

For Immediate Release

Contact: Abby Hills, Director of Communications, BBB National Programs
703.247.9330 / press@bbbnp.org

National Advertising Division Finds BestCompany.com “Moderated Reviews” Claim Supported; Recommends Other Claims be Modified or Discontinued

New York, NY – Jan. 27, 2022 – The National Advertising Division (NAD) of BBB National Programs determined that BestCompany.com, LLC provided a reasonable basis for the claim that all reviews posted on BestCompany.com are “moderated through a tech-enabled, proprietary, 7-point moderation process to ensure they are real and authentic.”

However, NAD recommended that the advertiser discontinue certain express and implied claims related to the advertiser’s message that Best Company is an independent and impartial review site. NAD also recommended that Best Company limit its use of the “100% verified” claim to only those reviews where the individual writing the review is verified as a bona fide purchaser of the product.

These claims, which appeared on BestCompany.com, were challenged by SmileDirectClub, LLC (SDC), a national provider of clear aligner therapy (“invisible braces”) that uses a tele-dentistry platform and sells related goods and services. Best Company offers general information, reviews, and recommendations for a variety of products and services, including in the “invisible braces” category and for specific brands within the category such as SDC and its competitors.

NAD determined that the advertiser has a reasonable basis for the claim that all reviews posted on BestCompany.com are “moderated through a tech-enabled, proprietary, 7-point moderation process to ensure they are real and authentic.” NAD was satisfied that the advertiser takes reasonable measures to avoid publishing incentivized reviews such that it may reasonably claim that it has a process to ensure that posted reviews are “real and authentic.”

Nevertheless, NAD determined that Best Company did not support express claims and implied messages that its website is independent and impartial because its ranking criteria results in a higher score for businesses that have a partnership with Best Company. NAD noted that an independent and impartial ranking of products, even one based on consumer reviews, should be based on reviews that are representative of the universe of consumer reviews for all companies reviewed and ranked. Further, NAD found that a disclosure explaining the ranking methodology cannot cure the express and implied misleading message that the rankings are independent.

Therefore, NAD recommended that the advertiser discontinue express claims that:

- Rankings on the BestCompany.com website “cannot be bought” or otherwise influenced to “unfairly favor one company over another, not based on merit.”
- Best Company does not have “any relationships with companies that guarantee their ranking or score and we never will.”

- “Best Company never has and never will take payment in exchange for an unmerited rank on BestCompany.com.”
- Best Company’s rankings of various companies and their products on BestCompany.com are “honest and unbiased.”
- Best Company is a “Truly Independent and Impartial Review Site,” as well as the modified version that Best Company offers “Truly Independent and Impartial Rankings and Reviews.”

NAD also recommended that the advertiser discontinue implied claims that:

- Best Company does not and never will have any improper relationships with featured companies, and rankings or scores on BestCompany.com cannot be purchased or obtained through a direct relationship.
- Best Company is not “pay to play.”
- Best Company ranks the clear aligner brand “Byte” over all other brands based on its “expert recommendation” and not due to Best Company’s undisclosed true relationship with Byte.

NAD determined that a reasonable takeaway from the claim “100% Verified,” as used to describe Best Company’s review verification process, is that all reviews posted on BestCompany.com receive the same level of scrutiny. While the advertiser demonstrated that all reviews go through a pre-publication moderation process to confirm that the review is from a person and not a bot, not all published reviews go through the process to become “Verified Customer Reviews,” i.e., further confirmation that the individual is a paying customer of the reviewed business.

Thus, NAD recommended that the advertiser modify its advertising to label only those reviews that have passed through additional verification (“Verified Customer Reviews”) as “100% verified” and to use the claim exclusively when it has verified that the individual writing the review is a bona fide purchaser of the product.

Finally, during the proceeding the advertiser voluntarily agreed to remove and modify two videos about SDC and its products and programs. Accordingly, NAD did not review the claims in those videos on the merits.

In its advertiser statement, Best Company stated that it “will comply with NAD’s decision.” Further, the advertiser stated that although it “disagrees with NAD’s views that Best Company cannot advertise itself as a ‘Truly Independent and Impartial Review Site’ . . . Best Company respects the NAD and its role in regulating national advertising and will comply with its recommendations.”

All BBB National Programs case decision summaries can be found in the [case decision library](#). For the full text of NAD, NARB, and CARU decisions, subscribe to the [online archive](#).

About BBB National Programs: BBB National Programs is where businesses turn to enhance consumer trust and consumers are heard. The non-profit organization creates a fairer playing field for businesses and a better experience for consumers through the development and delivery of effective third-party accountability and dispute resolution programs. Embracing its role as an independent organization since the restructuring of the Council of Better Business Bureaus in June 2019, BBB National Programs today oversees more than a dozen leading national industry self-regulation programs, and continues to evolve its work and grow its impact by providing business guidance and fostering best practices in arenas such as advertising, child-directed marketing, and privacy. To learn more, visit bbbprograms.org.

About the National Advertising Division: The National Advertising Division (NAD) of BBB National Programs provides independent self-regulation and dispute resolution services, guiding the truthfulness

of advertising across the U.S. NAD reviews national advertising in all media and its decisions set consistent standards for advertising truth and accuracy, delivering meaningful protection to consumers and leveling the playing field for business.