



## Local businesses have problems with BBB grades

by MONIKA DIAZ

[Bio](#) | [Email](#)

WFAA

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DALLAS — The Better Business Bureau announced major changes Thursday after an ABC News investigation into its ratings system.

Among the allegations: That the BBB awarded "A+" ratings to businesses who were members, and handed out lower grades to non-members.

Some North Texas business owners told News 8 the ratings system needs a complete overhaul because it doesn't make any sense.

Cathy Duncan of Earth Blooms on Greenville Avenue in Dallas has been in the floral business for 30 years. Her shop has an "F" rating from the Better Business Bureau and has received five complaints in the last 36 months.

The Dallas BBB told News 8 that Duncan's failure to respond to two complaints dropped her score.

Duncan dropped her BBB membership years ago because of budget constraints. She says non-members have to buy-in to get better ratings.

"I don't feel it's fair to pay to get a rating," Duncan said. "To me, that's the real scam to the consumer."

Toyota of Dallas, which is also not a member of organization, had an "F" rating for years, despite winning several awards from the automaker.

General manager David Kelley went online only to find out that his competitors who *were* members had better grades.

"One of the paying members had double the complaints that we had, and yet they had a much better rating than what we do," Kelley said.

According to the BBB, the dealership had one unanswered complaint and failed to respond to an advertising issue by the agency's review department.

Kelley wrote a letter questioning the system on Monday and finalized all complaints.

The grade for Toyota of Dallas improved to a "B," but Kelley still doesn't trust the BBB.

"Even with a 'B' today, I would question the system," Kelley said.

News 8 randomly checked the ratings for some local businesses online.

Neiman Marcus, a BBB member, has an "A+" rating, but 123 complaints were filed against the company in the last 36 months. All of them were resolved or closed.

The Magnolia Hotel in downtown Dallas has an "F" rating because of one complaint that it never responded to.

The restaurant Five Sixty by Wolfgang Puck also got an "F" because it failed to respond to one complaint.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Dallas it got a "B-" from the BBB despite having no complaints.

According to the BBB, the hotel's grade would improve if it had more information on the company's background and how long it has been in business; even with all that information, it would only score a "B+."

The Better Business Bureau — including its Dallas outlet — stand by the ratings system, but and will soon implement changes.

Some of the changes approved by the national board include no longer giving additional points to accredited businesses; conducting a review process for accrediting businesses; and streamlining the process for complaints on sales practices.

"We think the national board made the correct decision and we will be implementing this change as soon as possible," said Jeannette Kopko, a spokeswoman for the Dallas BBB. "It is scheduled for tonight at midnight."

E-mail [mdiaz@wfaa.com](mailto:mdiaz@wfaa.com)

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