

Is Someone Else Using YOUR Free, Online Business Directory Listings to Drive Phone Calls, E-Mails or Web Traffic To THEIR BUSINESS Instead of Yours?

By Randy A. Smith

Here is a super-simple way to find out – absolutely free.

We are all aware that consumers utilize the internet to search for things these days: clothing, books, shoes, insurance, truck rentals, even self storage. But did you know there are dozens of FREE online business directory listings available to you as a business owner? Yes, FREE! Unfortunately, many business owners don't know that these free directory listings exist or how to find them and get listed. At times, search engines (even Google) make mistakes and grab data from the wrong sources. Worse yet, in some instances unscrupulous other businesses do know how to access many of these free online business directory listings and somehow manage to get THEIR phone number and THEIR website link posted under YOUR business name. Some are even so bold as to capture customers (who were already looking for your business on YOUR free listing at various sites) and turn around and try to sell these "leads" or "referrals" back to you, making you think they are bringing you customers you couldn't have otherwise had!

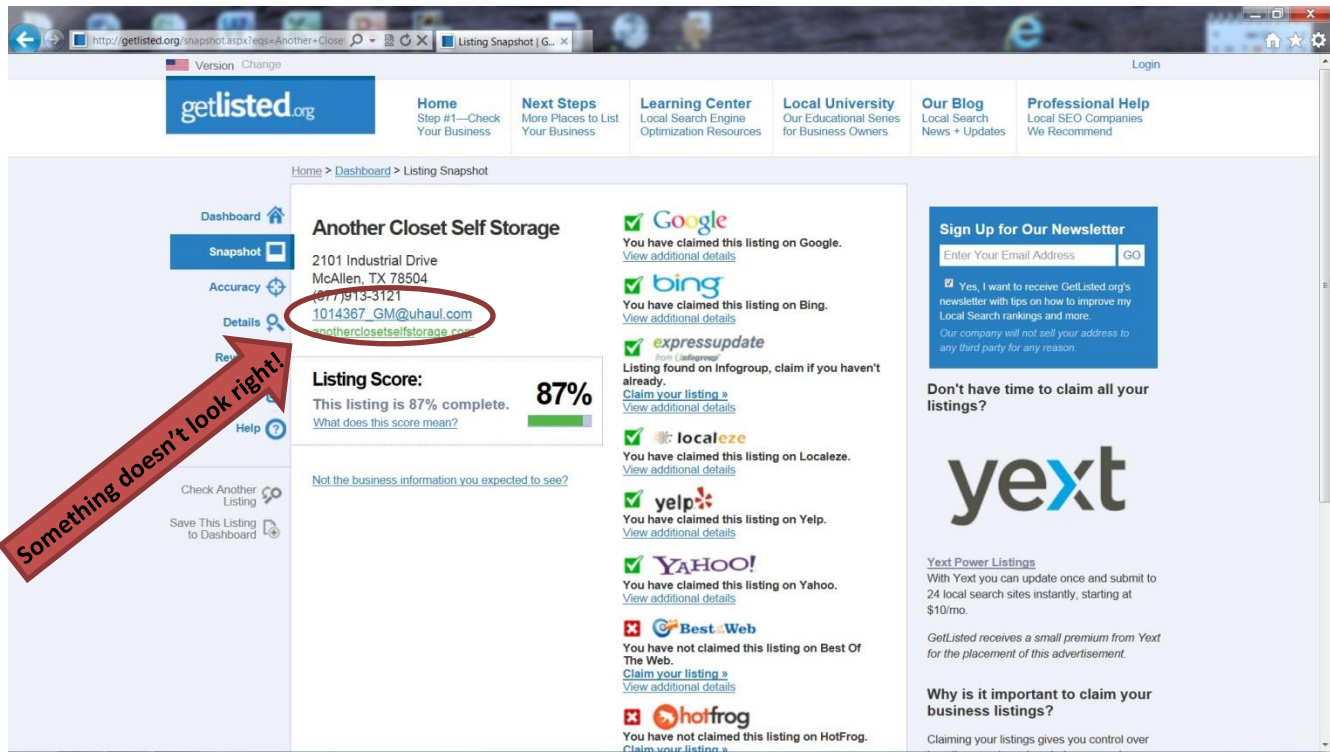
Here are a few simple things you can do to see if you (and your business) have been such a victim. Finding out if you've been a victim or if erroneous data is posted is relatively easy... getting the problems (wrong data) fixed will take a little more diligence and effort. But let's start off by doing two quick, free listings checks at two well-known websites. I highly recommend you use BOTH sites!!! *(Disclaimer: I am in no way affiliated with either web site)*

