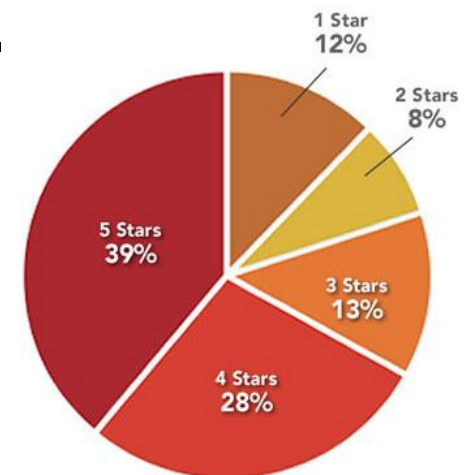




**BATTLING ASTROTURFING**

**April 2013**

- Yelp averaged 86 million monthly unique visitors (Q4 2012). 100 million in Jan. '13.
- Over 36 million reviews contributed.
- Reviews overwhelmingly positive.



- “Who’s composing all those fake online reviews?”
  - NY Times (August 27, 2001)
- “As online retailers increasingly depend on reviews as a sales tool, an industry of fibbers and promoters has sprung up to buy and sell raves for a pittance.”
  - NY Times (August 19, 2011)
- “Yelp runs its reviews through an anti-fraud filter, with impressive results; every fake review the Texan bought was flagged by Yelp’s algorithms, though his fraudulent reviews remain up on the seven other sites.”
  - Businessweek (September 29, 2011)

- The Wild West approach:
  - Legally allowable (47 USC §230).
  - Content quality takes a hit and many people unhappy.
  - Example: Craigslist and prostitutes.



- The Takedown approach:
  - Eliminates potentially “objectionable” speech
  - Eliminates a lot more than that.
  - Example: doctors who gag their patients
    - *Lee v. Makhnevich*, 11-civ-8665, (SDNY Mar. 27, 2013)



- The Sherlock Holmes approach:
  - Noble in theory
  - Likely impossible in practice, especially at scale.
  - Examples: Wikipedia vs. Encyclopedia Britannica



- The Community approach:
  - Can you create incentives for “good” content?
  - Can you devalue “bad” content?
  - Can you limit your own biases?
  - Can you scale it?
  - Can you add any helpful cues without diminishing what other people have to say?



**=> Product designers are far more influential than lawyers in helping solve these hot button issues**

- Foster a community of users.
- Develop sophisticated technologies.
- Disrupt the astroturfing market.



# Fostering community: an early example



amazon.com

Hello. Sign in to get [personalized recommendations](#). New customer? [Start here](#).

Your Amazon.com | [Today's Deals](#) | [Gifts & Wish Lists](#) | [Gift Cards](#)

Shop All Departments

Search Camera & Photo

Camera & Photo | All Electronics | Brands | Bestsellers | Digital SLRs & Lenses | Point-and-Shoots | Camcorders | Pro Video

## Customer Reviews

[Nikon Coolpix L20 10MP Digital Camera with 3.6 Optical Zoom and 3 inch LCD \(Deep Red\)](#) by Nikon

### Average Customer Rating

★★★★☆ (58 customer reviews)

5 star: (25)  
4 star: (8)  
3 star: (6)  
2 star: (7)  
1 star: (12)

Ease of use: ★★★★★ (14)  
Picture quality: ★★★★★ (14)  
Portability: ★★★★★ (13)

> [Rate this item's 3 attributes or add a new one.](#)

Create your own review

### The Most Helpful Reviews

#### The most helpful favorable review

129 of 136 people found the following review helpful:

★★★★★ **Unless you need a really long-lens telephoto and billboard sized prints, this is the perfect camera for every use**

This is a professional camera capable of crystal clear prints worthy of publication or gallery display, up to 16x20.

And it is incredibly inexpensive for a camera of such value.

Ok, so its 3.6 optical zoom won't pick sand off an eagle's beak at a thousand yards. Okay, so it won't blow up to billboard size without loss of definition. In the real...

[Read the full review >](#)

Published 6 months ago by C. Scanlon

> See more [5 star](#), [4 star](#) reviews

#### The most helpful critical review

44 of 46 people found the following review helpful:

★★★★☆ **Decent Starter Camera**

I bought this camera for my wife when her Olympus Stylus 300 had run its life expectancy. May it rest in peace. The Nikon Coolpix is relatively easy to use.. has lots of decent features and the price was killer, but.. picture quality isn't as good as her late Olympus or the Canon Sureshot we also use. However.. It is worth the money. In hindsight I wish I'd spent \$50-90...

