

# How to use the media to fight Bad Bob

By Tom Wadsworth, CDDC



Throughout the country, good dealers are losing business to the deceptive practices of Bad Bob. Worse still, innocent customers are getting ripped off by Bad Bob as he continues to give our industry a bad name.

This article seeks to give you some effective ways to fight Bad Bob in your markets. While there are a number of legal and governmental ways to wage this battle, here I will focus on tactics that use the media.

## Why the media?

I concentrate on the media because it is my field of expertise and the primary focus of my career since the 1970s. I feel confident that these tactics will work.

While lawsuits and legal action can be costly and drag on for years, media tactics can be employed with minimal time and expense. Best of all, media strategies can boost your own reputation, warn thousands of consumers about Bad Bob's tactics, and actually compel Bad Bob to change his business practices or even to get out of town.

## About Bad Bob

First, a little background about Bad Bob. Twenty years ago, the industry didn't have a Bad Bob problem. From his beginnings in Florida in the late 1990s, he quickly spread to Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, Phoenix, and eventually to dozens of cities across the nation. Bad Bob thrives in metropolitan areas.

But don't assume that Bad Bob is just one or two companies. Throughout the country, Bad Bob has produced hundreds of disgruntled employees who left their companies and started their own garage door repair businesses. Since they often didn't know any other way to conduct such a business, they typically used Bad Bob's business model.

## Defining Bad Bob

What is Bad Bob's business model? It can be summed up in four basic elements: heavy advertising, focus on repair work, overcharging, and performing unnecessary repairs. Of course, there is nothing wrong with advertising, and many honest dealers use advertising effectively in their markets. However, Bad Bob's advertising is typically deceptive, and his heavy expenditures in advertising motivate him to overcharge customers and perform as many (unnecessary) additional repairs as possible.

Overcharging is not necessarily illegal. However, Bad Bob's *illegal* tactics fall into three categories: deceptive practices, false advertising,

and fraud. These three practices may have varying definitions from state to state, but they are illegal throughout the nation.

## Burning the good dealer

Good dealers get burned by Bad Bob, primarily by his deceptive practices. In his advertising blitz, one of his standard strategies has been to use names that are strikingly similar to those of the established dealers in that market. For example, if your business is known as "ABC Garage Door," Bob will promote himself as "ABC Garage Doors" or "ABC Garage Door Service."

Thus, when consumers are looking for you, the established dealer, they will mistakenly call Bad Bob. The good dealer not only loses the business, he is also (wrongly) blamed for Bob's gross overcharging and shoddy work.

## First, collect evidence

*Evidence* is the solid foundation of your media battle with Bad Bob. If you plan to enter the public arena with your battle, you must have good evidence that Bad Bob is genuinely bad for the public. You don't want others to dismiss your case by claiming that you're just a "disgruntled competitor."

So, I recommend that you create a special file in your office (or on your computer) for the collection of evidence. Here are four items to place in that file.

**Deceptive ads.** Monitor your local media to see how Bad Bob is advertising. Save Yellow Pages ads and coupon-book ads that have

### COLLECT EVIDENCE

Deceptive ads

Invoices

Eyewitnesses

News reports

*“Media strategies can boost your own reputation, warn thousands of consumers about Bad Bob’s tactics, and actually compel Bad Bob to change his business practices or even to get out of town.”*

deceptive information, such as phony street addresses, false claims, and phony names, especially when those names steal your own name. Learn how to “print screen” on your computer or to save Bad Bob’s Google or Bing listings that contain deceptive or false information.

**Eyewitnesses.** When a customer notifies you that he or she was ripped off, collect the customer’s contact information, such as name, address, phone number, and email address. These consumers are valuable eyewitnesses to the scam, and they are often willing to identify themselves openly to any investigating agency.

**Invoices.** In that same phone call from the abused customer, ask for a copy of their invoice from Bad Bob. That invoice contains his abuses, clearly itemized for each (unnecessary) repair or part and its (exorbitant) price. As an industry insider, you may also be able to identify line items that show where Bob charged the customer two or three times for the same item.

**News reports.** Since Bad Bob has now been exposed dozens of times in news reports across the country, these stories provide abundant evidence that the problem is nationally recognized. On page 61, see the list of 22 news stories that have unmasked Bad Bobs since 2014.