Step 1: Go to www.getlisted.org. Once there, you will see this page:

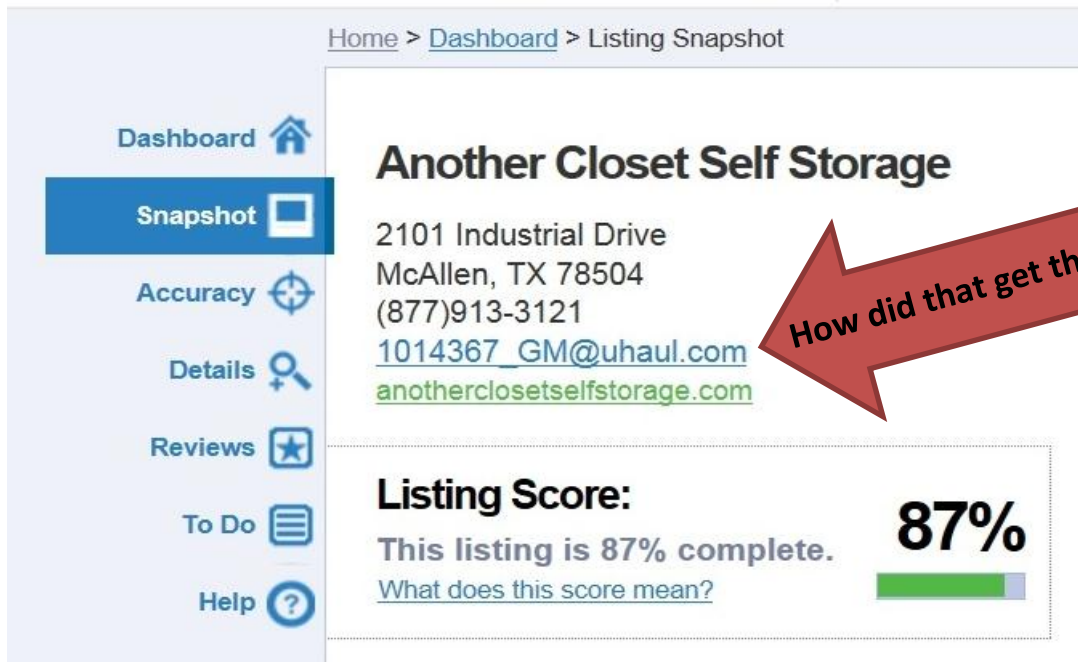
The screenshot shows the homepage of getlisted.org. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Next Steps, Learning Center, Local University, Our Blog, and Professional Help. The main content area features a heading: "See how your business is listed at Google, Yahoo, and other top local search engines." Below this heading is a form with two input fields: "Enter Your Business Name:" containing the text "Another Closet Self Storage" and "Enter Your Zip Code:" containing "78504". A blue button labeled "Check My Listings" is positioned below the fields, with a link for "Advanced Check" underneath it. A yellow arrow points to the business name field, and a green arrow points to the "Check My Listings" button. The footer contains copyright information and links for "About GetListed.org", "Terms of Use", and "Privacy Policy".

Step 2: Enter your business name and zip code like the example above (yellow arrow). Then click "Check My Listings" button (green arrow). It may take almost a minute or two before the results are displayed.

Once the results appear, you will see this page, or one similar:



Step 3: Check your listing snapshot very carefully. Check the address, phone number, email address and URL to your website. In the above actual result page for our facility, look just below the phone number in the red circle... Here I find listed an email address for a U-Haul representative! I handle all web functions at our company and I can assure you I did not put a U-Haul email address on our self storage facility listing. See the close-up screenshot below.



