disappointed in a supposed trusted venue

27. *27 Steve K said at 1:17 am on November 13th, 2010:*

After watching the report, BBB you are a joke. BBB has no ethics and your rading system is a joke. You will never regain my trust again and I will never seek out businesses by looking at their BBB rating.

28. *28 Patrick said at 1:17 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Too Late, I'm glad ABC exposed you all. Only now yow acknowledge your errors.. How incompetent do you have to be to give Hamas a rating of A, and you say your system is sound??? Straight laughable. I really wish you jerks stop calling me to become a member of your organization. After this exposure, I'm glad I never sent you losers a penny.

29. *29 J said at 1:19 am on November 13th, 2010:*

WOW! WHAT IS THE RATING FOR THE BBB ? I can not see it or file a complaint with you. I guess the BBB is now owned by China. Fine US citizens you are! Unreal!! PAY \$ FOR AN A+ What a JOKE!

30. *30 Steven said at 1:24 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Hey Greg, how bout at least telling why my posts have not been approved. Censoring comments is far from being transparent. What are you hucksters afraid of? I guess the truth hurts. I guess I will be spending the rest of the night posting Cox's email on every discussion board I visit. The email and the ABC news segment will go viral in the next few days. Have fun dealing with the backlash. I'm sure their will be a lot of businesses that are feeling really stupid now for paying the BBB. And yes Greg, the BBB most certainly DOES employ a “pay for play” business model. No amount of spin will change that fact. The BBB's days are numbered. Better start looking for a job.

31. *31 Bonnie R. said at 1:54 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Greg, I can so appreciate what you are doing... I understand backing a company and believing in what they do... especially in today's job market... and especially IF you happen to be one of those high paid lucky people that work with the BBB... I get it, really...

So maybe the 20/20 piece will launch some kind of investigation into the practices of the BBB so that we can truly find out how MANY mistakes you guys are actually responsible for making... and HOW these mistakes are happening... maybe once the truth is out there then changes can be made and trust can be restored... until then you guys can deny all you want- it's not gonna restore any trust... it's just gonna make you look like you are covering something up!!

Until then, in favor for all the small businesses that could not afford the fees BUT so needed your ratings for their business- I'm gonna pray you get investigated!!!

32. *32 Raoul Paolo said at 3:38 am on November 13th, 2010:*

I think the facts speak for themselves. This is not about making some errors, it is a fundamental problem with the BBB and ironically exactly the business behavior that BBB is "fighting".

Gaining trust is a long term process, losing it is a matter of seconds. I lost ***all*** my trust in the BBB. This comes as an absolute shock. BBB means ***nothing*** to me after seeing the 20/20 report. End of story.

33. *33 admin said at 8:15 am on November 13th, 2010:*

J:
You can file a complaint against a BBB. If you wish to do so, visit:
<http://hotline.bbb.org/odrweb/public/hlcsearch.aspx>

Greg, BBB

34. *34 ronnieblah said at 8:43 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Sad fact is that this type of thing goes on ALL the time. The money should be REFUNDED back to the businesses that were scammed if BBB expects to gain back it's trust.

Trying to correct the situation is a given once you are exposed. Hamas an A? That's not a mistake... People nowadays aren't so easy to forgive when they get scammed.

35. *35 Brian Deal said at 8:53 am on November 13th, 2010:*

I can't believe this comes a such a shock to people. I wonder how many good mom and pop businesses this racket has put out of business because they would pay up.

Shame. Shame. Shame.

Bunch of thugs!

36. *36 Steven said at 9:53 am on November 13th, 2010:*

The bbb are a bunch of liars. I posted proof that the bbb has been aware of this since March of 2009. Anyone who wants to see the evidence, please email me at dupedconsumer@yahoo.com
It's funny to see how Mr. Cox's view has changed since this has been picked up by the mainstream media.

BTW, filing a complaint as Greg suggests will not accomplish a thing. I have done so numerous times in the past and have not even received even one response.

No mount of spin will change the fact that the bbb has been involved in possible criminal activity and certainly has abused the public's trust.

37. *37 Don said at 10:03 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Let me just start by saying that in no large corporation does the president/CEO directly respond to public outcry... unless you feel threatened by the light shown on your crafty nature that is. You sir were clearly uncomfortable answering for your policies that resemble, no, parallel the Italian mob 'insurance' tactics of "pay or else". What else do you do in that wonderful shell of non-profit scheme, launder money from side interests? Hmm...perhaps it's time to grab a golden parachute and pursue other interests...

38. *38 admin said at 10:12 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Steven:

Please keep in mind, there were lengthy discussions with the segments. The ABC crew was in the BBB office for more than three hours talking to Mr. Cox and other BBB representatives. Prior to starting the interview, ABC 20/20 and the BBB agreed that the on-camera interview would last for one hour – starting at 10:30 and ending at 11:30. Mr. Cox had other commitments that day and needed to honor those commitments. During the interview, we even reminded Brian Ross that time was running short and they needed to wrap things up. Mr. Cox sat down at 10:30 and requested to leave at 11:30 as agreed. We felt 60 minutes was ample time considering the fact that Mr. Cox's comments would comprise less than one minute an on-air time. Keep in mind, there were lengthy discussions with the segments producer prior to this interview to cover most of the topics of this interview.

Also, you mentioned something along the lines that we are censoring comments? Every comment has been posted in its entirety except one where I had to remove some personal contact info. Let me know if your comments are not displaying.

Greg, BBB

39. *39 Steven said at 10:23 am on November 13th, 2010:*

See post #20 for absolute proof that Steven Cox and the BBB lied about their knowledge of the problems highlighted in the interview. They have known about this since March of 2009 and tried to cover it up.

I bet Mr. Cox is regretting the day he sent that email. Hey Greg, the internet is an amazing tool for getting info out to the public.

As previously stated, Angies List is a great resource to check out a company. The BBB has lost all value in this regard.

40. *40 John White said at 10:35 am on November 13th, 2010:*

Dear Mr. Steve Cox,

I'm not buying this explanation. The BBB is now suspect and will never hold the same value to us consumers. You should be ashamed of yourself for attempting to explain away these BBB crimes (that's what I call them) as mistakes. It's quite obvious to the viewing audience that these weren't just "mistakes" or "errors". You and the BBB got caught engaging in dirty business practices! Shame on the entire BBB organization!

41. *41 Mike said at 10:43 am on November 13th, 2010:*

If the BBB is to be trusted again, the complaints against individual BBBs should be handled by an outside entity.

42. *42 carol said at 10:45 am on November 13th, 2010:*

i used to be a member of the bbb and learned that being a member only boosts you up 4 points. and a member has to stay above a c rating. however, it only took one time for me not to get to a complaint on time for them to kick me out and give me a F – tarnishing my reputation. All because I was out of town for a personal family situation and they seemed to not care.

43. *43 Lauren said at 10:46 am on November 13th, 2010:*

I have used the BBB for years and value their service. I agree with Mr. Cox that it's unfair to punish the entire BBB for one mistake; there are many branches across the nation and also many employees who are honest, thorough, and hardworking. I have faith that steps will be taken to rectify the situation.

44. *44 cr said at 10:58 am on November 13th, 2010:*

I am poster from #8... just wanted to add in that while all of the bbb's follow a 'system' they are all independently ran.. my former ceo of the one I worked at was a joke – he did nothing but tell the 7 of us what to do – get memberships! he uses the bbb's money to pay for lunches and dinners for himself on the company credit card.. also pays about \$500 a month to LEASE a brand new car. How do I know all of this? I was the one who opened the daily mail. I was being paid the least and doing the job of 3 people which is why I'm not there now – and saw what a ripoff that particular location was and still is. I had even written to the Counsel of BBB about this location before and not sure what happened – since I never heard anything back. It's locations like this one that needs restructured and retrained – My grandmother worked for the BBB 40 years ago and stated this was NOT how they were back then and much has changed. Most of the locations seem to be in to just get members (\$\$) to cover the CEO's overspending of frivolous things and underpay their overworked employees – who are not happy with their jobs – as they are 99% of the time rude to any one that comes in or calls – as if they are better than the consumer or business on the other end. Perhaps each location needs looked into and restructured to put the BBB's original name back in good order as it was many years ago when it wasn't all about the money.

45. *45 Gary Westergren said at 11:31 am on November 13th, 2010:*

As a BBB accredited business for 5 years, I watched the 20/20 report with some interest.

I'm really concerned about the public perception of member-businesses of the BBB.

I've found the problems myself when I look up a business that I want to check out. The same non-member business might be listed 2-3 times with variations of the same or similar address. Each of the listings may have a different rating (ranging from C to F). Even with no complaints registered, the highest grade that I've ever seen for a non-member business is C.

I always wondered about that, but didn't think much of it until the 20/20 report.

For damage control, I think the BBB needs to make most of the details of whatever algorithm is used for grading public. Transparency is the key to trust here.

I hate to say this, but whatever the public reaction seems to be, may affect my decision to renew my annual BBB membership when it comes up this April.

46. *46 admin said at 12:33 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Steven:

You also mention that BBB is accrediting a scam business. What business are you referring to so we can look into it?

Greg, BBB

47. *47 admin said at 12:36 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Carol: I'm sorry to hear you've had a bad experience in the past with BBB. We are here to help protect the public. If you have time, please share with us your full story so we can investigate it on our end. Please send it to wecare@bbb.org

Thanks,
Greg, BBB

48. *48 Steven said at 12:54 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Sorry Greg, too late now. The fact is that I have already informed the bbb about this at least a dozen times over the last year. The bbb chose to do nothing about it. Thankfully, after the GMA piece, a local investigative news team from an area tv station has decided to look into this. With the documentation that I have provided them, it is clearly evident that the bbb has turned a blind eye to the scam be perpetrated by a bbb accredited business.

To the poster that thinks this is an isolated incident, you need to do a little more research. The practices exposed by 20/20 is normal operating procedure for the bbb.

<http://www.bbbroundup.com>

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

49. *49 Jimmie Rivers said at 2:39 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Steve,

It's nice to finally hear you say the BBB makes mistakes. That's the point. These mistakes cause considerable damage to small businesses.

You harp on the 17 "ingredients" of your grading system, but truth to tell there are only two that will get you an F. One is not answering the BBB on a complaint which has two problems. One: often the small business never receives the complaint because the BBB doesn't have the right contact info (which is another BBB error that unfairly penalizes the small business). Two: When the small business does answer the call on whether they've addressed the complaint it is a judgment based decision and members get the benefit of the doubt, non-members don't).

The other ingredient that can bring about an F is type of business, and for certain categories there is no hope. In other cases, by mis-classifying non-member businesses you have harmed them unfairly.

Finally, ABC 20/20 has brought out the whistle blower in a number of current and former BBB employees. They have a lot to tell, and it goes to the high pressure, telemarketing sales procedures used, where yes, complaints are used as leads. Stay tuned.