## MEDIA TACTIC #1

### Contact a consumer reporter

Yes, you’re busy; you don’t have the time to prosecute a case against Bad Bob. Fortunately, the news media in your area are likely to have an investigative reporter who is constantly looking for stories like yours. Let the reporter do the work for you. These reporters are particularly interested in stories about predatory businesses that abuse local consumers, especially seniors.

But don’t just call the reporter and whine about a competitor. Provide them with the evidence mentioned above. These documents are exactly what the reporter needs in order to expose these rip-off practices. Plus, when they see all the other news stories, they will know how to conduct their own hidden-camera investigation, and they’ll know the key details that deserve primary focus.

*Image courtesy of KTVT, the CBS affiliate in Dallas.*



## MEDIA TACTIC #2

### Distribute a consumer alert

If you can’t get the attention of the local media, just send your own “consumer alert.” If you have a Facebook page (either a personal page or a business page), you essentially have your own broadcasting station. Post your alert on your Facebook page, but be careful to identify Bad Bob’s *practices*, not his *name(s)*.

You also want to avoid looking like the whining dealer who complains about his competitors. Instead, be the good dealer who warns consumers about predatory and unscrupulous businesses. Fight for the consumer, not yourself.

A consumer alert can take various forms. It can be a formal

press release that you send to your local news media. You can hire a public relations agency to draft it, or use our free Bad Bob press release template (see note at the end of this article). Just be sure that your release contains



verifiable facts and avoids identifying Bad Bob’s company name.

You can post that press release on your social media sites and on your own website. Across the country, many good dealers have added consumer alerts to their websites. They position your company as the benevolent expert in town who warns consumers about rip-off artists.

Your consumer alert can also take the form of an advertisement. Bruce and Lisa Roth of Quality Overhead Door of Toledo recently created a 30-second television commercial that warns consumers about Bad Bob’s practices (see the video at [www.qualityoverheaddoor.com](http://www.qualityoverheaddoor.com)).

*continued on page 60*

*"If you can fully justify your prices, why not proudly display them?"*

*continued from page 59*

You can buy a similar ad for radio, newspaper, the Yellow Pages, or even for coupon books.

### MEDIA TACTIC #3

#### Notify the ad medium

If you see Bad Bob using false advertising or deceptive ads, notify the medium that ran the ad. Advertising media (e.g., Google, Yellow Pages, Groupon, Valpak, radio, TV, newspaper) are partially to blame

when their company is used to spread false information or to propagate a scam. And they know it.

If you are already spending money with that particular medium, your complaint will likely get quicker attention. Your complaint can result in a crackdown—by that medium—to force Bad Bob to change or stop his ads.

If you're reluctant to believe that complaining to the media will do any good, listen to your federal government. The Federal

Trade Commission's website encourages you to "contact the radio station, television station, or publication where the ad ran. Let them know that they're running an ad you think may be deceptive."

Submitting that complaint costs you nothing. But it can result in saving thousands of consumers from getting ripped off, and you might start to get back the business that Bad Bob has stolen from you.

*"Contact the radio*

*station, television station,*

*or publication where the ad ran.*

*Let them know that they're running*

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*- Federal Trade Commission*



### MEDIA TACTIC #4

#### Publish your prices

Traditionally, dealers in our industry have not been known to publish their prices. The practice is perfectly legal, but make sure that your prices are independently set and are not the result of any collusion with competitors. In our culture, publishing pricing has long been common for grocery stores, auto dealers, gas stations, and many others.



Plus, with the advent of online shopping, consumers can quickly find out the price of almost anything. Did you know that Amazon sells a pack of 10 nylon 13-ball-bearing rollers for less than 16 bucks? Did you know that consumers can now go online to see specific prices and buy garage door cable, hinges, brackets, and weatherseal?

Times have changed. Today, almost anyone can find out almost anything.

So, one good way to warn the public about exorbitant pricing is by publishing your prices for standard repairs, such as a spring replacement. Put your prices in an ad, or post them on your website. If you can fully justify your prices, why not proudly display them?

#### A good example

Consider what Overhead Door Company of Dallas did in its area, a hotbed for Bad Bobs. A year ago, when the local media started exposing Bad Bob's practices in the area, Overhead Door of Dallas provided its standard repair pricing to Dave Lieber, the consumer watchdog for the Dallas Morning News. NBC 5, the local Dallas television station, then reported those prices to the public to help consumers realize when they've been ripped off.

