6 BENEFITS OF BBB ACCREDITATION

Start with trust
Founded more than 100 years ago, Better Business Bureau (BBB) is a not-for-profit organization promoting trust and viability between businesses and consumers by investigating the integrity of businesses and providing free reviews of these businesses on its website. Currently, BBB operates 112 independently incorporated, local branches in the U.S. and Canada under the supervision of the Council of Better Business Bureaus in Arlington, Virginia.

Unaffiliated with any government department or agency, BBB does not endorse or recommend certain services, products or businesses. Instead, it is intended to help consumers find honest, reliable companies using information based on the company’s past and present behavior toward people who have interacted with them.

A business accredited by BBB has been determined to meet the following eight official standards:

1. Has established and maintained a positive track record in the marketplace.
2. Has adhered to established standards of selling and advertising.
3. Has honestly represented products and services, including clear and adequate disclosures of all material terms.
4. Has openly identified the nature, location and ownership of the business, and clearly disclosed all policies, procedures and guarantees that bear on a customer’s decision to buy.
5. Has abided by all written agreements and verbal representations.
6. Has addressed all marketplace disputes quickly, professionally and in good faith.
7. Has protected any data collected against mishandling and fraud, collected personal information only as needed, and respected the preferences of customers regarding the use of their information.
8. Has approached all business dealings, marketplace transactions and commitments with integrity.*

In addition, businesses that have been accredited by BBB have paid a fee for accreditation monitoring and reviewing as well as for the support of BBB services to consumers.

*Source: http://www.bbb.org/council/for-businesses/about-bbb-accreditation/bbb-accreditation-standards
Based on a positive/negative point system, BBB rating standards consider the following information before assigning quantitative measures of viability to queried businesses:

1. Number of complaints against the business and how the business responded to the complaints (if they responded at all).
2. What kind of business it is and if BBB believes the business is misrepresenting its products or services or violating the law.
3. How long the business has been operating and if any continuance discrepancies exist in the time it has been operating.
4. Transparency of the business—does the business provide comprehensive information about its products and services and does the business offer a verifiable address?
5. Consistently remaining committed to BBB’s standards of abiding by mediation settlements or arbitration awards.
6. Whether government actions or licensing issues have been directed toward the company.
7. This chart describes the point scale used by BBB to rate accredited and non-accredited businesses. A company’s total score is based on a 100-point scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Range of points that can be earned or deducted (maximum to minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Complaint Volume (Weighted by Complaint Age)</td>
<td>15 to 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unanswered Complaints</td>
<td>40 to 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unresolved Complaints</td>
<td>30 to 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Complaint Resolution Delayed</td>
<td>5 or 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Failure to Address Complaint Pattern</td>
<td>0 or -11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Type of Business</td>
<td>0 to -41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Time in Business</td>
<td>10 to 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Transparent Business Practices</td>
<td>0 or -5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Failure to Honor Mediation/Arbitration</td>
<td>0 to -41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Competency Licensing</td>
<td>0 or -41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Government Action (per action)</td>
<td>0 to -25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Advertising Review (per incident)</td>
<td>0 to -41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. BBB Trademark Infringement</td>
<td>0 or -41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.bbb.org/council/overview-of-bbb-grade](http://www.bbb.org/council/overview-of-bbb-grade)
Although businesses are not obligated by any federal or local governmental entity to pursue accreditation by Better Business Bureau, hundreds of thousands of businesses in the U.S. and Canada maintain their BBB Accreditation to continue enjoying the numerous advantages and perks provided by BBB Accreditation.

In addition to receiving discounts for various business products/services, companies with BBB Accreditation also have access to free seminars and ethics training programs focusing on successful business practices and marketing strategies that have been proven viable and consumer-friendly by stringent search engine algorithms and various statistical analytics devices.

Supplementary benefits of BBB Accreditation include the following:
Companies with BBB Accreditation receive a comprehensive review page that provides all information necessary for consumers to make informed decisions about doing business with the company. Items listed on a BBB review page include:

- Full name of the business
- Address/phone number
- Category/type of business
- Links to the business’ websites and social media pages
- How long the business has been accredited by BBB
- Link for consumers to file a complaint
- Link to request a quote from the company
- Link to submit a customer review

An example of a BBB report on an accredited business is the report they have published for the department store Kmart:

“The BBB has determined that Sears Holdings Corporation (Kmart) meets BBB accreditation standards that includes a commitment to make a good faith effort to resolve any consumer complaints. BBB Accredited Businesses pay a fee for accreditation review/monitoring and for support of BBB services to the public.

BBB accreditation does not mean that the business’ products or services have been evaluated or endorsed by BBB, or that BBB has made a determination as to the business’ product quality or competency in performing services.