You've ignored all of my prior emails to you; you might want to rethink that. I agree with you, and always have maintained that the BBB performs lots of good services. But the grading system is a joke and you don't have the ability to resolve more than a handful of consumer complaints.

I hope that at your about to be convened Board Member you put some serious thought into how to fix things. I have suggestions if you are interested.

50. *50 Kathya O said at 2:40 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

I saw the 20/20 report and I am extremely dissapointed in the BBB. I have used the BBB when looking for services and I cannot believe that businesses, in essence, buy their rating. I feel 20/20 questioning the BBB's intergrity has merit. How can the two organizations created (ie Hamas) have been a fluke? Two of them! Citing that "We are not perfect. We make mistakes." is laughable. Too many mistakes is incompetence. In this economy, (and working for a non-profit) making six-figure salary employees should at least ensure a more dependable product.

Shame on the BBB for deceiving the public and shaking down business. Next time, I will not use you. And I will inform others about the 20/20 report. I hope you guys make major improvements.

51. *51 DT said at 5:56 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

So Steve,

Your telling me that our grade of a C will be changed to an A? We have never had a complaint, but when we did turn down becoming a part of Denver's BBB, we received a grade of a C.

I'll wait for that change.

52. 52 Norm said at 6:32 pm on November 13th, 2010:

Lets first understand where this story originated. The AG Richard Blumenthal got caught flat footed in a TV show on Glenn Beck and Bill O'Rielly when he was on a "which hunt" during an election on the company GoldLine which happens to be a Glen Beck sponser. Glen Beck replied. Goldline has an A+ record with the BBB. Mr. Blumenthal and Mr. Beck hate each other. The BBB has gotten caught up in a political debate during an election between the two. Mr. Blemnthal is on a which hunt to prove his point. Before he blasted the BBB on TV he has never once stopped to learn how the BBB gets its ratings.

Second, the ABC 20/20 was a JOKE! WolfGang Puck and these additional business owners would SIMPLY have to answer their complaints to not have an F record. NOT pay the BBB.

Also, the complaints in this story were only about the LA BBB.. NOT the BBB in other area. So any attempt to charactorize the BBB as whole is a cheap attempt at charactor assanation. Any organization can hire a bad employee.

I would be willing to bet the that the overwhelming majority of AG in all 50 states are THANKFUL for the help of the BBB's staff.

Here is a list of a few AG's that Link to the BBB's website..

<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/consumer/index.shtml>

http://myfloridalegal.com/_85256CC5006DFCC3.nsf/0/B1698683390060CA852573FC00687D54?Open&Highlight=0,better,business

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/business/resources.html>

These are just a few.. I could keep going..

ABC 20/20 and hundreds of other media have relied on the BBB for help with news stories on scams, etc.. Brian Ross's investigation was a sad attempt at journalism.

For the few isolated errors the BBB has made, you will find hundreds of thousands examples of GOOD that the BBB has done!

53. 53 Norm said at 6:40 pm on November 13th, 2010:

Jimmie Rivers,

Why don't you come clean with who you are? Why have you hidden your information on bbbroundup.com? What is your agenda? Are you a former disgruntled employee, business owner with an F record or what? Is it fair to do a story as a so called journalist and hide?

Have you taken this same stance againts other organizations that do ZERO background checks on their advertisors? Have you checked out ABC's advertisors to insure they meet your ethical standards?

I challenge you to come clean! But, I am sure you won't..

54. 54 Mike Chen said at 6:51 pm on November 13th, 2010:

BBB,

It is beyond sad that your current leadership allowed almost a century of consumer trust go down the toilet for one common vice: GREED.

The video of Steve Cox is a joke. Seriously, "we've made mistakes."?!? Sounds more to me like he's saying, "We blame the media for this. If it wasn't for GMA / ABC News, we could stil be making millions more by screwing business owners." THE ONLY WAY TO PROPERLY RESOLVE THIS IS TO ISSUE A PUBLIC APOLOGY AND ANNOUNCE THAT THE BOARD OF THE BBB IS BEING REPLACED ALONG WITH THE CEO.

55. *55 jake merrando said at 6:52 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Nice of you to -somewhat- man up to questions, your top exec couldn't from the 20/20 story.

56. *56 jake merrando said at 7:00 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

ps ... The tingle in his eye was really telling during the interview. Money talks though right? Can the BBB really have a top 5 fraud list right now on its homepage without resolving its own current issues?

57. *57 steven said at 8:41 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Nice try Norm! You obviously work for the BBB. You seem to be very confused about the facts. There are examples of this kind of behavior all over the country. It's time you and Mr. Cox get your heads out of the sand. The fact is that by paying the BBB you get a better grade, and in some cases, complaints just seem to disappear. The BBB has always believed it was beyond reproach, and the actions of Mr. Cox during the interview only serves to prove that fact. If Mr Cox had the phrase "I'm A Crook" stamped across his forehead, he could not have looked guiltier. The funny part is that Mr Cox and the BBB thought it would be best to run away when confronted with a complaint. I wonder how that fits in with the BBB standards of handling complaints. I think the BBB deserves an F.

And to Jimmie Rivers, thanks for all you have done and continue to do in exposing the truth about the BBB. It's about time that the public is made aware of the facts.

58. *58 Peter said at 10:59 pm on November 13th, 2010:*

Bring it back...."It replaces what the BBB used for 95 years, the simple satisfactory/unsatisfactory ratings." Repeat...bring it back.

59. *59 Rich Morgan said at 5:52 am on November 14th, 2010:*

As a small business owner that does currently have an A+ rating based on the fact that we have maintained an impeccable reputation with the public by providing fair and ethical service to our clients...because that's how we do business, not by paying the BBB...I find some of this feedback very troubling.

We are a BBB Accredited business and I personally know most of the employees of our local BBB office and think they do want to do the right thing. For the record we did have a satisfactory record before becoming an accredited business (before the grading system it was simply satisfactory or unsatisfactory).

One subject that is not mentioned in this story, that should be is; unethical consumers. We have had several instances over the years, including one current pending complaint where the consumer has filed a "bogus" complaint, because we would not give in to the CONSUMERS blackmail!

How does a business owner defend his/her business with unethical CONSUMERS making statements such as; "I want a refund or you're A+ record with the BBB will be an F when I'm done." ? Yes, that was a real statement made by a consumer, not because we did wrong...because they wanted money!

As a paying Accredited Business we have one, resolved (we refunded the customer for services which were rendered as promised) but still published complaint on our record within the last 36 months. The BBB did not remove that complaint from our record, simply because we were a paying Accredited Business! That complaint for the record was completely bogus, and another example of a dishonest consumer using the complaint system as a way of basically "extorting" a small business for monetary gain.

A business owner has to cut his/her losses at some point and concentrate efforts on running their business as opposed to exhausting all of their energy and resources trying to fight a situation like this, so as in this case...the complaint stays.

Too bad for the business, huh? Not necessarily! The honest consumer (luckily for all of us still the majority of people) suffer too because instead of being able to deliver that customer the top-notch level of service and

products they deserve, the company is using valuable resources, time, energy, and money focused on defending themselves and protecting their company and employees.

In the “information age”, it’s very easy for a deceptive consumer to damage a small business’s reputation not only in this manner, but all over the internet! It’s a very stressful situation for a small business owner that truly does operate an honest and ethical business to walk on eggshells because of the knowledge of the damage this type of press can do to his or her business, true or not. Even worse there is ultimately no recourse for a small business to protect itself from this.

To play devils advocate and in all fairness to both sides, I am troubled by the fact that there are competitors in our market that truly are “no good” with 30, 40, 50 or more complaints yet still somehow have an A or B rating, which is questionable. The BBB’s explanation of ratings cites things such as; nature of the business, business size and volume, etc. The problem with this is that’s based on unverified information in a lot of instances. For example; my business has a competitor with 25+ complaints in the last 24 months, yet they have an A+ rating. I know for a fact that, that business owner over-inflates the volume of business they do and they are roughly the same size as my business so they get away with it. To the consumer we look the same...far from the truth!

We serve approximately 5000 new clients each year and to the best of my recollection have had 3 or 4 complaints filed with the BBB in almost 14 years in business (those 3 or 4, all customers we would not “pay for silence”), we earned our A+ rating and should be able to tout that to the public. I was excited to see the rating system go to a letter grade as I thought this would differentiate us from the “bad guys”, but now the bad guys can get a good grade too even with dozens upon dozens of complaints.

The satisfactory / unsatisfactory rating system had the same results as the letter grade because of this fact, so that is not the answer either. Perhaps just as with other business rating type websites, the BBB should just move to a system of publishing the complaints submitted and the company’s response and let the public determine what’s valid and what’s not.

I for one will continue to support the BBB and what it stands for, because I want the public to know we believe in running our business fairly, honestly and ethically. Is it a perfect system...no, but it’s better than the consumer deciding who to do business with by flipping a coin or who has the prettiest ad in the phonebook.

The BBB does provide the public, and ironically the media, with a lot of great services. Ex. alerting the public of known scams, outing fraudulent contractors, work from home businesses, investment scams, etc. It takes money to support these types of services and “paying” Accredited Business’s provide that money!

Rich Morgan
CEO
Magic Touch Mechanical, Inc.
<http://www.AirConditioningArizona.com>

60. *60 leo said at 9:32 am on November 14th, 2010:*

<http://www.swipeauctions.com>

Please avoid this website, it is a scam business.

61. *61 Mike said at 9:35 am on November 14th, 2010:*

You guys are a bunch of crooks that have been scamming people for years and costing honest businesses a lot of money. I hope all your branches receive a windfall of class action lawsuits that will put you out of business for the good of all. You claim non-profit yet strong arm companies for large sums of money to pay your directors hundreds of thousands of dollars. I’ve been waiting years for this scam to be proven true and it finally has.

62. *62 Steve said at 12:26 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

I believe that you guys are making money saleing good ratings and try to cover up now, I don’t think is working and the governments should get rid of bbb and create something honest, you guys should’t never charge for

anything that is why I think the government should take over and I hope they will. I have very bad experiences with networksolutions.com because they steal money from my credit card and are a very lousy service, bbb still give them A rating, so that is why I don't believe you guys. I have thousands of customers and they will listen to me.

63. *63 mary said at 12:34 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

20/20 did a one sided interview. It was up to Steve cox to counter act with an educated voice. It's quite obvious that wasn't the case, to leave in the middle of an interview of that stature when the reputation of one of the oldest organizations is being questioned on it's integrity was a disgrace.. He should resign. He has done enough damage.. The BBB needs to seriously consider his position, either resign or fire him...