The strategy, which cost nothing for the door dealer, helped the dealer boost its own reputation while warning consumers. As online shopping continues to embed itself into our lives, you may find that internet publishing of standard prices will become more common.

# Bad Bobs exposed in the media

## 22 examples since 2014\*

### WBTV (CBS), Charlotte, N.C.

Date: **April 30, 2014**

Story: **WBTV Investigates: Hidden camera watches repairman at work**

By *Jamie Boll*

<http://www.wbvtv.com/story/25392337/wbvtv-investigates-hidden-camera-watches-repairman-at-work>

### NBC "Today" Show (national)

Date: **Dec. 3, 2014**

Story: **How honest are garage door repairmen? Hidden cameras put some to the test**

By *Jeff Rossen and Charlie McClravy*

<http://www.today.com/money/garage-door-repairmen-hidden-cameras-put-some-test-1D80319362>

### Dallas Morning News, Dallas, Texas

Date: **Dec. 6, 2014**

Story: **Watchdog: Garage door repair company overcharges elderly**

By *Dave Lieber*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/investigations/watchdog/20141206-watchdog-garage-door-repair-company-overcharges-elderly.ece>

### KTVU (Fox), Oakland, Calif.

Date: **April 23, 2015**

Story: **2 Investigates: Undercover video raises questions about garage door repair company**

By *Eric Rasmussen*

<http://www.ktvu.com/news/4316183-story>

### WFTV (ABC), Orlando, Fla.

Date: **May 1, 2015**

Story: **Action 9 confronts repair companies in hidden-camera investigation**

By *Todd Ulrich*

<http://www.wftv.com/news/news/local/action-9-confronts-repair-companies-hidden-camera-nk7Pj/>

### WOAI-TV (NBC), San Antonio, Texas

Date: **May 15, 2015**

Story: **Investigation: garage door repair gamble**

By *Jaie Avila*

<http://news4sanantonio.com/news/local/investigation-garage-door-repair-gamble>

### WTTE-TV (Fox), Columbus, Ohio

Date: **May 20, 2015**

Story: **Hidden-camera investigation: garage door techs called out**

By *Tom Sussi*

<http://myfox28columbus.com/news/local/hidden-camera-investigation-garage-door-techs-called-out-10-10-2015>

### Door + Access Systems Newsmagazine (national)

Date: **Sept. 29, 2015**

Story: **GDS: The worst garage door company in the nation**

By *Tom Wadsworth*

[http://www.dasma.com/articles/feature/GDS-The%20Worst\\_Fall2015.pdf](http://www.dasma.com/articles/feature/GDS-The%20Worst_Fall2015.pdf)

### Dallas Morning News

Date: **Oct. 16, 2015**

Story: **Watchdog: Dallas-area garage door company labeled worst in nation**

By *Dave Lieber*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/investigations/watchdog/20151015-watchdog-dallas-area-garage-door-company-labeled-worst-in-nation.ece>

### NBC 5, Dallas, Texas

Date: **Oct. 18, 2015**

Story: **Now in Dallas, garage door company founder evades public attention**

By *Marina Trahan Martinez*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/metro/20151018-now-in-dallas-garage-door-company-founder-evades-public-attention.ece>

### Dallas Morning News

Date: **Oct. 18, 2015**

Story: **Watchdog: Garage door company sells you what you don't need**

By *Dave Lieber*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/investigations/watchdog/20151017-watchdog-garage-door-company-sells-you-what-you-dont-need.ece>

### CBS 11, Dallas, Texas

Date: **Oct. 19, 2015**

Story: **Consumer Justice: Company named "worst in the nation" by industry**

By *Cristin Severance*

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2015/10/19/consumer-justice-company-named-worst-in-the-nation-by-industry/>

### CBS 11, Dallas, Texas

Date: **Oct. 20, 2015**

Story: **Consumer Justice: Another kind of victim of garage door company ripoff**

By *Cristin Severance*

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/show/latest-cbsdftw-video/video-3309280-consumer-justice-another-kind-of-victim-of-garage-door-company-ripoff/>

