

BAD BOB LOSING GROUND?

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New statistics reveal signs of progress

According to the latest statistics from the Better Business Bureau (BBB), complaints filed against “Garage Door Repair” companies dropped dramatically (20%) in 2018.

The 20% drop in complaints is quite striking, considering that complaints filed against these companies had been constantly rising ever since the BBB’s “Garage Door Repair” category was created in 2010. The 2018 drop is the first ever in the history of this category.

The impact of Google’s crackdown

The reason for the drop may be directly related to Google’s crackdown on untrustworthy garage door company ads, which was initiated in late 2017. On Oct. 19, 2017, Google killed hundreds of online ads by GDS, the notorious nationwide garage door repair company known for confusing customers with hundreds of business names, performing unnecessary repairs, and overcharging customers. (GDS, based in Carrollton, Texas, has also been known as Neighborhood Garage Door Service, Yes Garage Door Service, Global Development Strategies, and hundreds of other names.)

The 2017 Google crackdown didn’t end with GDS. A month later, Google launched its advanced verification program, notifying garage door companies nationwide that their Google ads will stop running in January 2018 unless the companies pass its new advanced verification process.

The impact of this crackdown should not be underestimated. Previously, thousands of online customer complaints, dozens of negative media stories, lawsuits, and even criminal convictions seemed to have little or no effect on garage door repair scammers. Instead, the scammer business model seemed to flourish nationwide.

However, after the 2017 Google crackdown, many scammers found themselves unable to advertise their services on Google, which had been their primary conduit for soliciting customers. GDS insiders reported that its business had been severely affected, forcing the company to find new ways to lure unsuspecting customers.

Accounting for the 20% drop

The Google crackdown against GDS may account for a significant portion of the 20% reduction in BBB complaints. In 2015, BBB

complaints against GDS comprised 15% of all BBB complaints against garage door companies throughout the U.S.

However, the Google crackdown has also affected hundreds of other predatory garage door repair shops besides GDS. So the 20% reduction makes sense; half of the reduction may have come from GDS alone, and half could have come from other scammers.

Regardless, Bad Bob’s apparent loss of business is good news for consumers and for the reputation of the garage door industry.

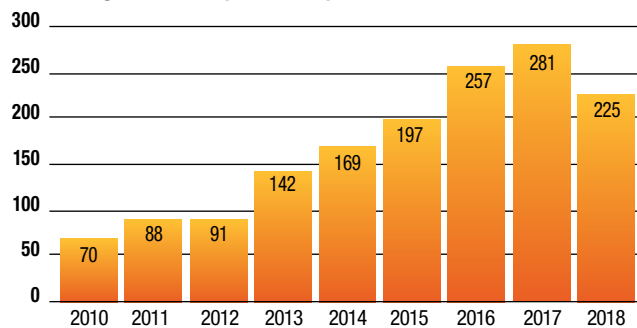
A word of caution

The BBB statistics are the first signs of substantive progress in the industry’s ongoing battle against garage door repair scammers. Yet scamming activity continues at a high rate nationwide, and complaints against garage door repair companies continue daily (on Yelp, Google, BBB, HomeAdvisor, etc.). The best news is, thanks to Google, fewer consumers are finding these companies’ advertisements.

It’s possible that 2018 will be remembered as the year when Bad Bob scrambled to find new ways to circumvent Google’s system. Be watchful, though; after this brief lull, complaints may start to rise again in 2019. ■

COMPLAINTS DOWN

Garage Door Repair Complaints

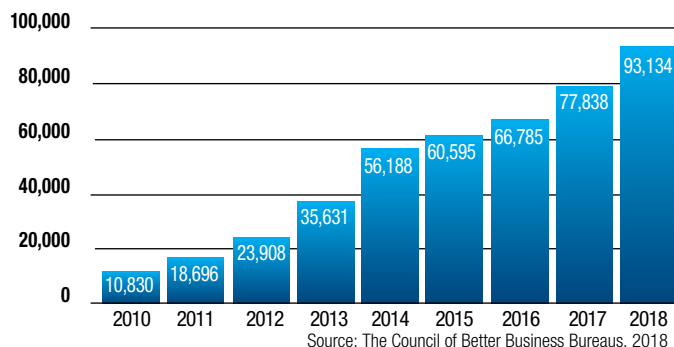


FIRST DROP EVER: For the first time since “Garage Door Repair” company statistics have been tracked in the U.S. and Canada, complaints filed with the BBB dropped, decreasing a remarkable 20% since 2017. “Garage Door” complaints also dropped 9% over the same year. Yet overall complaints to all 5,850 business categories jumped 4%.

Note: The BBB added the category of “Garage Door Repair” in 2010, apparently after noticing a special problem in that specific industry.

INQUIRIES UP

Garage Door Repair Inquiries



CONSUMERS ARE LEARNING: An “inquiry” happens when a consumer goes to the BBB to check on a “Garage Door Repair” company. In 2018, these inquiries increased 20% over the previous year. Even though total inquiries for all business categories in 2018 is about equal with 2015 numbers, inquiries for garage door repair companies increased by 50% over that same time period (2015-2018).

Tip: The public is increasingly learning to check the BBB listings for garage door companies. Pay attention to your BBB rating and resolve complaints promptly.