64. *64 Steve said at 12:44 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Eventually customers won't care anymore if the site have the bbb logo or not, they will look for reviews from previous customers, so that is why before you want to purchase a service from companys like networksolutions go to google.com and search from real customer reviews, forget the bbb logo is just a guy making \$300,000 dollars a year and don't care if is a group of terrorist or not, he just want to get paid

65. *65 steven said at 12:50 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Hey Rich Morgan, check this out. From your area and another BBB accredited business. Now I'm not saying that you don't run an honest and ethical shop. I'm only saying that the BBB accreditation is worthless. Here is one of your competitors that is also BBB accredited and they have 73 complaints, yet still maintain an A+ grade.

</central-northern-western-arizona/business-reviews/air-conditioning-contractors-and-systems/chas-roberts-air-conditioning-inc-in-phoenix-az-684/>

Soon you will realize that being associated with the BBB in any way will end up hurting your business. This is bigger than you think and the BBB is guilty of perpetrating one of the biggest frauds on the American people.

66. *66 admin said at 1:24 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Mary, unfortunately, 20/20 wanted to make the interview longer than the time we agreed upon and the president had other engagements he needed to get to. Leading up to, during, and following that interview, we answered all of the questions ABC asked and held up our end of the agreement.

67. *67 Norm said at 1:39 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Steven,

I beleive you are Jimmie Rivers. I just can't believe ABC would allow a "so called journalist" to go on air with out publically disclosing who they are. What does Jimmie Rivers have to hide?

Let me ask you this.. If the BBB only had greed on their minds, why do they NOT allow anyone in? Ever month they don't allow members in and kick members out.

Also Steven,

Other organizations whom are membership based , give their members awards and recongnition and you are not calling them "pay to play".. They don't give awards and recongnition to non-members.

Police in ever city hire bad employees that do something stupid. Yet, thank God we have Police men and woment to protect and serve us.

The Wolfgang Puck example that ABC gave was very lame. No American uses the BBB to look up a restaurant before they go eat.

Even Wolfgang Puck can hire bad employees- his hostess in Dallas seemed to make a bad mistake that ended up on the news as well.

<http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/weird/WWII-Veterans-Turned-Away-at-Wolfgang-Pucks-105054169.html>

Lets be fair...

68. *68 Brian said at 2:14 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Read more about the unfair practices of teh BBB on our Anti-BBB Blog at <http://blog-bbb.com>. Here are just some of the articles: # Terrorist Organization Hamas Joins the BBB & gets an A- Grade for \$425!

How to File a Complaint against the BBB Today!

National Consumer Council Files \$20 Million Lawsuit Against the Better Business Bureau

Corrine Brown alerts Congress of the BBB's unfair treatment of small businesses

Reliable Air gets an A+ Rating from the BBB after Bankruptcy & Criminal Charges??

Why the BBB deserves an FFF!

The Shocking Grading Practices of the so called "Better" Business Bureau Exposed

Blog-BBB.com wins another ally in the fight against the BBB!

Mechanic's Responds Investigates Alleged Violations by Bob Casteel Heating and Cooling, Inc.

David Takes Down Goliath: Hot-Shot Lawyer Out-Smarted by Small Business

Has the BBB Outlived Their Usefulness?

Is the BBB Too Cozy With the Firms It Monitors?

How did Conn's maintain A+ rating with local BBB?

BBB Exhibits Unfair Practices Against the Debt Settlement Industry

Is the BBB's rating system flawed?

69. *69 steven said at 2:34 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Sorry Admin, NOTHING should have been more important than for the bbb to restore the publics trust. Instead, Mr Cox decided to run. You should be ashamed of yourselves for failing to face the truth, even when it's being put right in front of your faces.

How come the bbb did not address these issues when it was brought to your attention? I'll tell you why. It's because they think they are above reproach. They never thought that this would make it to the mainstream media. The bbb was more interested in finding out the identity of the whistle blower instead of fixing, or even addressing, the problems.

Also just out of curiosity, could you tell me if there are any businesses that are not accredited that have 73 complaints that have an A+, or just an A, for that matter?

70. *70 steven said at 2:47 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Very funny Norm! Your belief that I am Jimmy Rivers is wrong. Just like your belief that the BBB is not engaging in what I believe to be criminal activities. By your own statements, you seem to completely miss the point. Yes, there are many organizations that offer awards, but there is only 1 bbb. The public has come to trust that what the BBB says about a company is legitimate. The recently exposed details of the BBB has proven that the publics trust has been misplaced. Sorry Norm if you don't like the facts. Mr. Cox can bury his head in the sand all he wants, but this is not going away and the public wants answers. Just because a company advertises on ABC, it does not mean that ABC in any way endorses the product or service. You are comparing apples and oranges.

71. *71 jim in mi said at 5:55 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

I have no prejudice here. I followed your link here to be fair and hear BBBs side of the story — which turns out to be: oh, we made a mistake, but we are SUCH good guys you should never question us. Not much of a logical argument there, boys. I say: BUSTED.

72. *72 Ruben Jimenez said at 6:38 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Saw the 20/20 segment, the BBB is a joke! You get an F on adhering to your Vision, Mission, and Values! Executives making \$300K-\$500K, what a racket! I'll never think of the BBB organization in the same way again or give any credit to the ratings you all publish on other companies.

73. *73 Perry Ruiz said at 7:21 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

I have been burned by the BBB, and after watching this story, I am forwarding it to all my previous customers and putting the link on our website. I am also, sending out flyers to all small businesses in my area, so they don't waste their time or money joining such an unethical company. I too have been given a low rating for no just cause, which I too plan on exposing. This is just the beginning!

74. *74 admin said at 8:31 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Perry:

I am sorry you've not had a great experience with your BBB. Please share your experience by sending us an email at wecare@bbb.org so we can address your concerns.

Greg, BBB

75. *75 Norm said at 9:37 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Steven- aka- Jimmie Rivers,

Here is an example to prove you wrong. I could keep going and provide examples from all over the nation- How about a company that has over 900 complaints in the last 3 years that is an A.

[/dallas/business-reviews/buses-charter-and-rental/greyhound-lines-in-dallas-tx-14152](#)

Here is one that has over 300 complaints and has an A.

[/dallas/business-reviews/collection-agencies/credit-protection-association-in-dallas-tx-4676](#)

76. *76 Norm said at 9:55 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Saying the BBB is a bunch of scammers is like saying Wolfgang Puck is a guy who hates Military Veterans.

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/101510dnmetbooted.285a300.html>

I am sure Wolfgang is grateful for the Veterans that served our country like we all are. The Manager at Wolfgang Pucks place in Dallas apologized and made it right. Mistakes happen!

Give the BBB a chance to make it right! They deserve it. They do a ton of great consumer protection work across our nation!

Managing a database of millions of business's across the nation has got to be to be a large task.

77. *77 steven said at 11:01 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Sorry Norm. I'm not Jimmie Rivers. And even if I was, how would that change the point of all is. The BBB got exposed for the fraud that it is and no amount of spin is going to change that. BTW, what do you have to say to the thousands of business owners who received a less than favorable grade for no apparent reason. The really sad part is that the bbb knew about all this for quite some time and tried to sweep it under the rug. As I said earlier, Steve Cox, or should I call you Norm (lol), could not have looked and / or sounded guiltier.

78. *78 Duped said at 11:45 pm on November 14th, 2010:*

Why such huge salaries? Isn't this a non-profit?

<http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2008/237/079/2008-237079691-05975367-90.pdf>

<http://www.scam.com/showthread.php?t=36232&page=2>

79. 79 David Heidrich said at 7:59 am on November 15th, 2010:

It's nice to see you claim you don't adjust grades of companies for money, but my own personal experience with the BBB proves otherwise.

The company in question Square-Enix, for years (yes, years) had a rating of "F" with the BBB, and many unresolved complains against them. Then, in 2007, they became "accredited" with the BBB and their rating became an A. Overnight. They still have unresolved complaints, but their rating never seems to go down. Money well spent on their part.

I'm going to forward this example of pay-for-higher-ratings to the Connecticut attorney general Richard Blumenthal, and hope he uses it to put an end to your scam.

80. 80 Charlie Mattingly, Louisville BBB said at 9:35 am on November 15th, 2010:

The 20/20 segment was the most biased piece of journalism I can recall, and was based substantially on untrue information.

81. 81 Jim Edgar said at 10:23 am on November 15th, 2010:

The integrity question should not have arisen. ABC and 20/20 are not fly-by-night web blogs which make baseless claims — if they question BBB practices, then they obviously feel there is some basis for the questions.

This makes my A+ rating pretty much worthless

82. 82 Cathy H said at 10:54 am on November 15th, 2010:

I watched the 20/20 interview on Friday evening. Mr. Cox handled himself very professionally. What else could one do when there was to be no good outcome for the Better Business Bureau, that it was completely slanted to one side? When I read other comments such as, "BBB is a scam," I think how easy it is to make a statement such as this UNTIL you are the innocent victim of one! My mother was a victim and the BBB staff bent over backwards to help her. What a discredit to the BBB...as well as to Brian Ross... it was sensationalism at best. The BBB has been going strong for 100 years and has been rebuked over the years for doing what is right. I hope they are here in the next 100. It's good to know there is an organization that looks out for our best interests.

83. 83 admin said at 10:58 am on November 15th, 2010:

Norm:

Thanks for your sharing your comments. We appreciate them.

Greg, BBB

84. 84 Sterling Smith said at 11:01 am on November 15th, 2010:

As a top sales representative within the BBB organization, I found this report to be extremely one-sided. We all saw Wolfgang Puck upset about his F ratings but what they failed to tell you is his company chooses to not respond to many of their customer's complaints. THAT is what gives a company an F rating. An F rating has nothing to do with money (which ABC chose to ignore) BUT it has EVERYTHING to do about taking care of your customers.

85. 85 Jerry Stephens said at 11:35 am on November 15th, 2010:

I have used the BBB services and found thme tp be most helpful.

86. *86 admin said at 1:51 pm on November 15th, 2010:*

The BBB's Executive Committee will meet Nov. 16 to discuss improvements to BBB's ratings system. We'd like your input. Please email us at wecare@bbb.org.

Greg, BBB

87. *87 John said at 1:54 pm on November 15th, 2010:*

I feel it is the BBB's responsibility to teach me how to be a good member and a good an honest business. An entry level membership should be available for businesses the first day they are opened for business. This would take away all surprises.

88. *88 Prescott Kelly said at 2:23 pm on November 15th, 2010:*

The 20/20 segment was potentially devastating to businesses that depend on the BBB ratings to establish trustworthiness in the web-enabled world. The pablum expressed above will not come even close to fixing the problem. Direct point-by-point explanations, especially concerning the pay for good ratings in the LA Bureau will be necessary. Like the 60 Minutes Audi unintended acceleration flap from 20 years ago, pretending that it will blow over will leave a long-term bad taste with consumers. You folks need to get VERY proactive. The Council CEO's defense on 20/20 was very weak. Let's please try to do much better. Very best regards, Prescott Kelly, Writer's Institute Inc., 33-year member, Connecticut BBB

89. *89 Roger said at 3:32 pm on November 15th, 2010:*

I work with many business owners.

