

## PeopleClaim Blog

- [About](#)
- [Testimonials](#)

PeopleClaim is the cost and time-efficient way to resolve disputes equitably. Fridge blew up a month after the warranty expired? Your customer refused to pay his landscaping bill? The plumber charged HOW MUCH to replace a gasket? That's why [www.peopleclaim.com](http://www.peopleclaim.com) is here.

## The Better Business Bureau's 'pay for play' scandal, and why PeopleClaim.com is different—and unaffiliated.

**Posted:** November 15th, 2010 | **Author:** [sally](#) | **Filed under:** [Uncategorized](#) | **Tags:** [BBB accreditation](#), [Better Business Bureau](#), [consumer complaints](#), [pay for play](#), [proprietary algorithms](#), [rating systems](#) | [1 Comment](#) »

It's ironic that the Better Business Bureau (BBB) has now received a resounding F grade itself. Everyone's telling the formerly respected watchdog agency to clean up its act—from a host of indignant small business owners who feel, pretty much, that they've been scammed, to Connecticut's very angry Attorney General, Richard Blumenthal.

And there's merriment from coast to coast over ABC's story about how some bright spark registered Hamas and got it—for \$425—an A- rating. Well, Hamas' BBB listing *does* describe it as providing "educational programs for troubled youth." Glad to see that the BBB is doing those vaunted background checks.

Why do I bring this up? Because a number of people trying out PeopleClaim's complaint resolution system have asked why we're not affiliated with the BBB.

Now, I'd like to say that it's because we knew the Bureau had become somewhat...less than a public service. But actually it's because they refused us affiliation on the grounds that we're a competitor.

That's OK—we are, I suppose, although our business model doesn't include the same potential conflicts of interest. But it's awkward when an organization has become such a sacred cow that non-affiliation can make you look dodgy. And their not giving affiliation to a competitor can be viewed as either honest (they don't want to be tempted to give us an arbitrary F rating, having learned from the fuss about the Ritz-Carlton and Starbuck's arbitrary F ratings) or—well, a cudgel.

Fortunately, most people asking about our BBB affiliation were checking out PeopleClaim precisely because the Better Business Bureau hadn't done enough to fix their problem. They still wanted to resolve their complaint, so ultimately it didn't affect us. But how many people didn't ask, but also didn't use us, solely because we weren't BBB-affiliated? And how many other businesses have been forced by that de facto cudgel to pay up to a powerful organization that has proved to have badly lost its way?

It's impossible not to feel sorry for those BBB employees who do have integrity. I'm sure there are many, and I'm certain that those people have genuinely helped some consumers. The Bureau's scam alerts are generally very useful and timely.

But then I kept reading. According to BBB Roundup, Stanford University (unaccredited, one complaint 'responded to and given proper consideration') got a C grade, while the University of Phoenix Online (accredited, 273 complaints) got an A+.

The NAACP, meanwhile (unaccredited, one complaint, resolved) got an F, while Stormfront (accredited, fictitious, no complaints) got an A+. MasterCard International (unaccredited, nine complaints) got an F, while Visa (accredited, 49 complaints) got an A+. The New York Daily News (accredited, 37 complaints) got an A+, while the New York Post (unaccredited, three complaints) was only worth an F. Clearly, the BBB has some 'splaining to do.

## Playing the Ratings Game

The trouble is, virtually all 'ratings' systems can be gamed. Most smart small businesses with a few friends can easily get enough good reviews to outweigh any complaints on review sites, even if it costs them a few bucks (even a few hundred bucks). And if a rating system takes advertising dollars or membership fees from the businesses it's supposedly rating, then it's all over. The system is inherently flawed.

Small business owners nationwide are busy telling the media that membership in the BBB, at a cost of hundreds or even thousands of dollars, made complaints against them completely disappear. Obviously the BBB's ratings are skewed to the point of being meaningless and untrustworthy—I'm not a big latte fan, but I've bought enough coffee to know that overall, Starbucks isn't an "F" company. But then, I'd never have looked them up. However, if I'd checked on Joe Blow the Plumber and found that he was F-rated, I certainly wouldn't have hired him. Now I know that I might have been losing out on a great plumber

## So why is PeopleClaim a better alternative?

[www.PeopleClaim.com](http://www.PeopleClaim.com) doesn't take advertising. It doesn't take glowing testimonials. It doesn't have 'proprietary algorithms.' Its revenues come from the filing fee, which the complaining party may seek as part of their settlement, and only the complainant can remove a complaint from the site—again, usually as part of settlement. The system is simple and effective: you state what happened, attach supporting evidence, and say what you want. On being notified of the claim, the respondent can agree, negotiate, or reject your claim. If it isn't settled within a stipulated period of time, both sides post publicly on a freely searchable part of the site.

Ideally, a business or professional will never appear on PeopleClaim at all—because if a consumer has had a complaint, it's been quickly resolved.

And if a complaint does post publicly, a business or professional can be sure that anyone looking at it will be able to see both sides of the story. That way, consumers can judge for themselves whether the complaint was ludicrous, or the company has really tried to resolve things but the other party was unreasonable, or the company is one they want to avoid at all costs because it doesn't stand behind its product or service. They can even contact the other party for more insight or to join forces. And above all, make their own decision with a good factual basis.

We think that's a pretty good alternative to the risk of "pay for play."

## One Comment on “The Better Business Bureau’s ‘pay for play’ scandal, and why PeopleClaim.com is different—and unaffiliated.”

1. 1 [Feeling cynical](#) said at 8:15 pm on November 16th, 2010:

I'm one of those business owners that got scammed by the Better Business Bureau. The whole thing seemed like a protection racket but I paid up rather than get an F grade. Maybe I should file a claim against them for bad business practices.

---

### Leave a Reply

- Name (required)
- Mail (will not be published)
- Website

•

### Recent Posts

- [Flying the overly-friendly skies—“It’s not a grope. It’s a freedom pat.”](#)
- [Want to win an iPad?](#)
- [The Better Business Bureau’s ‘pay for play’ scandal, and why PeopleClaim.com is different—and unaffiliated.](#)
- [Why do utilities with a monopoly get to price-gouge?](#)
- [Want to find a good plumber? Here’s your checklist, and here’s what to do if you get ripped off.](#)

### Archives

- [November 2010](#)
- [October 2010](#)

## Categories

- [Uncategorized](#)

## Blogroll

- [Development Blog](#)
- [Documentation](#)
- [Plugins](#)
- [Suggest Ideas](#)
- [Support Forum](#)
- [Themes](#)
- [WordPress Planet](#)

## Meta

- [RSS](#)
- [Comment RSS](#)

© Copyright 2010 | [PeopleClaim Blog](#) | All Rights Reserved