

On Mon, Sep 14, 2015 at 12:35 PM, David Levi <dlevi@vinland.me> wrote:

Hi Steff, I just took a look at your Yelp review and saw that over a year after you reviewed us you dropped us from four stars to three. With our average of over four and no indication that you came back and had a sub-par experience, I have to wonder why? We've had our frustrations with Yelp hiding a disproportionate number of our five star reviews. To see the local representative make this downgrade so long after visiting is disturbing. I'd appreciate some indication of why you felt compelled to do this.

On Mon, Sep 14, 2015 at 1:27 PM, Steff Deschenes <smd@yelp.com> wrote:

Hi David -

Nice hearing from you; I hope your summer was lovely!

First, it's important to note that my reviews on Yelp have nothing to do with me as a Community Manager. I was using the site long before I ever worked for Yelp and will do so long after, so when I leave a review it's from a personal stand-point. I, again on a personal level, recently went through some of the reviews I had been on the fence about and made changes I reflected were more accurate given some perspective.

Thanks,
Steff

On Mon, Sep 14, 2015 at 1:50 PM, David Levi <dlevi@vinland.me> wrote: Steff, please dispense with the fake friendliness. I think you know that these online reviews can drive business or drive it away. You did solicit business for Yelp from Vinland, which I declined. Your employer, Yelp, made many attempts to solicit business from us, all of which I declined. Yelp subsequently hid a highly disproportionate number of our five star reviews, dropping our average, which compelled us to leave the Yelp owned SeatMe and switch to the pricier OpenTable. (Excuses about the "algorithm" are ridiculous--Yelp highlighted low reviews from users with no other posts). I don't know how an employee of a company trying to extract money from us can, in any ethical way, post a public review of us, but you did, and it was four stars, and you then dropped it to three stars more than a year later, without having revisited the restaurant or even changing the text of your review. This is foul, as is everything about the company you

work for. I've copied several members of the press, who may or may not be interested to hear a bit more about the already well-documented extortionist practices of Yelp.

Sincerely,

David

From: Steff Deschenes <smd@yelp.com>

Date: Mon, Sep 14, 2015 at 4:18 PM

Subject: Re: your yelp review

To: David Levi <dlevi@vinland.me>

Cc: Zach Poulin <Info@vinland.me>, Mary Pols

<mpols@mainetoday.com>, Kathleen Pierce

<kpierce@bangordailynews.com>, john golden <jdgmaine@gmail.com>

Hi David,

I am committed to addressing your concerns about Yelp and my review of Vinland.

Firstly, I want to reiterate that there has never been any amount of money a business can pay Yelp to manipulate reviews. Any claims that Yelp manipulates reviews for money or that advertisers are treated any differently than non-advertisers [are completely false](#) and have been repeatedly dismissed by [courts of law](#), thoroughly researched and disproven by [academic study](#), and investigated by government regulators, including the [FTC](#), who closed a nearly two-year investigation without taking action.

Yelp has an automated [recommendation software](#) in place which is engineered to highlight the most useful and reliable content to consumers who visit the site. Our stance is quality over quantity and we currently recommend about 71% of the reviews that are submitted. This means about one in four reviews submitted to Yelp are not published on a business' listing or recommended to consumers. There are several reasons a review might not be recommended. The recommendation software is engineered to weed out possible fakes (several reviews generated from the same IP address), biased reviews (written by a competitor, a disgruntled employee, or solicited by a business owner from friends, family members or favorite customers), and unhelpful rants or raves. The software can also weed out reviews written by less active

users, which can be real reviews based on real experiences but we don't know enough about the user to recommend their opinion to our community. The reviews that are not currently recommended can still be viewed on a separate page but do not factor into a business' overall star rating.

As the Yelp Community Manager in Portland, I am in no way affiliated with the Yelp sales department. My job is to grow the Yelp community here, both online and off, by hosting events, educating business owners, and writing a weekly newsletter. I am an active member of the community, and am always out and about experiencing all our great city has to offer. I write honest reviews highlighting my experiences with local business, including yours, as a way to share feedback with business owners and encourage a community of reviewers here in Portland. As a Yelp user, I have the right to change and/or update any of the reviews I've written about a business if my opinion about that business changes for whatever reason. I realized that because I personally did not enjoy my main course at your restaurant, I never felt inspired to return. So, as I was cleaning up my personal reviews a few months back I realized that according to Yelp, where 4-stars means "I'm a fan!" and 3-stars means "A-Okay/It was good!", for me personally, given my lackluster second snack and main course, my review was more of a 3-star.

I'm sorry you feel like you've had a bad experience with Yelp. You and your staff should certainly be proud of your 4.5 star rating, and I wish you continued success.

Best,
Steff