I would not go as far as ABC did in using the word fraud.

However, there are parallels with a 'protection racket' in the protection of a company's good name.

In my observations, there are clear inequities in your systems. And I have advised business owners of the tremendous power of the BBB and the danger in not paying the requested money.

Notice I did not say 'benefit for joining', but 'danger in not paying'.

I have observed:

- A+ ratings on companies with over 50 complaints: they were paid members. And in each case their reputations were terrible. Even 10 complaints is a clear indication of trouble.
- F ratings on companies with one or two complaints. They were unaware of any complaints. This is unfair and punitive: your system assumes perfect communication by BBB and no one can contest it. Unless they pay to join.
- No distinction between unfair complaints and legitimate complaints.

I know many, many business owners that are very pleased with the ABC report. They feel that your system is too powerful and lacking in integrity.

Consumers trust your valuable brand. It is my hope that you make the changes necessary to deserve your reputation.

90. *90 Rob said at 6:45 pm on November 15th, 2010:*

Have I seen anything like this first hand?

No.

Am I surprised?

No.

In my dealings with the BBB, they were rarely pleasant to interact with. I definitely would not put it past them to participate in these sorts of activities. No doubt it started with revenues being down and the BBB trying to

increase them to keep the organization afloat. Under multiple levels of pressure, it isn't too much of a stretch to imagine the BBB representatives offering a higher "grade" in exchange for an accreditation fee.

Does that make it ethical?

No.

Damaging businesses who are trying to maintain a high "grade" without paying to become accredited is under no circumstances acceptable.

Whether the Wolfgang Puck example given is legitimate or not, I know plenty of businesses have fallen victim to such actions.

I wonder how next year's membership levels of the BBB will compare to current figures after the 20/20 exposition.

91. *91 Earl Warner said at 4:16 am on November 16th, 2010:*

this is long past due,I feel the bbb has been ineffective and even detrimental to the consumer in several industries in our area. I would love the opportunity to elaborate on this on a constructive basis, all I get from our local bureau is unsatisfisfying justifications.

92. *92 admin said at 9:34 am on November 16th, 2010:*

Earl,

Your feedback is important to us! We are listening/acting on your concerns. Please send them to us at wecare@bbb.org.

Thanks

Greg, BBB

93. *93 admin said at 9:38 am on November 16th, 2010:*

Roger,

If you wouldn't mind, please shoot us an email at wecare@bbb.org with more details. We are working hard to correct past mistakes.

Thanks

Greg, BBB

94. *94 shanice said at 11:14 am on November 16th, 2010:*

What a scam!! I work for a sales company that use to pay for a membership and we always have the A+ rating then a new ceo came along and refuse to pay the BBB and no longer a paying member. all of a sudden our rating was drop to an F. We spend so much money in pleasing the customer and do right by our customers in hoping that it will change the rating but nothing. Everyone needs to call their city office and request to remove the BBB link that the government website will have so consumers can click right into the BBB website. We need to have our goverment stop advertising this crooked company that its not even a non profit organigation. What a RIPOFF!!

95. *95 jp said at 12:59 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

You should have each company's complete complaint file available online (with personal information of consumers redacted) because our ratings are terribly inaccurate, especially for larger companies (George Brazil does not deserve an A+ rating). You already make that information available to the public, but only at your local offices.

96. 96 Dan said at 1:07 pm on November 16th, 2010:

You speak of taking actions to revise the rating system to make it more useful to consumers. Do these actions include completely decoupling a business' ranking from whether or not it pays dues to the BBB? By linking payment to ratings the BBB has basically rendered the rating system worthless. The only way to fix this problem is to put in place a verifiable wall between a company's ranking and its payment of dues. Any other actions the BBB might take to fix the rating system are pointless unless this key step is taken first.

97. 97 Edward Maloney said at 2:17 pm on November 16th, 2010:

What difference is this from bond and stock rating companies which are paid by the corporations which they rate? It is all just flagrant capitalist hypocrisy and corruption based on the greatest business myth and scam called the "free market." Let the Better Business Bureau and the financial rating companies be BANNED from accepting any money whatsoever from those rated, otherwise it is a total unacceptable conflict of interest. Also, those BBB executives had ridiculous salaries and have obviously been caught with their pants down and their hands out over an institutional policy accepting what amounts to "bribes" disguised as "memberships." I ONLY believe in Consumer Reports ratings

98. 98 Scott said at 2:31 pm on November 16th, 2010:

So when any business pays their respective licensing fee(s) to the State for their license, ie. a dentist, lawyer, doctor, contractor, then does this mean that their license is therefore, worthless? I think not.

Payments to BBB for accreditation fees are incidental. The bigger picture is that all BBB Accredited Businesses must adhere to BBB Standards for Trust, which includes that they MUST respond to any and all complaints. Non BBB accredited firms, on the other hand, do not have to respond to complaints, though they will experience a drop in their rating consequently.

As for "Wolfy" Puck, as he is so affectionately referred to be some here: Mr. Puck FAILED to respond to complaints, a fact that is curiously missing from 20/20's expose. While some in our starstruck society believe that Mr. Puck is above reproach—the rest of us believe he is not. He may have good food, but if he cares so little as to even respond to complaints from his dissatisfied customers....then this is very telling.

The F rating for Disneyland was also earned: Curious that ABC and Disney are part of the same company. Funny also that Wolfgang Puck is a frequent guest of Good Morning America.

99. 99 Mr. Rufo, said at 2:37 pm on November 16th, 2010:

With all due respect, sir, the only thing that is despicable is the actions of the BBB that were revealed in the ABC story. You can't brush those egregious actions aside as anomalies when there are so many documented incidences. You are just embarrassed by your association with the BBB and are attempting damage control. The damage is done. I will never again trust the BBB, which is a real shame because they "seemed" to be providing a useful service. As someone else noted, I will be anxious to see the follow-up story documenting how the BBB addressed these issues. Until then, there is no trust. I found it more than ironic that the stated purpose on BBB tax returns is: "The leader in advancing marketplace trust." This story has trashed decades of trust and BBB brand equity. Restoring those will be difficult if not impossible without new leadership. It's time to bring in a crisis management expert and can those overpaid and underinformed executives.

100. 100 trent rogers said at 3:04 pm on November 16th, 2010:

Have by any chance lost your kitty.

101. 101 Jerry Naiser said at 3:23 pm on November 16th, 2010:

I currently have apending lawsuit against my local BBB Branch in central Texas for exactly the same thing that 20/20 reported on. My case has not been heard yet, although I expect it to go well for me.

I am writing today to bring up another issue. One not mentioned in all the news stories. Why does the BBB enjoy non-profit status with the IRS?

Compared to Angieslist and Citysearch, All three sell advertising, only one sells a higher ranking if you become a member. Only this same one telemarkets nonmembers to become members when a complaint is filed. Only one charges to use the logo on the internet after you become a member. Only one has a bucket of upsells for their telemarketing staff to continually call you on.

Regardless of your position on the ratings scam, you have to agree that the BBB is certinely not in search of profits.

If you agree, please help make them pay their fare share by filing out this simple IRS form to report a tax cheat: <p://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f211.pdf>

The IRS will pay you a reward.

If you dont want the reward, fill out this one: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f3949a.pdf>

Best regards,

Jerry

102. *102 Aaron Reese, BBB said at 4:26 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

I work for the BBB. Improving our services to the public is something we should always strive for. That sounds great. But I don't understand why you are apologizing after a bogus 20/20 story. It took me less than one minute to debunk nearly everything in that story. It is not only inaccurate, but, I believe, malicious.

It's great to improve whatever policies we think need improvement. I don't think you'll find many objections there. I make suggestions on how to improve things to my superiors when I feel we need them. However, we are not "pay to play." It's a false statement and that is not even addressed here.

103. *103 Christopher Raines said at 4:40 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

I should be allowed to use your logo on my website without paying for the online program.

104. *104 admin said at 4:56 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

Shanice,

I'm sorry you had a bad experience with your BBB. You can email us more details at wecare@bbb.org so we can look further into the matter.

Greg, BBB

105. *105 steven said at 5:54 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

Mr Reese, your take on this would be funny, if it weren't so sad. Instead of trying to discredit an accurate report, the BBB should do the ethical thing and own up to this fraud that has been finally exposed. So tell me, where would I go to see that the lady who owned the antique store and got an A+ after she paid her "bribe" to the bbb did not happen. Where can I find out that ABC was inaccurate in their reporting about Hamas, and the other bogus businesses that received accreditation and A ratings? From the many responses here from people all over the country, these were certainly not "mistakes" or anomalies, but rather the normal order of business for the BBB. ABC did not force the BBB to do anything. They just presented the bait and the BBB took it hook, line and sinker. They proved that if you pay them, they will improve your grade. The BBB is standing there, on tape, with their hand in the cookie jar and the best they can come up with is basically, "wasn't me". I wonder what the BBB spin on this would be if they were not exposed. Oh wait, we already know this (see post #20) In my opinion, this is one of the biggest scams ever perpetrated on the American people. Other than the telemarketing aspect of the BBB, there are a very small number of people employed. In my local BBB, there is one person to handle

accredited businesses, and one person to handle non accredited businesses. Simple math would dictate that the BBB does not have near the resources to check on every company, let alone issue a grade.

106. *106 Charles R Dickerson said at 6:07 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

It has been my recent experience that the assertions, charges, accusations about the prejudicial treatment of "big business", by the BBB, to the detriment of the American consumer, are in reality, true. Without any further consideration or reprieve, they simply take the side, the word of "big business". You treat the Sears Holding Corporation with a great deal of "kid glove" consideration. You CANNOT find any records on local Sears stores when you need a reliability check. As it turns out, few, if any local stores have BBB records. The only "records" are at the corporate level. And it's really nothing at all. It doesn't tell a consumer anything about what a LOCAL stores does right or wrong. You have local Sears Auto Centers with records of shoddy repairs, unnecessary repairs, wheels falling off, vehicles damaged, very bad, non-exitant customer service and yet, their is NO record of this to protect, defend the customer. You give the Sears corporate headquarters a grade of "A-", with a long history of consumer ripoffs. Thousands and thousands of complaints in very short periods of time and yet, you do virtually nothing. Sears condones, denies and encourages the bad service and yet, their are no records. And when Sears makes a response, you take that as the absolute TRUTH and the customer is wrong, always. So where, exactly do all these State Attorney General cases come from? The FTC court filings and yes the customer WRITTEN complaints that Sears ALWAYS justifies, condones, excuses. "They worked on my car, then I had to pay \$2,000 for the damages they caused.....They did my brakes and a wheel fell off at 60 MPH....., The mechanic said he didn't do anything wrong..... Now we are given to understand that companies like Sears are just at the top of the garbage pile. They pay and the consumer gets ripped-off. If you have any doubts about what I am saying, simply type into any internet search engine " Sears Complaints" and get an education.

