

# Consumer Reviews—The SBM Member Directory Way

By Roberta M. Gubbins

**S**ally Consumer is looking for a lawyer. She collects suggestions from friends and family, then turns to the Internet for more information. Like most consumers, Sally visits the review section of a lawyer's profile—the modern version of word-of-mouth referrals.

Potential clients want reliable information when choosing an attorney for their legal needs. Client reviews like those found in the SBM Member Directory are an important part of the decision-making process.

If you want to add reviews to your Internet presence, you can start by updating your Member Directory profile. The directory's features are preset *not* to enable client reviews or endorsements. You must opt in to these features in your profile settings.

## Who can write reviews?

A review can only be submitted by an individual registered on the site as a member, and who was or is a client of the lawyer being reviewed. Fellow lawyers can't post reviews unless they are also clients. When Zeekbeek receives a review from a registered member, it sends an e-mail to the lawyer being reviewed to verify the individual is a client.



If the lawyer confirms the individual is a client, the review is posted; if the individual is not a client, the review is not posted and the reviewer is notified of the reason for not posting. If the lawyer doesn't respond within seven days, Zeekbeek reserves the right to publish the review. If there is confusion over a reviewer's status, Zeekbeek will try to resolve the situation. Visit Zeekbeek's review policy for more information.

You can opt out of the review feature at any time. However, if you opt in to enable client reviews and then opt out, any reviews you received are still stored in the system; if you later reactivate the feature, the old reviews will still be visible.

## The contents of the review

Zeekbeek doesn't verify the contents of reviews. However, if a review contains offen-

sive language, the site administrator notifies the reviewer that the review is rejected. If the offensive language is removed, the review is posted. Lawyers are allowed one response to a posted client review; to discourage continuing arguments, the client can't comment on the lawyer's response.

The majority of reviews are positive. When a rare negative review appears, remember the following:

- Consumer research shows that a few negative comments improve the credibility of positive reviews.
- The review could reveal an office procedure that needs changing.
- A response to the review, restating your commitment to client service, sends a powerful message to potential clients.

Client reviews are not new, but the delivery system is—now they are on the Internet for everyone to see. Clients use these resources, so it's time for you to use them, too. Your SBM Member Directory powered by Zeekbeek lets you use reviews to your advantage. ■

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*Roberta M. Gubbins has served as the editor of the Ingham County Legal News. Since leaving the paper, she provides services as a ghostwriter editing articles, blogs, and e-blasts for lawyers and law firms.*

*She is the editor of Briefs, the Ingham County Bar Association e-newsletter, and The Mentor, the SBM Master Lawyers Section newsletter.*