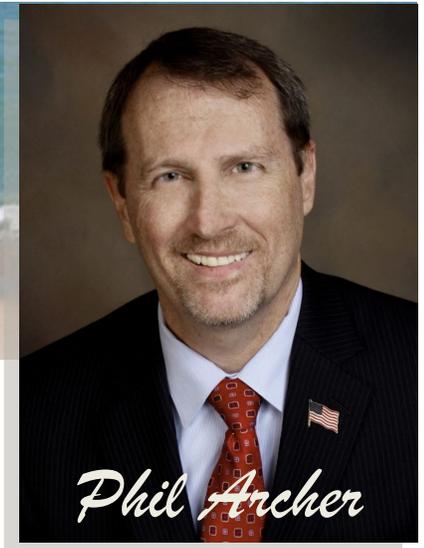




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# The Monthly Brief

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## RISKY BUSINESS

The yellow pages are a thing of the past. Today most of us use Google to locate a service or business in our area. This most often happens for things we don't use every day like plumbers, electricians, and other service industries.



However [The Wall Street Journal](#) recently reported that up to 11 million business listings on Google Maps are either hijacked or fake.

In one instance a stuck garage door caused a woman to search for a repair company using Google. She called a business she recognized and made an appointment. "A man arrived in an unmarked van and said he was a company contractor. He wasn't. After working on the garage door, he asked for \$728, nearly twice the cost of previous repairs. He demanded cash or a personal check, but she refused. The repairman had hijacked the name of a legitimate business on Google Maps and listed his own phone number. What's worse he returned again and again, hounding her for payment on a repair so shoddy it had to be redone."

The WSJ said that Google isn't motivated to fix the problem as it charges legitimate companies a fee to appear above the scam ads. Google strongly disputes this saying it's working daily to stop scammers.

As always, buyer beware and take the time to do your research before hiring anyone to perform services or work at your home.

\*Wall Street Journal

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## Airline Ticket Scam

Taking a vacation this summer? If you book your airfare through a third-party website, be sure to use caution. How the Scam Works

While doing an online search to find the cheapest flight to your destination, you come across a website that has a great deal. You haven't heard of the company before, but the website looks legitimate and everything seems to be in order. When you begin the payment process, however, red flags start to appear.

In the most common version of the scam, you pay with your credit card like normal. But shortly after making the payment, you receive a call from the company asking you to verify your name, address, banking information or other personal details – something a legitimate company would never do.

What makes the scam so convincing is that, once you pay, you receive a confirmation code that can be verified with the airline. However, after a day or two, your reservation will be cancelled and the company that charged you will disappear. It appears the scammers booked the flight and charged your card – only to cancel it shortly after and make off with your money.

To learn more ways to protect yourself from travel scams, read [BBB.org/TravelScam](http://BBB.org/TravelScam). You can also review the general tips found at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](http://BBB.org/AvoidScams)

\*BBB

## CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

Many consumers rely on product reviews to help make online purchase decisions. A good product review history can cause sales to skyrocket. But what percentage of those reviews are reliable and authentic?



According to an analysis by the [Washington Post](#), a majority of reviews in certain Amazon product categories are fraudulent or paid.. According to Fakespot, who analyses review content on Amazon, inauthentic reviews actually dominate some product categories: Consumer Electronics (61%); Beauty/Cosmetics (63%); Clothing/Sneakers (59%); and Supplements/Vitamins (64%)

Many of these fraudulent reviews originate on Facebook, where sellers seek shoppers on dozens of networks, including Amazon Review Club and Amazon Reviewers Group, to give glowing feedback in exchange for money or other compensation. The practice artificially inflates the ranking of thousands of products, and misleads consumers. Amazon does permit incentivized reviews, but some aren't including the required disclosure notice.

Fortunately [Fakespot](#) offers a free check of reviews by entering the URL of a product on sites including Amazon, WalMart, Best Buy, Tripadvisor, Yelp and more. It analyses the reviews delivering a letter grade A-F. Also [ReviewFraud](#) has a searchable data base of companies by state (incl FL), with fake reviews.

\*Washington Post, Marketingland.com