107. *107 Carrie pinson said at 6:31 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

To your President/Chairman:

FoxNews did a story last week regarding my mother at 90 year old woman you lost her home because Home Realty of Memphis was operating without a license and the TN Department of Financial Institution issued an Emergency Cease and Desist Order. The had made 9 loans. The Memphis Director Randy Hutchison was interviewed on TV and continues to rate the Company A+. Please e-mail me immediately to discuss. I am her daughter.

108. *108 bbb supporter said at 6:36 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

the 20/20 report was very much one-sided and was completely unfair to the BBB. not once did they mention the background details that go into the grades. just because a business has only had one or two complaints, if they never even bothered to respond to them or try to satisfy the consumer with a resolution or good faith gesture, then of course they are going to loose points, as they should! i'm sure there are a few BBB offices that do not have the right people in charge, but there are over 100 BBB's and the majority of them are doing things the right way and ARE earning their communities' trust. its the few bad apples that are ruining it for them all. I still believe the BBB is a great organization and stand behind them entirely.

109. *109 Mr. Saldana said at 7:02 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

Resignations and Full Transparency.

It is a shame that the many years of consumer confidence and trust earned by the BBB have been ruined by the illegal acts and greed of the BBB. No matter how the BBB wants to spin the facts, it appears that the reality is that the examples shown on the 20/20 report are not anomalies, but rather everyday normal practices of the BBB. The reason for this, I suspect, is money! Greed is not good! It is appalling that upper management of the BBB are paid over \$300,000 when they are a non-profit corp.

To address these problems and re-gain the trust and consumer confidence lost, the BBB should take the following actions without delay.

- (1) Stop using the A – F grading system. Go back to the “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” system that has served them well for many years.
- (2) Allow consumers and businesses to register complaints against the BBB and publish those complaints online with full disclosure.
- (3) Fully disclose the specific criteria for ranking of businesses. Every business should be measured against a fixed set of objective criteria for ranking. Do not hide behind a mysterious proprietary “algorithm” for assigning rank. The criteria for ranking should be fully disclosed and measured on objective standards. A business should know the objective criteria it is being measured against.
- (4) The top management of the BBB must take responsibility for the failings of the BBB and resign from their positions. Specifically, Mr. Cox, Mr. Mitchell, and Mr. Almond should resign and be replaced. These actions will demonstrate a clear message and intent by the BBB of reform of the system.

If the BBB fails to take drastic actions to correct the problems then all businesses should cancel their memberships and the Attorney General should proceed with criminal charges.

110. 110 *Jimmie Rivers said at 7:21 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

Wanted to update you that we had over 100,000 visitors to bbbroundup.com today which briefly crashed the site. Thought you might like to know, and take into account, during today’s board decision.

111. 111 *Giovanni DiMeo said at 7:49 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

I used to put my trust in the BBB. I hired a company based on the rating your organization gave them. They were awful, the service was terrible, and my home is worse off now after them having been here.

I spent a year trying to undo the mess they caused. I also spent that year trying to figure out how the company received such a high grade from the BBB, when my personal experience, as well as the reviews of others that I found on line, were so negative. Now I know, the company must have bought the grade.

Your CEO called giving Hamas and Stormfront A ratings, while giving Wolfgang Puck an F because he didn’t pay, a mistake. Please. We now know that it was your policy to take money for grades.

The BBB is a joke, the fact that your homepage still asks us to put our trust in you is a disgrace, and you should be ashamed. The next time a I hire someone to work on my home, and they tell me about the high grade they received from the BBB, I will ask how much the grade cost them, and then ask them to leave.

112. 112 *Brandon said at 8:51 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

Greg,

I’m a BBB user as a consumer and generally supportive. That being said, you guys are being hammered and it is likely to get worse. I learned that total transparency is the only way to handle these things in my public service career. Why not commit to investigate all such payments and rating deals that may have occurred and publish them openly with legal charges if warranted. Transparency is the key word here!

113. 113 *Carrie said at 10:53 pm on November 16th, 2010:*

Believe nothing, no matter where you read it or who has said it unless it agrees with your own reason and own common sense.

Really 20/20...? you seem more desperate for ratings than ever. Your ‘ridiculous’ story made me laugh...and also wasted 10 minutes of my Friday night.

BBB...I’ll continue to support your efforts in protecting consumers. Thank you for all of the times you’ve helped me.

114. 114 *admin said at 9:22 am on November 17th, 2010:*

I appreciate everyone's comments.

Remember: if you have more details you would like to share, please email us at wecare.bbb.org.

Thanks,
Greg

115. 115 *Alissa said at 11:18 am on November 17th, 2010:*

What I think is dispicable that all this negativity is based on such a one sided segment from 20/20. It is amazing to hear all these negative responses and yet they are based on FALSE information. Shame on 20/20 first of all for this type of reporting. It was one of the last "investigative" shows I watched but now I will never do so again as it sickens me to see it also operates on its OWN agenda without truthful complete facts. I am a former employee and now a business owner myself so I KNOW THE facts and truth. For all these responses that are negative, why not take the time to find out the truth about your questions BEFORE you perpetuate such a SAD and one sided opinion in order to infiltrate others with your uneducated opinions. There are always disgruntled people but it is always their stupidity and misinformed opinions speak the loudest. Maybe take the time to contact ALL THE consumers the BBB has helped by assisting in a complaint OR by protecting them from getting involved in a problematic company. Or maybe call ALL THE business owners that use their accreditation in PROPER ways. Or even business owners that take PRIDE in the fact that they have an A and are responsive to any problems the BBB brings to their attention. Lets close our eyes to the fact that the person that filed THE LIES AND MISREPESENTED company information to the BBB on the Hamas incident because then that would mean accountability and that in LACKING in todays society. If all the companies complaining on here about their F grade would take the time to JUST ANSWER their complaints from consumers instead of writing on here you would see where the problem is in your company and how quickly your grade can change WITHOUT PAYING to be accredited. To those others that have questions about the BBB instead of getting misinformation why not go the the source. There's a novel idea. Take responsibility for the reason you have bad grades instead of blaming others. Don't kill the messenger for exposing the problems with your company, take time to make it right. Bottom Line

116. 116 *Alissa said at 11:33 am on November 17th, 2010:*

Okay in re-reading my reply I noticed a few typos and I apologize for that. When I am adamant about what I am typing 😊 Oh no...I just admitted I made an error and am not perfect. Sounds familiar.... 😊

117. 117 *steven said at 1:15 pm on November 17th, 2010:*

Alissa, What was the false information used in the news piece? Isn't it the responsibility of the BBB to check on companies that they accredit? How can they justify giving an accreditation to a company that they have not even looked into? The many example given during the 20/20 segment were true and accurate, although it has become obvious that the BBB's position on this matter is to discredit the source. The strategy they used when this was brought to their attention over a year ago by Jimmy Rivers and his site, <http://bbbroundup.com/> I got news for the bbb. The American people are smarter than that, and besides, that strategy did not work then, and it's not going to work now.

Maybe the bbb should have taken their own advice and answer the complaint. Instead Mr. Cox decided it was best to run away. LOL, you can't make this stuff up!

118. 118 *Billy Marshall said at 2:33 pm on November 17th, 2010:*

Alissa wrote "Lets close our eyes to the fact that the person that filed THE LIES AND MISREPESENTED company information to the BBB on the Hamas incident because then that would mean accountability and that in LACKING in todays society."

That person did lie, and that's a dirty trick, Karl Rove kind of stuff. But the fact remains that that liar was able to get an A Rating by paying for it. \$425 to be exact. That means that ALL of the so called BBB's reputation has been crushed. Gone. It matter's nothing to me anymore, forever. You can whine all you want about lacking accountability, but I hold the BBB accountable for being nothing more than a racketeering scheme! Hamas and Stormfront!! They never even checked on the names!!! It's a credit card scam!!!!

I personally can't stand Wolfgang Puck, but if he had an A+ from the BBB I would never eat his food again.

And Alissa, if you value your business, you'll remove all trapping's of your association with the BBB or you will lose business. even if you earned the honest way, which can never be believed after the Hamas /Stormfront incident.

119. 119 Norm said at 2:52 pm on November 17th, 2010:

Steven aka- Jimmie Rivers,

I see you made mention of me on your website. Thanks, I feel special.. Why don't you be fair and reference my post #67, 75 and #76 on your website ? I tell you why you won't.. I provided you evidence to prove you wrong.

Let me correct myself.. You are right..

Anthony Weiner (D-NY) who confronted Bill O'Reilly regarding Goldline. I would say O' Reily and Beck have proven Mr. Weiner wrong on many accounts. Sorry, I had the wrong left wing Politician..

I don't work for the BBB, so I can say what ever I want and I don't have to remain politically correct!

Your boy Richard Blumenthal, does not have such a trustworthy past as well,

Blumenthal took hundreds of thousands of \$ of PAC money, as well as lied about his envolvment in Vietnam War. These Political Action Committees were funded by some of the same business's he was regulating.. Seems like the Pot calling the Kettle black to me.. But, ABC does not tell you that..

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

So Jimmie Rivers, what is your story, Why are you hiding behind your website and postings, why could you not show your face on TV? I am completly shocked that ABC would allow you to hide your face.. What happened to transparancy?

You get your information from disgruntled ex employees.. Really? Every business in America has disgruntled ex-employees that I am sure would tell you something negative about them.

Let me ask you a question Mr. Rivers, have you ever read some of the complaints againts these business owners that you speak of on your website? If the answer is NO.. Then how can you honestly say that you have the full story or %100 of the facts?

Oh yeah, it is clear that you nor ABC care about getting both sides of the story..

120. 120 Norm said at 3:07 pm on November 17th, 2010:

Alissa,

I agree with you %100.

I think what the BBB will find as a result of this 20/20 story is that it will give companies with F a reason to call and complain and a defense to their customers as an excuse for their poor customer service as well as giving scammers the ability to say that the BBB is a scam to try and legitimize their scam. Thanks ABC!

To Jerry Naiser,

You got REVOLKED.. that is a perfect example that the BBB is NOT pay to play..

You bragged about you being an 18 year long member of the BBB.. This shows the BBB gives no special treatment.

This means your money is no good with the BBB. The BBB ought to be suing you for Trademark infringement as you still use the BBB in your advertisement on your website.

By the way Jerry, how do you get 33 complaints in 3 years in the Lawn and Pest Control business? How hard of a business is that?