[Read the full review >](#)

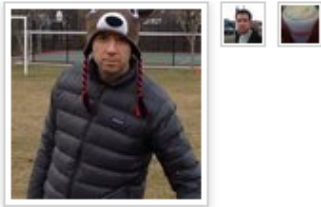
Published 4 months ago by Jerry D. Finley

> See more [3 star](#), [2 star](#), [1 star](#) reviews

Vs.

## Brian S.'s Profile

bswanson77.yelp.com



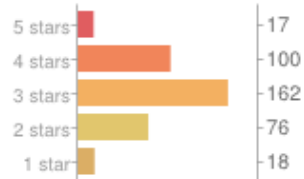
### "Yelping my way through Manhattan"

- 71 Friends
- 373 Reviews
- 6 Review Updates
- 11 Firsts
- 124 Tips
- 13 Fans
- 1 List



- Add as a Friend
- Send Compliment
- Send Message
- Follow This Reviewer
- Show Similar Reviews

### Rating Distribution



[View more graphs »](#)

### Recent Reviews [373 Reviews](#)

Filter by: [Location](#) [Category](#)

[Search Reviews](#)

Sort by: [Date](#)

#### Central Park

Category: Parks

830 5th Ave  
New York, NY 10024  
(212) 310-6600

3/22/2013 15 Check-ins Here

Not sure how anyone can not give Central Park 5 stars! What can be said that you all don't already know? It's an oasis in the urban jungle - nothing is better than strolling through the Park during the spring, summer, or fall (winter can be pretty too, it's just so damn cold in our City!).

I love running the Central Park Loop, which is 6 miles and takes you around pretty much the entire park. It's always full of fellow runners and walkers and tourists.

There's also plenty of space for kids to run around and enjoy the rare freedom of actually being able to play on grass, instead of a depressing City park filled with used condoms and dog poop. And no cars to worry about to boot!

Was this review ...? [Useful](#) (2) [Funny](#) (2) [Cool](#)

- Bookmark
- Send Compliment
- Send To A Friend
- Link to This Review
- Flag review

#### Mesazul Steakhouse

Category: Latin American

4400 NW 87th Ave  
Doral, FL 33178  
(305) 591-6616

3/22/2013

Came here with a work colleague as I was staying at the hotel for business. Although the restaurant did not appear to be full, we waited around 30 minutes to be seated, with a different excuse from the inept hostess each time. Finally, we spoke to a manager, who was apologetic and seated us.

**Location**  
New York, NY

**Yelping Since**  
May 2010

**Things I Love**  
my family, food, wine, running

**Find Me In**  
UES

**My Hometown**  
Boston, MA

**When I'm Not Yelping...**  
I'm thinking about Yelping

**Why You Should Read My Reviews**  
Because you're bored

**My Second Favorite Website**  
<http://www.tnz.com>

**The Last Great Book I Read**  
The Big Short by Michael Lewis

**My First Concert**  
Pointer Sisters

**My Favorite Movie**  
Love, Actually

**My Last Meal On Earth**  
Veritas (pre-changes)

**Don't Tell Anyone Else But...**  
I love lamp

**Most Recent Discovery**  
Sfoglia restaurant on the UES

**Current Crush**  
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

## Alex W.'s Profile



0 Friends

1 Review

### Location

Ithaca, NY

### Yelping Since

November 2009

Flag this profile

### Recent Reviews 1 Review

Filter by: [Location](#) [Category](#)

Search Reviews

Sort by: [Date](#)

#### Babbo Ristorante e Enoteca

Category: Italian  
Neighborhood: Greenwich Village

110 Waverly Pl  
New York, NY 10011  
(212) 777-0303

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/24/2013

Came in late at night, starving.

#### Lobster Pasta

Lobster was chewy, it was litterly inedible.  
Pasta was almost microwaved, way to overcooked.  
Bread was chared, the crust was like rubber

Some of the worst food I have ever had , cafeteria food was better.

Was this review ...? [Useful](#) [Funny](#) [Cool](#)



Alex has no friends.

### No Lists



Alex hasn't made any lists yet.



## Review Filter - Huh?

Yelp has an automated review filter to keep the site's content as useful and trustworthy as possible. [Read More](#)

## Yelp's Review Filter Explained



## Learn More About the Review Filter

Why does Yelp have a review filter?

Why were these reviews filtered?

Can I ask my customers for reviews?

What are Yelp's review guidelines?

## General Guidelines

Yelp allows users to contribute different kinds of content, including reviews, photos, events, votes, tips, private messages, and more. Playing nice isn't rocket science, but just in case, we've put together these general guidelines. Please also read the guidelines below for specific types of content that you might contribute to the site.