### Dallas Morning News

Date: **Oct. 24, 2015**

Story: **Watchdog: Listen to clues in sales script to find good guys**

By *Dave Lieber*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/investigations/watchdog/20151023-watchdog-listen-to-clues-in-sales-script-to-find-good-guys.ece>

### Inside Edition (national)

Date: **Oct. 29, 2015**

Story: **Hidden camera investigation shows repairman charging hundreds of dollars for unnecessary fix**

By *Lisa Guerrero*

<http://www.insideedition.com/headlines/12647-hidden-camera-investigation-reveals-repairman-charging-hundreds-of-dollars-for-unnecessary-fix>

### Inside Edition (national)

Date: **Oct. 30, 2015**

Story: **Watch repairman tear off door sensor ... then charge \$120 to fix it**

By *Lisa Guerrero*

<http://www.insideedition.com/headlines/12689-watch-repairman-tear-off-door-sensor-then-charge-120-to-fix-it>

### WKYC-TV (NBC), Cleveland, Ohio

Date: **Nov. 25, 2015**

Story: **Garage door company called 'worst in nation'**

By *Tom Meyer*

<http://www.wkyc.com/story/news/local/northeast-ohio/2015/11/26/garage-worst-overcharges-shoddy/76380106/>

### Dallas Morning News

Date: **Dec. 20, 2015**

Story: **Watchdog: Carrollton-based garage door company's ex-manager fesses up**

By *Dave Lieber*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/investigations/watchdog/20151219-watchdog-carrollton-based-garage-door-company-s-ex-manager-fesses-up.ece>

### New York Times (national)

Date: **Jan. 30, 2016**

Story: **Fake online locksmiths may be out to pick your pocket, too**

By *David Segal*

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/business/fake-online-locksmiths-may-be-out-to-pick-your-pocket-too.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/business/fake-online-locksmiths-may-be-out-to-pick-your-pocket-too.html?_r=0)

### Stamford (Conn.) Advocate

Date: **March 15, 2016**

Story: **Pair accused of trying to scam elderly Stamford woman out of \$4K**

By *John Nickerson*

<http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/police-reports/article/Men-charged-with-trying-to-take-4-000-for-6891580.php>

### KPNX (NBC), Phoenix, Ariz.

Date: **March 30, 2016**

Story: **Call 12 helps with garage door repair bill**

By *Stacia Naquin*

<http://www.12news.com/money/business/consumer/call-12-for-action/call-12-helps-with-garage-door-repair-bill/110840751>

### Dallas Morning News

Date: **July 1, 2016**

Story: **Watchdog: The one garage door repair company you don't want**

By *Dave Lieber*

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/watchdog/2016/07/01/watchdog-garage-door-services-repair-company-uses-other-company-names>

\*The sources of these stories are responsible for the accuracy of their content. We (Door + Access Systems and its editor) can only vouch for the accuracy of our own articles.

*"The DASMA/IDA Task Force on Industry Reputation is now busy creating more ammunition for your battle against Bad Bob."*

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**Free stuff**

How do you create a consumer alert? What should you say in a press release or a TV ad? To help free you from this burden, we have created several documents that do the work for you. You simply need to fill in your name and make sure the text is accurate and appropriate. Since these documents are all in a Word document format, you can easily edit them and distribute them as needed.

These bonus materials include:

**FOUR FREE BONUS MATERIALS**

**A sample press release**

**A sample print ad**

**A sample radio/TV script**

**10 tips on "How to choose a garage door repair company"**

In addition to these materials, the DASMA/IDA Task Force on Industry Reputation is now busy creating more ammunition for your battle against Bad Bob. In January 2017, the group expects to release several industry-approved videos that you can use to warn consumers in your market. DASMA, IDA, and IDEA will notify you when they're ready.

The industry's trade associations have acknowledged that Bad Bob is a national problem, and they are leading an effort to fight it. But this war must be fought with ground troops—by honest dealers who stand up and say, "I've had enough."

It has long been said that "the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Armed with the resources in this article, you no longer need to sit by and do nothing. Just send me your email address, and I'll send these bonus materials to you without charge or obligation. Working together, we can make a difference. ■

To comment on this story or to receive the bonus materials, send an email to the editor at [trw@tomwadsworth.com](mailto:trw@tomwadsworth.com).

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