[http://maps.google.com/maps/place?](http://maps.google.com/maps/place?hl=en&rlz=1R2SKPT_enUS403&wrapid=tlif12900242565861&um=1&ie=UTF-8&q=Real+Green+Pest+Control+and+Lawn,+Round+Rock,+Tx&fb=1&gl=us&hq=Real+Green+Pest+Control+and)

[hl=en&rlz=1R2SKPT_enUS403&wrapid=tlif12900242565861&um=1&ie=UTF-8&q=Real+Green+Pest+Control+and+Lawn,+Round+Rock,+Tx&fb=1&gl=us&hq=Real+Green+Pest+Control+and](http://maps.google.com/maps/place?hl=en&rlz=1R2SKPT_enUS403&wrapid=tlif12900242565861&um=1&ie=UTF-8&q=Real+Green+Pest+Control+and+Lawn,+Round+Rock,+Tx&fb=1&gl=us&hq=Real+Green+Pest+Control+and)

121. 121 Alissa said at 3:55 pm on November 17th, 2010:

Steven (?!?) – So are you telling me that it is the BBB’s responsibility to drive by EVERY business to verify the address they provide not to mention the phone numbers. Oh and wait they would also have to follow them around EVERY DAY to make sure that what service they provide and what type of business they are is actually true. I have an idea, why don’t you call around to every state’s licensing agency and see if they, being the regulatory agency, actually do those things FOR EVERY business they license. Let me know how that goes for you. Lets address what false information was included even though it would be MUCH quicker to discuss what was accurate since there was VERY LITTLE that was. But just for funsies lets start with the fact that I do agree that people are smarter than this as you stated, BUT ONLY when they are given full disclosure of all details and facts to make an educated decision. So are people smart enough to know that through all the pomp and kudos that 20/20 gave Wolfgang Puck, THE REAL REASON for his F grade is because he has 2 UNANSWERED complaints NOT because he won’t pay for accreditation? NO they aren’t able to know that because 20/20 conveniently didn’t disclose that. Maybe because they needed to save that allotted time for the ever important issue of why your dog eats strange things. Right. Are they smart enough to know that these 2 companies that were erroneously accredited were due to the fact that this person with too much time on their hands had nothing better to do than provide COMPLETELY false information on the document to the BBB in order to set them up? It was NOTHING MORE THAN LIES AND DECEPTION on that person’s part. OH WAIT, that’s right a BBB employee should have driven to the address, do a background check on the Principal including a picture ID to verify it really was them, and then of course be their shadow to make sure they are actually what they say they are. That is absolutely ridiculous. But no, people didn’t see that part because all that was included was sound bites that supported what 20/20 was trying to accomplish. Not to mention the fact that Blumenthall’s agenda was to push him into the senate in spite of his “problematic past and present”. 20/20 did nothing but PROVE the old adage, “you can’t believe everything you hear/read”. Otherwise we would all be millionaires from the Nigerian Lottery. As far as the website you included, there is a PLETHORA of these LAME, UNEDUCATED sites that post whatever suits their purpose without any verification. I think I would prefer to deal with facts NOT obscurity unlike you and 20/20. Good luck with that, tell me how it works out for you.

122. 122 steven said at 4:15 pm on November 17th, 2010:

Wow, the bbb and it’s supporters (employees) just don’t get it. The excuses are becoming more laughable by the minute. This is not about abc or Jimmy Rivers. This is about the fraudulent practices of the BBB. I’m not sure what point anyone is trying to make by saying that the people who started the fake companies are liars. They started these because they were trying to prove a point. And they did just that. They proved for all to see that the BBB is willing to take money for a good or better grade. On the other side of the coin, why was it so easy for a liar and a fake company to get accredited by the BBB? So I guess using your logic, an undercover officer selling drugs for a sting operation should also go to jail. After all, he was dealing drugs, how could we possibly believe him. I honestly can’t believe this is the BBB’s defense. I said it before and I’ll say it again, this is not about anyone other than the BBB and it’s fraudulent activities, caught on tape for all the world to see.

123. 123 steven said at 6:03 pm on November 17th, 2010:

Just for “funsies” Alissa, why don’t you explain to us the worth of a BBB accreditation, if they do not even verify that the address of the business is even real?

And there you go again making another one of my points for me. The BBB does NOT have the personnel or resources to investigate every company. Thanks for at least seeing that much. But this only raises the more important question. If this is true, and by your own admission it is, how in the world can the BBB issue a meaningful grade to a company? They can't, but they continue to do so in order to line their pockets. People will believe their own eyes and the numerous accounts of unfair treatment by the BBB from both consumers and businesses. They certainly will not believe the excuses being given by the BBB.

I would love to see the BBB have to answer to the American people and stand before Congress. I honestly believe that Steve Cox, because of his previous cover up attempts, should be put in prison. The BBB needs to own up to its many mistakes, but as far as ever being the trustworthy organization it once was, those days are long past. I'm sure that ABC and 20/20 are already working on a rebuttal to the accusations of unfair and inaccurate journalism being levied by the BBB. Mr. Cox had his opportunity to address this, but instead ran away like a scared little child. WTG Mr. Cox! How does that fit in with the BBB's policies on complaint resolution? I can't seem to find the part where it says to run away.

This is just like the guy who gets caught on "To Catch A Predator" telling Chris Hansen, "I swear this is the first time".

124. *124 Jimmie Rivers said at 6:04 pm on November 17th, 2010:*

Several BBB supporters have said if the company would just answer the complaints then they wouldn't have an F grade.

This is wrong for two reasons:

1) What you really mean is the company must respond to the BBB. This has NOTHING to do with whether or not the company responded to, and satisfied, the consumer who issued the complaint. What right does the BBB have to ask this of any non-member business? And how does this serve the consumer.

2) There are countless instances, well documented, where the BBB either does not send a complaint to the business if they are not a member, or has erroneous contact information for the business. How is a business supposed to answer a complaint it never receives?

125. *125 Hilary Lockhart said at 6:45 pm on November 17th, 2010:*

I did not even know about this story until today. BBB called me today wanting me to renew my membership – I canceled when rates went up in May. While talking to the representative I noticed my rating went from an A+ to an A-. I had not noticed this until today. When I asked her about it, she had no idea, why my rating would have gone down. I have been in business 9 1/2 years and NO complaints. However, I did cancel my membership and this is what caused my rating to go down. She said if I became a member I would be at an A+ AGAIN. So I have to BUY it. Really upsets me that I have an amazing business, with no complaints, but consumers see that I have an A-. I told her they need to at least disclose that my A- is TOTALLY based off non-membership.

When I told my husband about this, he said the BBB was being investigated and I found the 20/20 report and this blog.

So here I am venting.....

Hilary Lockhart
President
A+ Nannies, Inc.

126. *126 Javier said at 11:14 pm on November 17th, 2010:*

Why does Jimmie Rivers hide all the time? On the news he had to "black" out his face and change his voice. Come on man, at least Steve Cox showed his face while you hid. I think you are just another idiot business owner that got "screwed" by the BBB when in fact, you caused it all. Or you could be a disgruntled sales employee that couldn't make any money. Either way I challenge you to man up and show your self and let everyone know what

your real problem is. Maybe you just prefer to stay behind a keyboard and a computer screen, which shows how big of a punk you are. Don't you have a wife/girlfriend? A life?

I trust the BBB and will continue to do so. Joining the BBB is commendable and that deserves the 4% factor it has on your rating. The members have committed to RESOLVE all complaints. Why wouldn't I want to stick to using members? The BBB has millions of consumers and businesses using the service everyday. Everyone of you that is posting a negative comment were at an F already and are using this as fallback and an excuse for their crappy record. By the way, Jerry Naiser you are a complete idiot.

127. *127 karenq said at 3:07 am on November 18th, 2010:*

BBB need to be but out of business so they can not hurt people anymore go away BBB when dont need you or want you if i see you name on a business i know to go some where else. Go a way Big Bad Bull stop hurt people. When thought you meant us good but you dont you just want the MONEY SO TAKE WHAT YOU GOT AND GO AWAY...

128. *128 KAREN said at 3:13 am on November 18th, 2010:*

I'm so glad to see them finally exposed for what they are. The BBB is the biggest scam organization in this country.

I am so happy to see these frauds finally exposed. Small business owners across the country have been well aware of the BBB's pay for play schemes for years. It's just one of those things we have had to go along with because American consumers are so damn lazy and stupid that they will listen to anyone that promotes themselves as an authority, rather than research the facts themselves. AMERICAN CONSUMERS I ASSURE OF YOU ONE THING, YOU CANNOT TRUST ONE THING THIS ORGANIZATION TELLS YOU ABOUT OTHER BUSINESSES.

129. *129 KAREN said at 3:19 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Thank you, ABC! It's about time that the Better Business Bureau was exposed . If you check out the Atlanta area's BBB website and do some comparisons, you'll see that paying for a grade is standard procedure there, too.

130. *130 kAREN said at 3:20 am on November 18th, 2010:*

The BBB is a scam organization that needs to be reported on, itself. First of all, you can get the file on a company—but you have to PAY for it—yes, the BBB is a for profit enterprise. Secondly, the BBB will do absolutely zilch to help you if you have been ripped off by a company

131. *131 Karen said at 3:26 am on November 18th, 2010:*

i will do this in Michigan so all business that didnt see the show will know do not do Business with BBB (no more Big Bad Bull in Michigan we dont have that kind of money to burn)

I have been burned by the BBB, and after watching this story, I am forwarding it to all my previous customers and putting the link on our website. I am also, sending out flyers to all small businesses in my area, so they don't waste their time or money joining such an unethical company. which I too plan on exposing. This is just the beginning!

132. *132 Yaron said at 9:48 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Hello Greg,

I have a question, I have a moving company for about 9 years now I want to understand how I have about 40 complaints in 3 year period, with over 2250 references, 62 – 5 star reviews on the BBB's TrustLink.org site – but I am have a "NR" rating. I have been fighting with the BBB for years to prove by ethical business practice with no luck. I have customers with complaints registered on my company that we never services, customers who threatened to complain if we don't give them money, customers who intentionally extorted money from us in order or they will complain. Long distance moving is one of the toughest industries to service and our complaint ratio less than 1%! How can the BBB tell consumers that we are not a good business? The BBB used to evaluate

complaints and remove the ones which are proven to be Invalid but no more, now it doesn't matter what the customer says, it is always a valid complaint, even if we never even serviced the customer.

133. *133 steven said at 10:52 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Sorry Javier, you are the idiot. What difference does it make who Jimmy Rivers is? This story is not about him. Besides, Brian Ross of ABC was the one asking the questions and he was right there in front of the camera. It's about the bbb and their PROVEN fraudulent activities. Javier, you just keep trusting the bbb. I'm sure that there were a lot of people who trusted Bernie Madoff right up until the very end and I'm sure some of them still think that he did nothing wrong. The blame it on the messenger strategy is NOT working. I sure hope that they came up with a better strategy than that at their board meeting. The FEW people here that have sided with the BBB are obviously people associated with the BBB in some sort of way. The average consumer saw the facts with their own eyes. There is so much more to this story that hasn't even been exposed yet. The public would have been made aware of a lot more if Steve Cox didn't run away in the middle of the interview. Why should any business answer a complaint from the BBB when the BBB's own president won't answer the complaints filed against the BBB? I wonder what type of grade a business would get if instead of facing the complaint, they tell the BBB that they don't have any more time for this and ran away? Steve Cox and the BBB are guilty and have been aware of all this well before the 20/20 airing. They misjudged several aspects of their strategy to discredit the source and hope that the mainstream media never used it as a reference. I guess that strategy didn't work out so well for the BBB.