This particular facility HAS NEVER been a U-Haul equipment Dealer!

Step 4: If the snapshot information is...

Not the business information you expected to see?

The information above represents what the major Local search engines have "on file" about your business. If there are errors, you should edit (or claim) your listing at each engine by clicking the links under their logos on the right.

After looking at the "snapshot" of your listing, you must go to each individual listing on the right side of the screen. If you see a red box with a white X, this means you have not "claimed" your listing (like **Best of the Web** directory example below – red arrow). If you see a green box with a check mark, like you see at the right for our **Bing** listing, this means the listing has been "claimed". But: **VERY IMPORTANT NOTE!!!**

You must click on the "View additional details" link and **completely check the data there** to make sure that YOU indeed are the one who has "claimed" the listing and not someone else! If someone else has "claimed" the listing or the wrong data is there (i.e. different phone, different email, different website, etc) – you should work to get it fixed **IMMEDIATELY!**

 **Google**
You have claimed this listing on Google.
[View additional details](#)

 **bing**
You have claimed this listing on Bing.
[View additional details](#)

 **expressupdate**
from Infogroup
Listing found on Infogroup, claim if you haven't already.
[Claim your listing »](#)
[View additional details](#)

 **localeze**
You have claimed this listing on Localeze.
[View additional details](#)

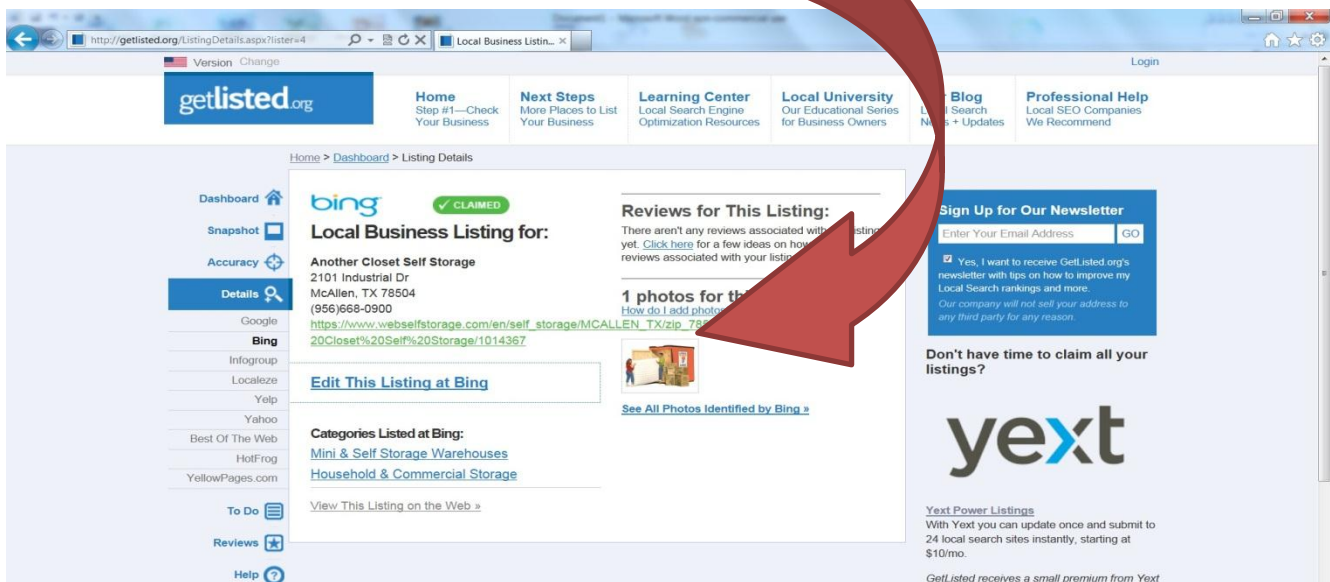
 **yelp**
You have claimed this listing on Yelp.
[View additional details](#)

 **YAHOO!**
You have claimed this listing on Yahoo.
[View additional details](#)

 **Best of The Web**
You have not claimed this listing on Best Of The Web.
[Claim your listing »](#)
[View additional details](#)

Here is WHY you need to check EACH individual listing!

