

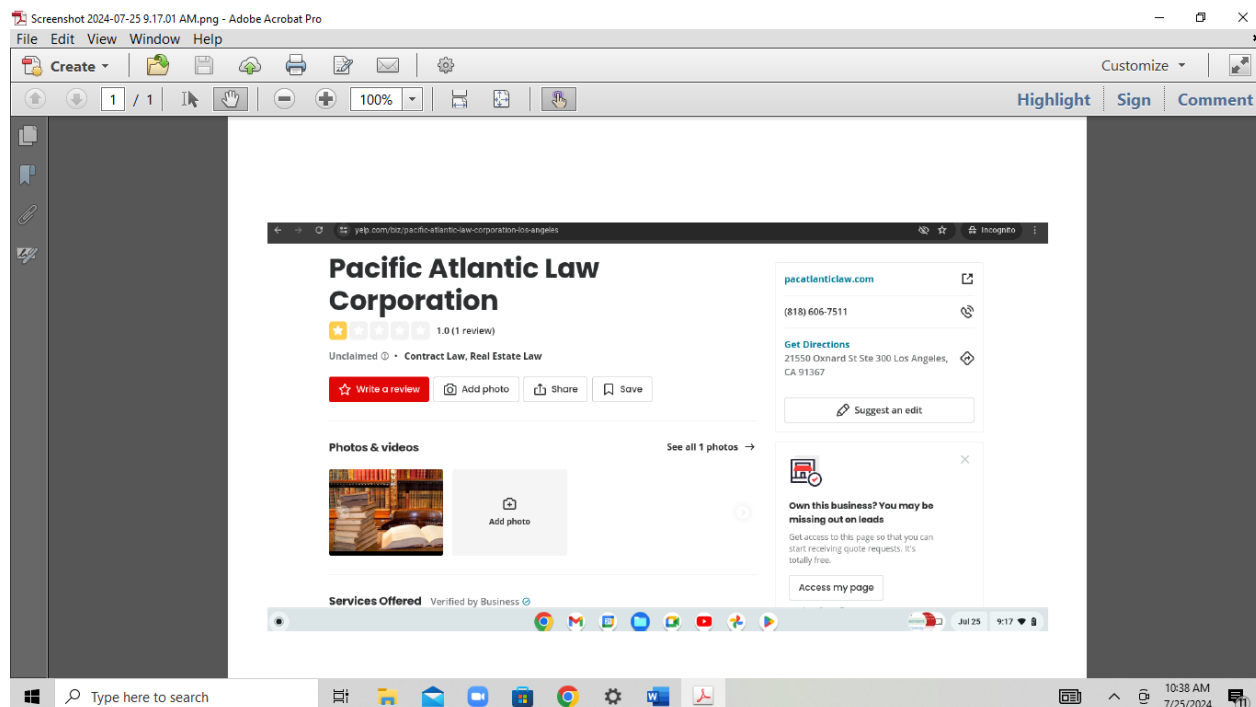
YELP'S "DARK" SIDE (MY OPINION BASED ON MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE)