134. *134 admin said at 10:57 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Yaron:

I'm sorry to hear that you have had a bad experience with your local BBB and are not happy with you rating.

I would like to direct you to our BBB complaint form to share your issues. Please visit <http://hotline.bbb.org/odrweb/public/hlcsearch.aspx>

to complete.

Thanks,
Greg, BBB

135. *135 Yaron said at 11:07 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Greg,

I cannot file a complaint about my local BBB because I am afraid to do so. For over a year I have been trying to speak to them, explain to them, show them that I have complaint that do not relate to me, and all that happened is that I was bullied. I was told that if I keep writing emails and calling (trying to protect my business) then they will throw me out of the BBB completely and accused me of harassment. I have completely lost faith in the BBB. I had to hire a third party to try to talk to them, but again with no much luck.

136. *136 admin said at 11:10 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Yaron,

Your complaint would go directly to CBBB and not your local BBB so we would be able to investigate the matter for you. We need you to first file the complaint in order for us to proceed.

Greg, BBB

137. *137 steven said at 11:19 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Yaron, be very careful. Your concerns are valid. Your local BBB would certainly become aware of your complaint. After all, how could it possibly be resolved if your local bbb does not even know about it. As you can clearly see, up to this point, the BBB's strategy is to discredit the source of complaints.

So Greg, please tell us how the BBB would resolve Yaron's problem without his local BBB finding out?

138. 138 *admin said at 11:24 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Steven:

Obviously the local BBB would find out in the process as they would have to, but we can't take any action or investigate if there isn't a complaint filed. It's just as if we were investigating a complaint against a business.

Greg, BBB

139. 139 *Doug Firestone said at 11:38 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Steve Cox,

So what's the real deal.? Simply put: Does the BBB ask for "donations" in order to up a customers rating or not? Real easy question that requires an easy answer with no further explanation. Yes or no will suffice. I'm trying to do some biz with a BBB A+ rated company but hesitate at this time.

Thanks

140. 140 *steven said at 11:47 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Well once again Greg you and the BBB play a game of smoke and mirrors. The reason I responded to Yaron was because your response to him was very misleading. You made it seem as though his local bureau would not know about it. His concern was that his local BBB would retaliate against him for filing a complaint, and by reading the comments on this site, as well as, his personal experience with his local BBB, he has every right to feel the way he does. The BBB is extremely vindictive in their tactics used to squash a complaint against one of its own. Again Yaron, be very careful! If you get a chance, check out <http://bbbroundup.com/>

141. 141 *Yaron said at 11:48 am on November 18th, 2010:*

Greg,

Of course the local BBB needs to know about a complaint, but trust me, my local BBB knows about the complaint, they just don't care. For me to open this about them is Suicide! I don't want to wake up tomorrow with an F rating and go out of business. It is very easy to "fix" things after they are bought up to their attention; But what about the months and month when I was suffering. Do you know that a moving company that has 500 customers a year or 49,000 customer's year is considered the same according to the BBB? Do you know that if a local moving company does a 5 mile move they consider it the same as a 3000 mile move? They don't care that a state to state move is much more complicated than a 3 hour move across the street? They don't care and they don't listen. They just slap you with the complaints and throw you to sea! No matter what we will do , my customers will always be stressed and in a tough position, "Moving out of state is the third most stressful life event, following death and divorce according to the Employee Relocation Council" . The BBB is suppose to be there to protect consumers, not give them a way to extort, blackmail, and get money from the company.

142. 142 *steven said at 12:10 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Doug, The answer to your question is absolutely yes.

As far as trusting a business because of its A+ BBB rating and accreditation, DON'T DO IT!! That is exactly what my issue with the BBB stems from. I was a consumer who was scammed for thousands of dollars from a BBB accredited A+ business. Three months later the business went bankrupt and it was learned that most of the info, including names and addresses were fraudulent. The company skipped town and defrauded hundreds of people. A lot of these people, me included, went with this company because of their BBB accreditation, which was referred to often in their sales pitch. Had the BBB done the slightest bit of checking, most of these facts could have been revealed before so many consumers got ripped off.

143. 143 *steven said at 12:24 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Doug, if it were me, I would tell the business about this news story and let him know that as long as he is a BBB accredited, you will take your business elsewhere. That seems to be the only way the BBB is going to get the message.

144. 144 *admin said at 1:21 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Yaron,

I'll email you directly and put you in touch with someone at CBBB who can help you.

Greg, BBB

145. 145 *Chris said at 1:31 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

I am a manager with All My Sons Moving & Storage, one of the largest and most respected moving companies in the country. We have 41 offices nationwide (including Mexico City) and even in the worst economy since the Great Depression, managed to service over 100,000 customers last year alone.

Despite being in perhaps the most volatile industry there is, our offices average under 10 complaints a year – that is under a .04% complaint ratio. Yet the BBB has continuously harassed our company, trying to extort money from us in order to obtain a quality grade. Our company has refused to pay to play, and in return the BBB retaliates against our company numerous times after each refused sales call.

Last week alone, the BBB made three separate “mistakes” which caused our grade on their website to unjustly fall to an “F”. Conveniently, these mistakes were all made within days of our company refusing to pay the BBB’s sales associate to move our grade to an “A+”.

Within 24 hours of refusing the BBB’s sales call, two complaints that were previously responded to and closed in the favor of our company were re-opened, and immediately re-closed as “unanswered by the business”, which in turn moved our grade down to an “F”. Upon viewing the complaints, every response previously on their website by both our company and the customer were no longer there! Luckily, our office is aware of the BBB’s mafia extortion tactics, and we keep extensive records of our correspondence with the BBB. Through numerous screenshots of their own website showing the responses to these complaints and dates of the BBB closing them in our favor, we were able to force the BBB to once again close the complaints under their original designation.

Within 48 hours of this resolution, the BBB resumed their retaliation efforts against our company for not paying their sales associate for an “A+” grade. The BBB once again re-opened a complaint previously closed in our favor, and immediately re-closed it under “unanswered by the business” and moved our grade back down to an “F”. However, this time the BBB did not even delete the previous responses on their website! Upon viewing the complaint, both the customer’s and our company’s responses indicating an amicable resolution to the complaint were still posted!

These are just examples from the last week alone. The BBB has been attempting to extort money from our company for years, causing us hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost business through unjust grades because we refuse to pay their annual fee to be left alone. The BBB has used any excuse possible to lower our grade, whether it be the above mentioned “mistakes” or by simply processing complaints that are in direct violation of their own terms and conditions.

For example, the last complaint against our company was a customer simply stating that we charge too much for our services. This was registered as a complaint despite the BBB’s official complaint form indicating that they are unable to process complaints “involving the price charged for goods or services”. Furthermore, the last complaint prior to this one was from a customer we did not even do business with! Despite our attempts to have such complaints taken off of their website, the BBB refuses to do so. In addition, the BBB website does not allow access to these complaints so that potential customers enquiring on their website cannot see whether a complaint is valid or not.

In conclusion, I applaud both 20/20 for reporting these mafia scare tactics, as well as CT Attorney General Richard Blumenthal for pursuing possible criminal prosecution of the BBB. My company refuses to give into the BBB’s harassment and I encourage other businesses to stand against these criminal acts.

146. 146 *Chris said at 1:32 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Doug,

The answer is yes.

147. 147 *steven said at 1:52 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Well said Chris!

148. 148 *Yaron said at 3:18 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Greg,

I will contact the person you emailed me. I hope he can help me because I have lost faith with the BBB. Up to date I have waited for someone to hear me out and help out. For the general information, check our reviews – <http://movingnationwide.com/moving/>

You can click and view each review from the original review the shipper wrote

Check out our TrustLink Page -

<http://www.trustlink.org/Reviews/Nationwide-Van-Lines-Inc-206002380>

We are a good company who gives out good service and its a shame that the BBB does not see that!

149. 149 *admin said at 4:00 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Chris:

I looked up All My Sons Moving & Storage in our reports and out of the first 4 results, 2 of the locations were accredited, 2 others were not (1 had an A rating, the other an A+).

If you can fill out the form here: <http://hotline.bbb.org/odrweb/public/hlcsearch.aspx>

we can get some more information on the location with the issue and investigate.

Thanks

Greg, BBB

150. 150 *George said at 5:04 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

Approximately three years ago, the BBB contacted me to join their membership. I indicated to them that I was not happy with their rating of my business in the past, and that I would not be interested in becoming a member. The salesperson assured me that my grade would improve from my current “D” status up to a minimum of a “B+”.

The salesperson also encouraged me to join with me other two businesses, assuring me that I would receive an “A+” if I did so. I fell into the trap, and I joined the BBB with all three of my businesses. The BBB took my money for the three enrollments, and I got the promised grades.

After some time, one of my three businesses received an inevitable complaint. The complaint was responded to promptly, and the issue resolved with the customer amicably. However, my grade for this business fell to a “C”, and upon a second complaint (also resolved promptly) was moved down to an “F”.

I called and wrote to my salesperson with the BBB multiple times, but I was ignored. I then called and wrote to the President of both my local BBB as well as the CBBB requesting assistance, but I was ignored once again. I could not get a call back or letter from anyone within the BBB despite my continuous efforts.

When a year had passed and it was time to renew my membership, the BBB began their sales calls once again! This time I refused their offer, and did not renew membership with any of my three businesses. Shortly after refusing their request for my money, the BBB reduced the grades of all three of my businesses, despite two

receiving no complaints since I purchased the “A+” grade. This was an act of retaliation for not allowing them to extort me for my money.

It’s bad enough that you have to pay the BBB for a good grade, but its REALLY bad that they take your money, then take the good grade that you paid for away anytime they feel like it.

The BBB is finally getting what it deserves. The BBB is not trusted by the public, and therefore it has become irrelevant to the real business world. Bye Bye BBB.

151. 151 Joelle said at 11:04 pm on November 18th, 2010:

Words cannot express the Joy of seeing the BBB finally being exposed. About four years ago I received what I would consider a soliciting call at my fathers small business he started over forty years ago from someone at the Cincinnati office in reference to membership, wanting us to join, they said there was a complaint and this would be the ideal time to join to help them resolve the complaint, I was concerned about the complaint and told my father he then told me several unbelievable stories about the BBB through the years just like the others posted. Needless to say we did not respond. Words can’t express how thrilled I was to show my father the news the other day about the BBB being exposed for the scammers they are! I wonder what sort of legal actions business’s may take against the BBB for the slandering of their business names.?!?!?Glad to see the tables are turned.