That's not my website!!! It's U-Haul's!



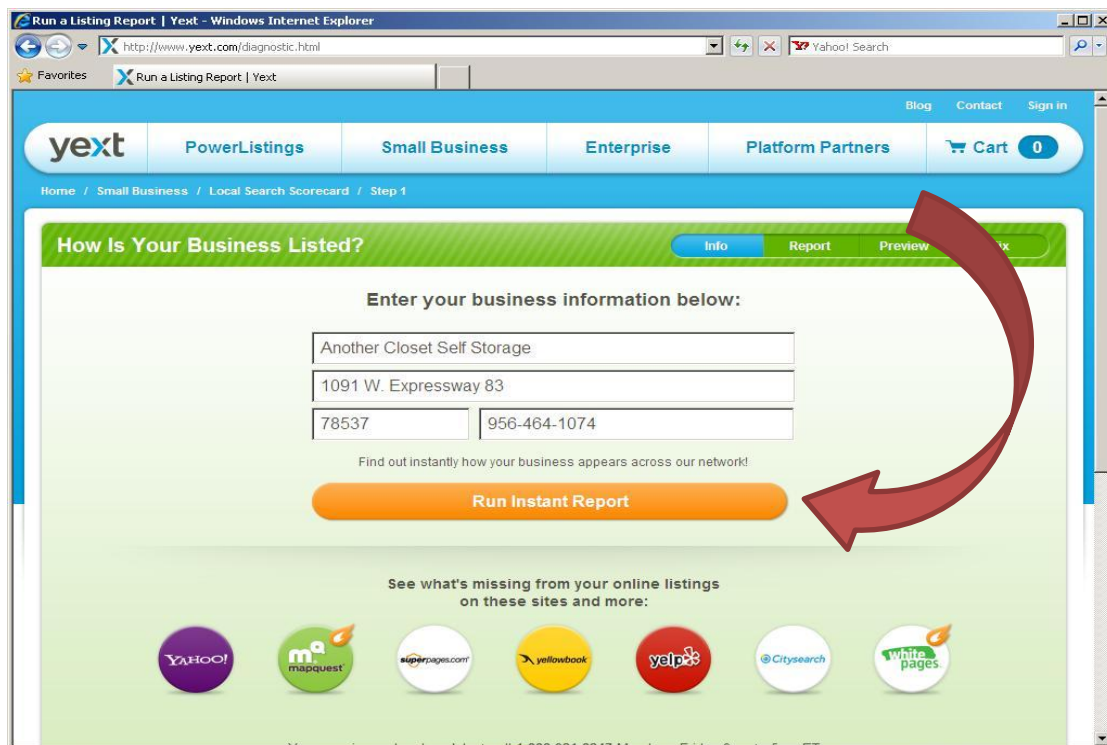
Even though it said I "claimed" my listing (I never did), somehow U-Haul's information (their website and their picture) managed to get on my free listing on BING! So you see, it is **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** that you check every **single one of your listings out there**. (For the record, I contacted U-Haul and I was told that because other facilities of ours [not this one] had been a Uhaul dealer and eMove affiliate in the past, that these online directories were getting their information from scanning old phonebooks! Since when do phonebooks list email addresses, web url's, and have web photos?!?!?)

Now, let's do a more thorough directory listing search at another free website. (Don't click **FIX** unless you want to pay to correct or claim listings. I don't recommend doing that at this time – just use the **FREE** check)

Step 1: Go to www.yext.com. There, you will see this page: Then click on the **Orange** Button – “Start Now”



Step 2: At next page, insert your business information like the example below. Click “Run Instant Report”



Step 3: After a brief search time, you will see a screen similar to this, with a list of results down the page:

Listings Diagnostic Report
Report prepared for: Another Closet Self Storage, 1091 W. Expressway 83, Donna, TX, 78537

