

NY Attorney General Takes Action Against Fake Online Reviews

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This morning, New York Attorney General Schneiderman [announced](#) that his office had concluded a year-long undercover investigation into the reputation management industry and the practice of posting fake reviews online.

Many search engine optimization (“SEO”) companies offer customers online “reputation management” services. During the investigation, the AG learned that some SEO companies perform these services through less-than-reputable means. For example, some companies create fake profiles on review websites and pay freelance writers to post reviews. This practice — commonly known as “astroturfing” — constitutes false advertising. The AG entered into Assurances of Discontinuance with 19 companies who engaged in this practice, with penalties ranging from \$2,500 to just under \$100,000.

If you read this blog, you already know it’s a bad idea to fake reviews. And you already know that if your company provide incentives for consumers to write reviews, those incentives must be disclosed. But the question is whether your partners know these things, too. If you are working with another company to help boost your reputation online, you should take steps to ensure they are performing their services in a way that complies with the law.