By Chinye Uwechue, Esq., July 25, 2024

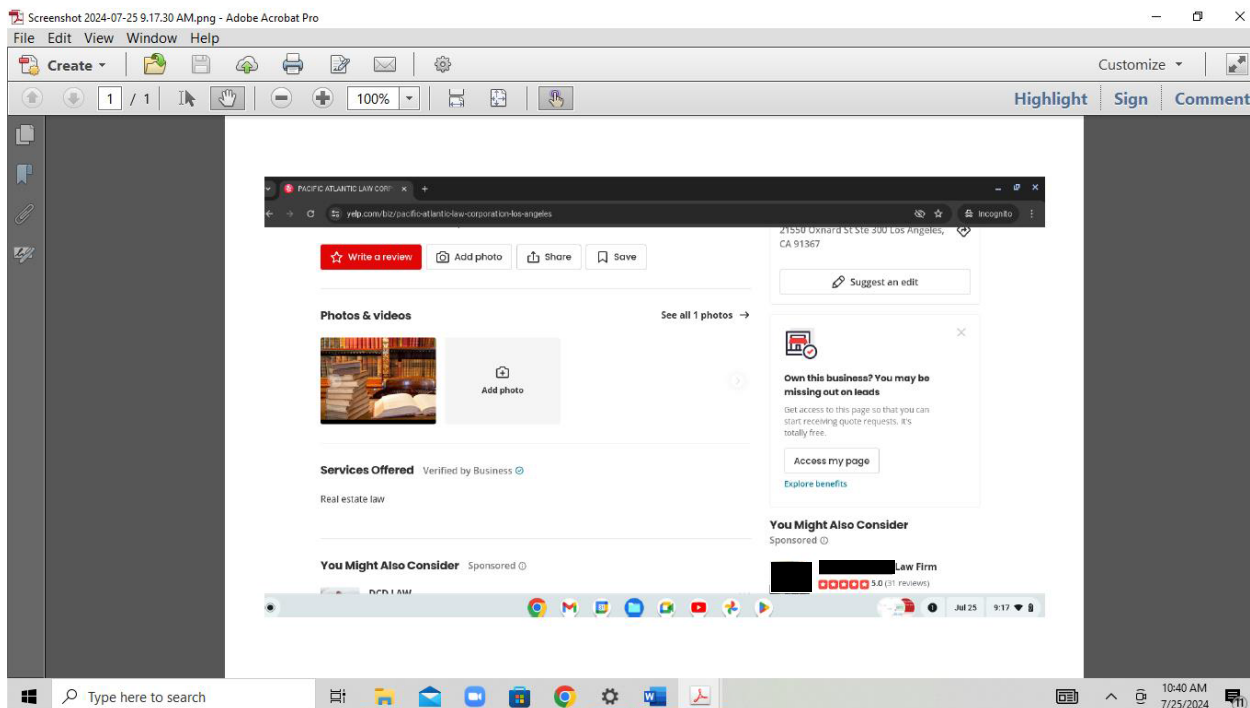
Have you ever wondered “what happens to entrepreneurs that refuse to open a Yelp account”? I happen to be one of those that did not want to open a Yelp account. Most of my clients are corporations and none use Yelp to select lawyers. This article is a summary of what happened when I refused to open or use a Yelp account.

I can only speak for myself ... when it became clear that I had no intention of using Yelp “all hell” broke loose. I have since seen unclaimed baseless negative reviews on Yelp.

In my opinion, Yelp has created a hidden extortionary business model that uses the Internet to maximize profits by attempting to force entrepreneurs to open Yelp accounts. Unless you reject an invitation to use Yelp and unless Yelp thereafter targets your business you will never know how Yelps operates “when no one is looking”. Using my personal experience, this article will show you the “dark” side of Yelp and how aspects of its business model can sometimes make members of the public complicit in its extortionary practices.



No name/identity of the person who posted the negative review. A valid legal name could expose that person to a defamation lawsuit.



My firm does NOT practice real estate law – misinformation.

When Pacific Atlantic Law Corporation's website and email hosting account were hacked, in order to avoid harming the public and prevent confusion over which activities were legitimately the firm's and which were activities by hackers/criminals, from 2022 to 2024, I made Pacific Atlantic Law Corporation effectively "dormant" and made sure it had no clients and did absolutely no business during those two years. If anyone used the law firm's name and/or contact information, that person/entity would be exposed as acting fraudulently (without legally valid authorization). Despite this "dormancy" Yelp managed to create fake negative reviews!

Yelp's extortionary business model

From my perspective, based upon my personal experience, Yelp has managed to create a business model that maximizes profits by forcing entrepreneurs to open Yelp accounts whether they actually want to or not. Had I opened an account I would never have known this "dark" and extortionary side of Yelp.

Yelp effectively gave me the following choices:

- Open a Yelp account (even though you don't want to) and correct the misinformation that Yelp posted about your business, or
- Yelp will destroy your business by maintaining an unsubstantiated set of negative reviews and have your competitors post on the same webpage their positive Yelp reviews to drive away all business from Pacific Atlantic Law Corporation. Furthermore, other social media platforms and people will pick up

on these bad reviews and re-publish them all over the Internet and there is nothing you can do to stop Yelp and these third-party disseminations.

CONCLUSION

There are many platforms and companies that look harmless and supportive of industry and the community because most people go along and use their services without ever questioning them. But when others exercise their right to refuse their services and thereby fail to “go with the flow” these same innocent looking platforms and companies can turn illegally vicious.

My experience, once again, highlights the danger of believing everything you see on the Internet.

Members of the public must always keep in mind that societies all over the world are diverse. Just because you and your “group” are being well served by a platform or corporation does not mean that the same platform or corporation is offering the same services to others that are not part of your “group”. The Internet allows platforms and corporations to simultaneously harm one group of citizens “in the dark” while providing legitimate services to other groups of citizens in the “light”.

We need to be mindful of all this because today it’s my firm and I being targeted Tomorrow it could be you.

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