ALERT
Your listings need attention

REPORT AT A GLANCE
OPTIMIZED: 67% | MISSING: 33%

SCANNED ON
JAN 26, 2012
4:01:59 PM

	Basic Listings Information	Categories	Web Site	Description	Photos	Special Offer	Status
Yahoo!	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Highway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Foursquare	NOT FOUND	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗ Not found
Yelp	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
WhitePages	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
MapQuest	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Superpages	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Citysearch	Another Closet Self Storage W Expressway 83 AT S Whalen Rd (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	! Alert

To get a more complete list, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click “Show 20+ more sites...” (red arrow)

Business Listing Report | Yext PowerListings - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.yext.com/listing-report.html

Business Listing Report | Yext PowerListings

	Basic Listings Information	Categories	Web Site	Description	Photos	Special Offer	Status
Yahoo!	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Highway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Foursquare	NOT FOUND	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗ Not found
Yelp	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
WhitePages	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
MapQuest	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Superpages	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Citysearch	Another Closet Self Storage W Expressway 83 AT S Whalen Rd (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	! Alert
Yellowbook	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expressway 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed
Local.com	Another Closet Self Storage 1091 W Expy 83 (956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓ Listed

Show 20+ more sites, mobile and navigation apps

Fix It All

Privacy Policy | © 2011 Yext. All Rights Reserved. | Made in NYC.

DON'T Click "Fix It All" unless you want to pay to have this site manage your directory listings. I don't recommend doing this at this time.

Step 4: These search results for one of our facilities shows an unfamiliar phone number. (See the red arrow)

Source	Business Name	Address	Phone	Green Check	Red X	Alert	Listed
Citysearch	Another Closet Self Storage	W Expressway 83 AT S Whalen Rd	(956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	Alert
Yellowbook	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	Listed
Local.com	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expwy 83	(956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	Listed
MerchantCircle	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-4285	✓	✗	Alert	Alert
EZlocal	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-1074	✓	✗	✗	Listed
GetFave	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-1074	✓	✗	✗	Listed
LocalDatabase	NOT FOUND			✗	✗	✗	Not found
ShowMeLocal	NOT FOUND			✗	✗	✗	Not found
Topix	NOT FOUND			✗	✗	✗	Not found
ZipLocal	ANOTHER CLOSET SELF STORAGE	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-1074	✓	✓	✗	Listed
CitySquares	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-1074	✓	✗	✗	Listed
LocalPages	Another Closet Self Storage	Expwy 83 & Whalen Rd	(956) 464-1074	✗	✗	✗	Alert
MojoPages	Another Closet Self Storage	1091 W Expressway 83	(956) 464-1074	✗	✗	✗	Listed

Step 5: Upon further investigation, going to the actual listing (clicking View Listing link) produces this result:

Another Closet Self Storage
1091 W Expressway 83, Donna, TX 78537 **800-468-4285**

Hours: Mon-Fri: 08:30AM-05:30PM, Sat: 08:30AM-12:30PM, Sun: Closed
Payment: Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, Cash, Check

U-HAUL 1-800 number again!!!!

This facility stopped renting Uhaul equipment in 2008 and our business never claimed this listing!!!

Do you see why it is so important to completely check all of your listings?!?!?!?

Now, How Do You Fix Any Problems You've Found?

I recommend doing ALL of the following, in this order.

If you've been lucky enough to have found no problems, congratulations! Unfortunately, most people will not be as fortunate. Not to worry though. Here is what I recommend and the reasoning behind why I suggest what I do. In my opinion, if enough people follow this process, then it will make a difference in the short-term, and more importantly, *over the long run*.