Sears Holdings Corporation affirms that it meets and will abide by the following standards”.*

Alternately, businesses that have not been accredited by BBB will also have a standard report published on their review page (if it exists):

“[Company] is not BBB accredited. Businesses are under no obligation to seek BBB accreditation, and some businesses are not accredited because they have not sought BBB accreditation. To be accredited by BBB, a business must apply for accreditation and BBB must determine that the business meets BBB accreditation standards that include a commitment to make a good faith effort to resolve any consumer complaints. BBB Accredited Businesses must pay a fee for accreditation review/monitoring and for support of BBB services to the public”.

Immediately following BBB reports are listings of resolved and unresolved complaints filed by consumers. Non-accredited businesses that show numerous complaints against them, whether they have been resolved or not, are frequently dismissed by alerting consumers who do not want to become victims of an apparently poorly run or unethical company. In fact, the number of consumers a business may lose immediately after the consumer determines the company is not BBB Accredited may lead to the failure of that business to thrive.

Companies with links from BBB’s website to their site’s main page axiomatically lend credibility to the company while attracting search engine algorithms that “crawl” the web for high-quality, legitimate sites. In addition, BBB reviews are already search engine optimized (SEO) for all accredited businesses so they do not have to worry about rewriting reviews to achieve good SERP (search engine results page) placement.

**SEO, Algorithms and BBB**

Relevant keywords and phrases included in BBB reviews also support the efficacy of text that must adhere to strict codes implemented by search engine algorithms. The goal of a company’s website is to naturally incorporate heavily searched keywords into the text in order to attract potential customers to its websites via a Google or Yahoo search query. Although Google and Yahoo use the same general SEO guidelines when ranking websites on query results, their use of algorithms unique to their search engine exert subtle differences that may put a site high on one and lower on another. However, BBB reviews are professionally created so keyword insertion and keyword density satisfy all general search engine requirements. This results in businesses ranking on the top three most used search engines—Google, Yahoo and Bing.

**Business Website SEO**

While BBB Accreditation provides business reviews that are optimized for search queries, company website developers need to be aware that search engines also evaluate content for quality and legitimacy and will reject websites they suspect were written merely for high ranking purposes. Although BBB reviews can help company websites rank higher on Google or Yahoo, that website also needs:

- Content that is relevant to the keyword
- Content that is authoritative regarding the keyword subject
- Content is just one aspect of other relevant information included in the website
- Content has not been overly stuffed with keywords or keyword phrases
People searching for products and services can easily access a company’s contact information and request bids on its BBB review page through organic search engine results. Not only does Better Business Bureau’s website have a 96/100 domain authority by Google and Yahoo, but the site also ranks in the top 1 percent of North American websites. Moreover, BBB’s Dynamic Seal of accreditation instantly links a site to its BBB review and rating.

### Lower Bounce Rates

When used as part of an online lead generation strategy, BBB Accreditation can also reduce bounce rates, an analytics term referring to the percentage of visitors exiting a website as soon as they land on one of the site's pages.

For example, if 1,000 people visit a company’s website in one day and 500 immediately “bounce” off the site because it wasn’t what they wanted or expected, then the website has a bounce rate of 50 percent. Because 50 percent is considered a high bounce rate, this indicates something is seriously wrong with the way the site presents its appearance, content, interface or a combination of all three to visitors.

Although BBB Accreditation is one of several excellent inbound marketing strategies to lead customers to a website, it may not reduce higher bounce rates if the website itself isn’t optimized with great content, applicable graphics and an easy-to-navigate interface.

### Ultimate Lead Generation Tool

BBB Accreditation not only creates a consistent supply of potentially lucrative leads, but it also:

- Requires little effort to maintain, as long as a business continues to adhere to and pass BBB’s standards
- Can help compile information valuable to attracting and retaining customers—email addresses for sending newsletters and special announcements, for example, or home addresses to which brochures and coupons can be mailed
- Creates a sense of abiding trust in people who see a business is BBB Accredited, which helps to place that business as an industry authority in regards to specific products and services it sells
- As a lead generation tool, BBB Accreditation produces expected results that can be manipulated using other marketing strategies to enhance its efficacy with attracting potentially buying customers and converting those customers into buying customers.
- Provides the “Request A Quote” program that sends solid leads to a company’s inbox from consumers who are interested in doing business with that company

BBB’s “Request a Quote” program is a form that allows consumers to submit a request for more information about a business they are interested in contacting. The form includes requests for the consumer’s name, phone number, email address, best contact time and why the consumer wishes to contact a particular business.

*The actual form can be viewed here: [http://www.bbb.org/alaskaoregonwesternwashington/quote](http://www.bbb.org/alaskaoregonwesternwashington/quote)*
A Consumer Reports survey found the majority of consumers seeking to purchase products or services from a business they have never used before search specifically for BBB's Accreditation Seal on a company's website. Highly recognizable with its blue and white coloring, trademark torch symbol and “BBB” lettering, BBB's Seal of Accreditation tells consumers they have found a business that is reliable, trustworthy and ethical. In fact, 70 percent of consumers automatically trust companies displaying BBB's Accreditation Seal and a solid 85 percent state they are much more inclined to do business with a company that has been accredited by BBB.*

Providing mediation and arbitration services designed to quickly resolve customer complaints within 48 hours of a complaint being filed, Better Business Bureau's conflict resolution assistance can help reinforce the reputation of a company for being credible and consumer-friendly by letting consumers know they have an established and dedicated advocate for them on which to rely in case they encounter difficulties with the company.

