

Pants on Fire

By Reg P. Wydeven
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I know I've mentioned in past articles how much I love Amazon.com. While wearing my pajamas and relaxing on my sofa, I can surf their site. With just a few clicks, I can have 'Star Wars' books, the soundtrack to the 'Star Trek' films, and the 'Indiana Jones' saga on blu ray shipped to my door for free.

You can buy almost anything on Amazon.com. I've bought clothing, sporting equipment, fishing lures, home goods and electronics. I remember when our daughter was born, we shopped on Amazon.com for a CD boom box to play lullabies on in her room. We picked one out, however, other shoppers gave it very poor reviews averaging only 1 out of a possible 5 stars. So we opted to buy a different model that was very highly rated. We were thrilled with the boom box and still use it often today, twelve years later.

Like us, many shoppers rely on their peers' product reviewing when selecting merchandise. I'm grateful that fellow web surfers take the time to share their experiences with me so I don't get ripped off. Unfortunately, though, some reviews may not be authentic.

This Spring, Amazon.com has sued four websites for allegedly selling fake product reviews that were posted on the site. Based in Seattle, Amazon.com filed the suit in a Washington state court against California resident, Jay Gentile, who allegedly runs BuyAzonReviews.com, as well as several unknown parties running three other sites: BuyAmazonReviews.com, BayReviews.net and BuyReviewsNow.com.

According to the suit, Amazon.com asserts that the websites in question have violated its trademarks for misleading use of its logo and name, fair competition laws, anti-cybersquatting laws and other violations. The suit is requesting that the sites cease and desist selling reviews, furnish information on prior reviews and the accounts of the people who paid for them, in addition to financial damages.

If you sold a product on Amazon.com, you could hire one of these sites to post glowing reviews for you on the online retailer's page for your product. On BuyReviewsNow.com, for example, you could purchase reviews for anywhere between \$80 and \$600, depending on how many you order.

The sites aren't hiding their services. The site [BuyAmazonReviews.com](#) flat out states, "Never has it been easier to get multiple 4 and 5 star reviews on your Amazon product page. We provide real reviews from aged accounts with real buying activity. Most products in the Amazon marketplace will never even be seen. The more positive reviews you have the better your chances are."

One site doesn't even require companies to ship their products to reviewers. According to the suit, BuyAzonReviews.com orders empty boxes or envelopes that are shipped solely for tracking purposes. The suit asserts that reviewers are posting "glowing five-star reviews ... on products they never received."

This lawsuit raises several interesting issues. First of all, experts question whether Amazon.com can file suit essentially on behalf of its customers who are the folks truly impacted by the false reviews. Second, if Amazon.com products are rated higher, arguably this will result in higher sales for the site. Finally, if Amazon.com wins, favorable reviews could be removed from products that are actually really good.

Who would have thought that there would be people on the internet that you couldn't trust.

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