- 1. DOCUMENT THE ISSUE.** The best way to do this is to pull up any wrong listing on your screen and do a "screen capture". You can do this on most PC's by simply pressing the "prt sc" button on your keyboard (usually located in the upper right side area of the keyboard). This "copies" a picture of exactly what you see on your screen to the computer's "clipboard" or short term memory. Then, simply minimize the webpage you are viewing and open any photo/graphics program of your choice. Most Windows PC's come with MS Paint already installed. MS Paint is usually located under Programs in a folder called Accessories. Just open MS Paint and look for the PASTE button or command. Click it and it copies your "clipboard" (screen picture currently in memory) to the MS Paint Program. Click "File", then "Save As" - saving the file with whatever name you choose (in a JPG file format). Repeat this process for every listing with the wrong information. *YOU NEED TO KEEP A RECORD OF EACH WRONG LISTING, ESPECIALLY LISTINGS WITH PHONE NUMBERS, EMAIL ADDRESSES, or WEBSITE ADDRESSES THAT ARE NOT YOURS. THIS COULD BE IMPORTANT FOR LEGAL REASONS IF A THIRD-PARTY IS FOUND TO HAVE KNOWINGLY CLAIMED A LISTING THAT WAS NOT THEIRS AND KNOWINGLY POPULATED YOUR LISTING WITH THEIR COMPANY DATA.*
- 2. IF THE LISTING HAS AN UNRECOGNIZABLE PHONE NUMBER OR OTHER INFO – FIND OUT WHOSE IT IS.** Simply click on the link or call the number. Make a note of who answers or where the web link leads to. It may be a legitimate error, such as a number transposed or wrong area code.
- 3. IF THE LISTING IS NOT "CLAIMED" – ATTEMPT TO CLAIM IT.** Fill out the listing with the correct information, correcting any errors or mis-information. **IF THE LISTING IS "CLAIMED" – ATTEMPT TO EDIT IT.** This may or may not be possible. If you are the 'claimant of record' you should be able to edit it. If you are not the 'claimant of record', you won't. If you are not the 'claimant of record' and the listing is truly your business listing with your name and address but wrong phone number or website link, you need to stop and ask yourself how this could have happened. It could have been accidental or intentional.
- 4. IF YOU CAN'T EDIT THE LISTING AND IT IS YOURS, YOU WILL NEED TO CONTACT THE DIRECTORY BY PHONE.** This can be challenging, frustrating and time-consuming... but it must be done. Look for a "contact us" link on the main directory page. Try looking for a customer service number. If that doesn't work, look for an "advertise with us" phone number. Get through to a salesperson, explain the problem, and request they transfer you to the right department. You should not have to pay anything to get the correct information listed. When speaking with the support representative, ask them how this error (such as another phone number to another business) could have appeared in your listing and/or who claimed it.
- 5. IF THE LISTING WAS CLAIMED BY A COMPETITOR OR VENDOR IN YOUR INDUSTRY – REPORT THIS EVENT TO YOUR STATE AND NATIONAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS.** It is very important to help protect the interests of your industry. If someone in your industry is using questionable business practices that affect you, you should report it to your state and national industry associations, especially if the offending party is a member of that association as well. All associations have a code of ethics pledge their members agree to abide by. If one member is in violation of that pledge and is guilty of multiple instances of questionable conduct, your fellow businessmen and association members need to know about it so action can be taken.
- 6. CONTACT THE PARTY WHO HAS THEIR INFORMATION ON YOUR LISTING**
Do this ONLY after the above steps have been taken. Call them by phone and explain what you found and that you have documented it. Tell them you do not know how it happened (unless you do) and that if it is in their power to correct it, that you want it corrected (removed) IMMEDIATELY. Write down the name of the person you spoke with. Tell them you have reported it to the directory site AND your state and national association. Request a follow-up email from them summarizing your call and that they are indeed aware of the problem and will correct it (if they can).

Good luck and be persistent! If you suspect willful wrong-doing by a third-party, I recommend contacting your State & National Industry Associations. See the next page for a simple, one-page standardized form that you may find useful for submitting your concerns. For multiple suspected instances of wrong-doing, I recommend sending multiple notices.

Important Notice to My Industry Association

This notice is to:

(Your Association Name)

This notice is from:

(Your Business Name)

I would like to report an issue of concern to me and of potential concern to my fellow industry association members and the industry association leadership. Please see a brief description of my concern below:

My contact information

My name:

Title: (owner, manager, etc.)

Best contact phone number:

Best Time to Call: (morning, afternoon, etc.)

Best contact email:

To me, this matter is: (check one)

important extremely important urgent

Fill this form out as completely as possible. Fax one to your national association as well as any relevant state associations as well. I recommend faxing it to the attention of Member Relations or other similar office.