152. 152 Mad-At-BBB said at 11:35 pm on November 18th, 2010:

I would be willing to wager that most of the people (except BBB employees) who are supporting the BBB do not even know how the BBB “helps consumers resolve complaints.” The BBB makes it seem like they go to bat for the consumer and fight for a resolution. However, that is not the case.

I have been in charge of responding to BBB complaints at 2 separate companies in the last 10 years. The process was the same at each company, as follows:

- 1) The consumer files a complaint with the BBB.
 - 2) The BBB sends the complaint to the business.
 - 3) The business responds to the BBB.
 - 4) The BBB sends the response to the consumer.
 - 5) The consumer responds to the BBB.
- The BBB sends the response to the business.
- 6) Repeats steps 3-5 until one side “gives up”.

If the consumer simply does not respond (regardless of how the business was responding), then the complaint is closed as “Assumed Satisfied”.

If an amicable solution is reached and the consumer actually remembers to tell the BBB they were satisfied, then it is closed as “Satisfied.”

If neither side gives in, ‘eventually’ the BBB will offer to send the case to Arbitration (not by a BBB employee – but by a third party they help locate). Then, usually a year or more after both sides agree to arbitration, the arbitrator will listen to both sides and decide the case.

So, in other words, the BBB itself does little to nothing other than be a messenger service. That doesn’t really seem to me like it is actually “doing” anything to “help the consumer.”

Regardless of how a complaint is closed, it still counts negatively against the business. Even if the customer were to later say “I’m sorry, I was mistaken, this is really a good company” – once a complaint is filed (regardless of how it is resolved or not), it counts against the business. The business could call the consumer names in their responses, but it would still show as “responded”.

People are saying that “all Wolfgang Puck” had to do was respond to his complaints. That’s right. Even if he responded and said that those people had “no taste in food” (or something) – as long as he kept responding to the

BBB and the consumer finally gives up — then he would not have had an “F”. Does that even make sense? Since when does “no comment” mean something worse than insulting the consumer? Who’s to say that Wolfgang Puck didn’t resolve the issue with the consumers directly (instead of going through the BBB)? Should he have an “F” simply because he chose to skip the middle-man?

Why doesn’t the BBB allow businesses the choice to be listed as “unrated” (or something similar). That would tell the consumer to “be careful” and to look for more information about the business before doing business with them. All that without irreparably damaging an innocent company (with an “F”) that doesn’t have the manpower to bow down to the BBB’s every wish.

The BBB has created such a monopoly (at best, or dictatorship at worst) that it is impossible to “opt-out” of being rated. If a business does not ‘trust’ the BBB (especially after the 20/20 story) or does not recognize the BBB’s “authority” — then the BBB does everything it can to ruin the businesses reputation. Even if we take the well documented “pay for play” part out of the picture, it still doesn’t seem right. Why does a business “have to be” rated by the BBB?

The BBB claims that it cannot take the time to check out every business thoroughly. Well, why not simply require that the BUSINESS supply documentation / proof before extending accreditation? For example, why not ask for their business license number (at the VERY least)? I propose that it would then shift that responsibility to the business itself to prove they are a real business (at the very least) and at the same time result in more accurate information for the BBB.

BBB supporters try to say that it is not the BBB’s fault that they were “scammed” by the people who gave them the business information about Hamas. No one is saying that those people didn’t lie. Of course they did – that is what it means to be a “scam”. But, how can we trust the BBB to protect us from scams if it quite readily falls prey to a scam itself? Simply asking for basic “proof” of the business could have potentially stopped that.

It would make it really easy for the BBB if all businesses would tell the truth. But why would we EVER expect a true “scam business” to be honest with the BBB? If the BBB is not checking to see if a business is a scam, how can the consumer trust when the BBB says that a business is not a scam? Isn’t that the BBB’s job? Bottom line (regarding that point) – if the BBB rated an obvious scam as an “A+”, then how many other “A+” business are a scam?

153. *153 Mad-At-BBB said at 11:43 pm on November 18th, 2010:*

By the way, if the 20/20 article was false then why doesn’t the BBB sue them for slander / libel.

154. *154 admin said at 12:25 pm on November 19th, 2010:*

Mad-At-BBB:

Please fill out this form (<http://hotline.bbb.org/ODRWeb/public/hlscomplaint.aspx>) so we can look into this issue further.

Greg, BBB

155. *155 steven said at 1:18 pm on November 19th, 2010:*

Very well stated Mad-At-BBB. I’m not sure what the admin would like you to send to him as it seems like you were quite thorough in your explanation. It would be nice if the BBB would simply answer the concerns in this public forum. I did see that the BBB basically admitted its’ guilt and is doing away with awarding accredited businesses an extra 4 points. That does not even scrape the surface of what is wrong with the BBB. Scam businesses will still be able to receive good grades. The BBB needs to open their eyes because this is not going away. Check in regularly to this informative website <http://bbbroundup.com/> for updates as this story progresses.

The real question is when is the BBB going to acknowledge that their letter grading system is seriously flawed. On the most basic level, they DO NOT have the resources to issue a reliable grade to every company. Putting the

responsibility on the business owner to supply accurate information is only asking for problems from scam businesses. I guess that is why there are so many scams that have been BBB accredited. As far as I'm concerned, the BBB is responsible for participating in the scam because of their failure to do any type of background check on the business. The consumer assumes because of the BBB accreditation that the company is legit. Often times these businesses use their accreditation in the sales pitch to lure their victims. The BBB is a complete sham.

Although the BBB refuses to give answers in this forum, I'll ask a question anyway. How many BBB employees at each regional office are assigned to check on the credibility of a company, or at the very least, check that the info supplied by the business is accurate?

Also, I am very much looking forward to the BBB's response to the Attorney General? Tick -Tock Mr. Cox, the clock is running and this time, you can't.

156. *156 Judge Jury Executioner? said at 1:23 pm on November 19th, 2010:*

“BBB: Judge, Jury & Executioner of Debt Settlement Industry”

The changes that the BBB proposes making to its flawed rating system certainly won't fix its biases, bad ratings, and slanderous attacks on an industry that it doesn't favor. Case in point: the debt settlement industry. As early as June 23, 2008 a complaint made on Ripoffreport.com (<http://www.ripoffreport.com/BBB-Better-Business-Bureau/Better-Business-Bure/better-business-bureau-of-the-pa6e8.htm#>) accused the BBB of the Southland of issuing an “F” rating to ANY debt settlement company, even if the company is ethical and has been in business for several years. The complainant adds “So, why an F rating for everyone? I'll tell you why; at the helm of the BBB of the Southland is Bill Mitchell, who is a former board member of SpringBoard Credit Counseling, a competitor to our industry.”

On August 13, 2010, “Debt Settlement Industry Gets Its Comeuppance From the FTC” (</us/post/debt-settlement-industry-gets-its-comeuppance-from-the-ftc-5724>) William G. Mitchell, President and CEO of the Better Business Bureau of the Southland, Inc. slanders the debt settlement industry ending his stating, “It's about time this industry was put out of business.”

It's also clear that the BBB lobbied alongside the credit counseling industry to pass a new law effective October 27 that imposes steep restrictions and sanctions on “for-profit” debt relief companies while, ironically, all non-profit debt relief companies, specifically, credit counseling operations, are fully exempted. Coincidence?

The above law resulted in a major victory for the BBB and the credit counseling industry, which was hurt by the explosive growth of the debt settlement industry and the ongoing increase in consumer bankruptcy filings.

Over the past two years, debt settlement, not debt consolidation, has answered the heightening consumer demand. For people with extreme financial hardships, it is a more viable bankruptcy alternative that provides a stronger form of debt elimination. Hence, the consequent growth of debt settlement companies threatened the profitability of the credit counseling industry, a long time BBB ally.

Here's something of equal threat to the credit counseling industry. Even after the advent of the 2005 bankruptcy reform bill, which was designed to lower the rate of bankruptcy filings, year after year, bankruptcy filings have increased. This year, over 1.6 million bankruptcy filings are expected, questioning the efficacy of non-profit credit counselors and their debt management plans, which according to a 2001 Consumer Reports survey have a dismal 21% completion rate.

Nevertheless, the BBB rating system gives an A rating to a vast majority of non-profit credit counseling organizations. Many have received considerable consumer complaints. And guess what companies are given a D-rating, even if they received zero complaints? “Debt settlement companies.”

Ironically, Dwight Kealoha, CEO of Hawaii's Better Business Bureau responded to the 20/20 probe on the ethics and questionable algorithms of the BBB with the following statement: “How can businesses go from a good grade to a bad one? “Have a lousy record with regards to complaint monitoring, complaint processing, not answering complaints, not having a license.” (<http://www.kitv.com/r/25781154/detail.html>). Yet, his statement contradicts

the black eye (and defamation of character) that the BBB gives to any company classified as a debt settlement company. Does our D- rating make any common sense? Our report states: “the BBB processed a total of 2 complaint(s) about this business in the last 36 months, our standard reporting period” and our complaints were Administratively Closed – “BBB determined the company provided proper verification that indicated there was no obligation to resolve the issues of the complaint.”

Are the BBB ratings based on algorithms or biases? Our report also states: “Based on BBB files, this business has a BBB Rating of D- on a scale from A+ to F. Reasons for this D- rating include: BBB concerns with the industry in which this business operates; Length of time business has been operating.”

In rebuttal to our flawed D- rating, “length of time” should not negatively affect the rating algorithms as the BBB clearly reports that our company has operated for four years.

In closing, BBB injustices have gone far beyond flaws in their rating system. In the case of debt settlement companies, the BBB has taken the prejudicial stance in being their judge, jury, and executioner. Their so-called rating algorithms automatically assign a D- to F rating to any debt settlement company regardless of length of time in business or degree of complaints. In contrast, the BBB expresses favoritism, giving numerable credit counseling organizations that have received excessive complaints, an A or B rating.

Additionally, the fair and neutral non-profit organization refuses to issue a new membership to any debt settlement company that willfully requests to pay for a new BBB membership. The problem, which seems more like a witch hunt to abolish the debt settlement industry, has also gone virally on the web. If a consumer does a Google search on a debt settlement company, a link comes up on the very top of the search result. In our case, it links to a NEGATIVE BBB report prominently showing our company’s D- rating. The report also erroneously states our company has only (1) employee, although six company phone numbers are listed. Plus, if the BBB bothered to check numerous online press releases on our services and charitable contributions, they would see we have more than one employee. What’s even more ironic is that we’ve asked the BBB to correct the erroneous reporting from one to the correct 15 employees.

Furthermore, out of the two complaints, one was from a “non customer” possibly a frivolous complaint from a competitor. On two separate occasions, the person completed an online form with different debt amounts and thus received two different quotes, which was the basis of his complaint. We still answered this complaint in good faith and the matter was administratively closed. We were also surprised that the rep claimed the non customer complaint was a “valid complaint” that would remain in our report, which it has.

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