

NY AG Announces Settlement Over Fake Followers

Gonzalo E. Mon

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In the world of social media, a person's power is often measured in terms of followers. Because more followers generally means more reach, companies who engage influencers often base their compensation on this metric. But follower counts may not always be what they seem. According to a *New York Times* [report](#) last year, influencers can buy fake followers (who are often bots) from companies like Devumi.



This week, the New York Attorney General announced a settlement with Devumi over its practices. Among other things, the company is prohibited from selling fake followers, likes, and other types of social media interactions. And to the extent Devumi works with real influencers, it must take steps to ensure they clearly disclose any connections they have to the companies they endorse. The AG said that this settlement sends “a clear message that anyone profiting off of deception and impersonation is breaking the law and will be held accountable.”

Although this may be the first case that addresses the sale of fake followers, it's not the first case that addresses companies using shady techniques to boost their reputations online. For example, in 2013, the New York AG [announced](#) settlements with 19 companies after a year-long undercover investigation into the reputation management industry. During the investigation, the AG learned that some agencies that promised to boost companies' presence online did so posting fake reviews.

What you should take away from these cases depends on your place in the industry. If you help companies boost their social media presence, take a close look at these settlements and make sure you're not engaging in the practices that were challenged. If you're hiring a company to boost your presence, ask that company some questions about how they plan to achieve results. And if you pay influencers based on the number of followers they have, investigate whether those followers are real people. Bots can lead to [all sorts of trouble](#).