BBB dispute resolution procedures are implemented by locally operated Better Business Bureaus and are usually resolved through mediation (with BBB acting as the neutral party) free of charge to the consumer and the business. However, consumer complaints involving law or medically oriented businesses/individuals are typically not handled by BBB mediators. In addition, BBB will not resolve complaints that are in the court system or have been filed in civil court since the dispute is already being worked by another entity.

Advantages to BBB’s Conflict Resolution Services

BBB provides verification that the complainant is actually a customer who has used a company’s services or products.

Businesses are given 28 days to respond to a complaint before BBB publishes anything about the complaint and its conclusion. If a business does not respond within two weeks of receiving the first notice, BBB sends another notice and gives the business another 14 days to respond. A “no response” closure to the case means BBB applies this lack of action to the company’s rating and review. However, companies that respond reasonably and in a timely manner to consumer complaints will experience positive increments in their BBB reviews and ratings. When a dispute cannot be resolved because the consumer is unreasonable but BBB determines the business make a “good faith” effort to settle the dispute, mediators will make a note of the circumstances surrounding the unresolved dispute and close the case in favor of the business. Although dispute mediation provided by BBB does not always satisfy all those involved, the goal of Better Business Bureau’s conflict resolution service is to be objective, fair and sensible.

Complaints Handled by BBB

Most disagreements between consumers and businesses from which they purchase products or services are accepted by BBB’s mediation service. However, BBB does reserve the right to refuse complaints that use abusive or foul language.

BBB’s mediation services do not accept:

• Disputes involving the workplace
• Discrimination complaints
• Matters that have been or are being litigated in court
• Complaints about the quality of legal or health services.
BBB provides detailed, insightful analytical measures regarding a company's performance so it can make informed, enlightened decisions about modifying its business practices, if necessary.

Business tools afforded by BBB to enhance a company's ability to employ analytics and other implements that focus on the operational status of the business include:

- Educational and networking programs and events involving other industry leaders for encouraging and sharing best practices and establishing solid business relationships.
- Insights into the competition through standardized ratings and information on most all area businesses. These insights include customer reviews, details regarding consumer complaints and results of complaint resolutions.
- A free BBB advertising service will review a company's advertisements before they are published to ensure the business is in compliance with specific advertising guidelines.
- Exclusive marketing and/or co-branding opportunities are available to showcase a company's BBB Accreditation in print mediums and online, including a comprehensive BBB Accredited Business Online Directory.

**BBB Google Adwords Program**

Better Business Bureau participates in the Google Adwords program to help accredited businesses advertise their products or services. A huge revenue producer for Google and for millions of businesses operating globally, the Adwords program (also called “pay-per-click”) involves a Google-generated text and/or image advertisement composed of less than 100 characters that is placed on other websites to promote a company's products and services.

BBB optimizes its Adwords advertisement so when search queries are performed, these ads, or creatives, are triggered by the words typed into a search by consumers. Ads marketing the business will then appear on the right-hand side of the screen or above search results. For each search result, Adwords programs may return 10 or more ads, depending on how much a business has invested in BBB's Adwords program.

When consumers click an advertisement for a BBB Accredited Business, that business is potentially making another sale while increasing its visibility through a viable SEO technique. Since BBB does most of the work involved with establishing an Adsense account for a business, the only thing a business needs to do is monitor the amount of interaction received through its Adwords program and continue refining keywords or keyword phrases by using various Google tools and analytics referencing the popularity of industry-related keywords.

In addition to these benefits provided by BBB's Adwords program, Adwords also allows companies to determine if a new product or service they wish to start marketing stands a feasible chance in today's vigorously competitive market. For example, if a business runs an advertisement for several months and receives relatively few hits, this may indicate the product or service represents a precarious niche in that industry and perhaps should be withdrawn or severely modified in order to justify its ROI.
In addition to these six benefits provided by BBB Accreditation, businesses awarded the BBB Seal of Accreditation may be able to deduct dues and contributions from their yearly tax expenses, because the IRS views support of Better Business Bureau as a “necessary and reasonable” business expenditure.

With the Internet producing hundreds of thousands of rogue businesses that routinely take advantage of consumer trust by scamming them out of their hard-earned money, businesses simply cannot afford to bypass the assurance of quality provided by BBB Accreditation. As soon as consumers see a business is accredited, they realize this business is real, established and makes every effort to forge enduring relationships with its customers by upholding all standards enforced by BBB.

With the support of reviews, complaint closures and other advantages included in BBB Accreditation, businesses will not only enjoy long-term success in their specific industry niche, but they will also be viewed as an industry authority that offers outstanding products, services and a sincere responsibility to nurturing the trust of today’s wary consumers.