- **Inappropriate content:** Colorful language and imagery is fine, but there's no need for threats, harassment, lewdness, hate speech, and other displays of bigotry.
- **Conflicts of interest:** Your contributions should be unbiased and objective. For example, you shouldn't write reviews of your own business or employer, your friends' or relatives' business, or businesses in your networking group.
- **Promotional content:** Unless you're using your Business Owners Account to add content to your business's profile page, we generally frown upon promotional content. Let's keep the site useful for consumers and not overrun with commercial noise from every user.
- **Relevance:** Please make sure your contributions are relevant and appropriate to the forum. For example, reviews aren't the place for rants about a business's employment practices, political ideologies, extraordinary circumstances, or other matters that don't address the core of the consumer experience.
- **Privacy:** Don't publicize other people's private information. Please don't post close-up photos of other people without their permission, and please don't post other people's full names unless you're referring to service providers who are commonly identified by their full names.
- **Intellectual property:** Don't swipe content from other sites or users. You're a smart cookie, so write your own reviews and take your own photos, please!

\* \* \*

## 6. RESTRICTIONS

We are under no obligation to enforce the Terms on your behalf against another user. While we encourage you to let us know if you believe another user has violated the Terms, we reserve the right to investigate and take appropriate action at our sole discretion.

### A. You agree not to, and will not assist, encourage, or enable others to use the Site to:

- i. Violate our [Content Guidelines](#), for example, by writing a fake or defamatory review, trading reviews with other businesses, or compensating someone or being compensated to write or remove a review;

## Contact Us

[About Us](#) | [Management](#) | [Myths About Yelp](#) | [Feedback](#)

Have a question? You may find the answer in the [Yelp FAQ](#) or in the [Business Support Center](#).

Interested in advertising? [Submit an ad inquiry](#).

To send us feedback or ideas, please choose a topic.

Questionable content ▾



Your Email Address:

Business Name

Mel's Diner, Max's

Near

New York, NY

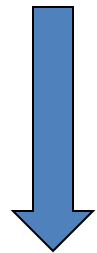
Search

Some of the worst food I have ever had , cafeteria food was better.

Was this review ...? [Useful](#) [Funny](#) [Cool](#)

[Bookmark](#) [Send Compliment](#) [Send To A Friend](#) [Link to This Review](#)

[Flag review](#)





## Reviewers go to Yelp after Florida pizza parlor owner hugs Obama

*Photos of Scott Van Duzer lifting the president off the floor bring an onslaught of impassioned political commentary from customers on Yelp.*

September 12, 2012 | By Tiffany Hsu, Los Angeles Times



The screenshot shows the top portion of a Yelp business profile. At the top is a red header with the Yelp logo on the left and a search bar on the right containing the text "Search for (e...". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "Welcome", "About Me", "Write a Review", and a partially visible "F...". The main content area features the business name "Big Apple Pizza" in bold red text, followed by a 5-star rating icon and the text "3043 reviews" with a link to "Rating Details". Below this, the category "Pizza" is listed, along with the address "2311 S 35th St, Fort Pierce, FL 34981" and the phone number "(772) 466-8303". A link to the website "http://www.bigapplepizza.com/" is also present, followed by a partially visible "Menu" link.

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- [Can I ask my customers for reviews?](#)
- [What are Yelp's review guidelines?](#)

## Is this your business?

[Claim your Yelp business page](#)

## 5 Filtered Reviews for Solano Family Physicians Note: The reviews below are not factored into the business's overall rating.



0  
1

Amanda H.  
Vallejo, CA

★★★★★ 8/30/2010

I am switching doctors as soon as possible. Dr. Brooks is a wonderful man, but the people in his office are very rude, and very inefficient. I have to call everyday to make sure simple faxes are sent, I have to follow-up on each and every detail because nothing ever gets done. The people are just rude, and it's not worth it, especially if you have to fill out workman's compensation forms (which took so long for them to get back to me, I almost didn't get them in in time). I will get a doctor that wants patients.



0  
1

Christopher M.  
Vallejo, CA

★★★★★ 4/9/2010

Dr. Gil is a great doc and has taken very good care of my mother over the past 6 years, but the office leaves much to be desired.

The reception staff is rude, unwelcoming, and acts like patients are an interruption. No eye contact, no smiles, and a sassy attitude is the norm for this place. When you call for assistance or appointment scheduling, they will almost likely drop the ball or lie to you about the progress of your request.

I found the office, after several visits, to be dirty and unsanitary. Other posters on here have stated the office is clean, and I have to wholeheartedly disagree. If you look at the ceiling tiles in the exam rooms, you will see there is mold growing from the leaking roof, which has been this way for at least a year. I have noticed this in room 7 and room 3. I have encountered a dirty restroom on almost each visit, with urine samples sitting on the back of the toilet and a soiled floor, the electronic paper towel dispenser would not dispense during my last two visits.

It appears no one cares about the facility or it's appearance or cleanliness. Makes you wonder about the hygiene and standard cleanliness protocols that goes on behind the scenes.

Further disturbing is, you may have to wait 30-60 minutes or more past your appointment time to be seen, all the while, streams of Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives are coming and going in a steady pace to pitch their products and leave samples of their amazing prescription drugs and are greeted immediately and with open arms, especially when they bring lunch.

Does this office and those charged with its operation, really care about their patients?  
Eek! Methinks not.



0  
1

Tiffany S.  
Vallejo, CA

★★★★★ 3/30/2010

Hopefully I will never have to return to this office for medical care. As long as you are healthy it's fine. Wow-let a person actually have a health issue and see how the care in this office changes.. I saw Dr. Brooks after being seen by the nurse practitioner, neither could really come up with an explanation for a rash I had. Both of them had different ideas about it and it even appeared as if they didn't know what actions the other had already taken. For the most part, NOTHING was done.. They sent me on my merry way and told me that I probably was just allergic to my shampoo or laundry soap and to try changing those products to an unscented one... ??? Ok, the skin on my back, stomach and neck was completely blistered, red and itching like mad. I had bruises on these areas of the body from the continuous itching. I am unable to even wear pants that have a waistband because of raw skin. Anyway, they sent me away after two months of repeated visits and them taking no action to find out what the problem was. All they did was pass me to each other and try and get rid of the sick patient. I don't think they should even be practicing medicine out of that office. They only want to deal with you when your healthy

[Flag this review](#)



0  
2

k.c.  
Benicia, CA

★★★★★ 4/27/2009

it is a shame the way the office in benicia is run. dr brooks is a great doctor however the office and the way that business is run is shameful. put you on hold, put you through to voice mail that never gets answered. you can leave a message for dr brooks and no one will ever call you back. god forbid if you were close to needing meds or attention. i actually had blood work done 6 months ago and no one has ever called me to discuss the results. i actually had to fax my results to my daughter who works for a doc in another state to explain them. dont expect to get billing for 6 months after your visit.

[Flag this review](#)

17 reviews for Murray Bar

Search Reviews

## Review Highlights [What's this?](#)



"Reasonable **drink** prices, nice atmosphere, great location."

In 4 reviews



"...a group of friends for some beer and **wings** and we all had an amazing..."

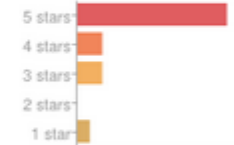
In 3 reviews



"...easy to get a drink, not too expensive and good TV to **watch** the game."

In 4 reviews

Rating  
Distribution | [Trend](#)



Sort by: [Yelp Sort](#) | [Date](#) | [Rating](#) | [Elites](#) | [Facebook Friends](#)

17 reviews in English



0  
1

3/11/2013

Amanda K.  
New York, NY

This past weekend I planned my birthday party here and it was amazing. The Murray Bar staff was so accommodating to our group, reserving the "field of dreams" section.

### Consumer Alert



We caught someone offering up cash, discounts, gift certificates or other incentives in exchange for reviews about this business. We warned them once, but they've been at it again so we wanted to let you know. These kinds of ploys hurt consumers and honest businesses who play by the rules. Check out the evidence [here](#).

Show me the reviews








Yelp's secret ops team found this evidence of someone offering free drinks in exchange for a Yelp review. Poster seen at the business is below.



The poster features a baseball with 'MB34' written on it at the top. Below it is the Yelp logo, followed by five gold stars. The text reads: 'Help Us. Yelp Us! Give MB34 a Positive 5-Star Review on Yelp.com & Receive a Coupon for (5) FREE DRINKS or DRAFTS! Simply Review MB34 at this link... www.yelp.com/biz/murray-bar-new-york Then Use "Send to a Friend", email to INFO@MURRAYBAR34TH.COM' At the bottom, in small text, it says 'Please Do Not Mention this Advert in the Review. Coupon will be Emailed within a 24-Hour Period Typically.'

**fiverr**<sup>®</sup> beta

 **diariles:** I will write up to 5 customized reviews for your site for \$5

GIG RATING **100%** ✓  64  0 EXPECTED DELIVERY **4 DAYS** ORDER IN QUE

+1 



I will write original, customized reviews for your site. I have excellent spelling and grammar and can change this up for you if you would like it to appear as different people. I will not create any business pages; you must already have them set up. I will not join any sites or take any surveys. All information I need to do the reviews needs to be easily accessible. Thank you for your understanding. Note: No Yelp reviews - I've been banned.

**original** **customized**  
**marketing**



**fiverr**<sup>®</sup> beta

 **ideasthatexcel:** I will post 2 positive reviews for your company or service for \$5

GIG RATING **100%** ✓  20  0 EXPECTED DELIVERY **5 DAYS** ORDERS IN QUEUE

+1 

I will post 2 positive reviews for your company or business on the website of your choice. Please Note - I do not post on Yelp.

**post reviews** **company**  
**google places**

