

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Our fall cover story ignited an unprecedented volume of email. Comments came from coast to coast, and all of them were positive. We can't publish them all, but here are brief excerpts from a selected few.

Comments From GDS Insiders

I am a current GDS employee, although hopefully for not much longer. I was hired in April 2015 to begin the Quality Department.

I read your article from front to back and honestly looked really hard for discrepancies and for the "slander" that (GDS management) stated was there. I didn't find any. Most employees recognize that your article is on target.

After I started, it became blatantly obvious that the company was after money, money, money. The techs are taught from day one to fluff up the prices by "gauging the customer" to what the tech feels the customer will pay for the work. The (inside) sales team is taught from day one to upcharge. If they give discounts or try to waive fees to customers, the salespeople get penalized on "quality," and their commissions are lowered.

I started as the Quality Department, brought in to make sure that the sales team IS (that's right, I said IS) being rude to customers, price gouging, etc. In my first days, a customer called us to cancel an appointment. I noticed that the sales rep did not cancel the appointment, and I thought that was a quality failure. But I was told that we don't cancel appointments. He said that the tech is to go to the customer's house anyway and "win the business face to face."

The (telephone) sales reps are given (sales) goals to reach, and if they don't reach goal, they get their level in the call queue lowered down. You are given a level of 1 to 10, and it's based on your performance.

The sales reps want to be on the "Diamond Team" (levels 8-10), since that team gets the calls first. This motivates everyone to basically beg, borrow, and steal to make a technician appointment with every caller. If they can't set an appointment with a caller, the call is given to the "T.O.," a "manager" who is just another sales rep on the floor who tries to get it closed that way.

"Hit them in their money" is what (management) says. If (management) lowers your queue position, they essentially lower your ability to make money.

Fist fights break out in the call center, but the guys aren't fired. They are just sent home or lowered in the queue. Why? Because these guys are barracudas that sell like you wouldn't believe.

—Shannon Owens, Dallas, Texas (no longer employed by GDS)



I was hired at GDS (in 2015) to work in their "quality department." To GDS, "quality" had nothing to do with the quality of their products or their services. Instead, quality referred to the ability of telephone staff to turn every call into a solid appointment.

To them, pricing was like some sort of wild carnival game. One supervisor bragged that he'd sold the same item to one customer for \$300 and to another for \$3,000. The pricing just depended on the circumstances.

On my first day, I Googled the company and learned about their bad reputation. But they were paying me \$12 an hour, and I needed cash. I quit in July because I was supposed to help reps not serve customers. They used my job to deliberately take the morals out of their sales process.

—Kate Morgan, Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas

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This hurts all of us.

- Rob Greenburg

Comments From Homeowners

I am a project manager with a custom home builder in Houston, and I've had great experiences with "the original GDS" (aka GDS of USA). In late summer of 2015, I referred my father and mother to Garage Door Services because they were having issues with their garage motor. (But my 68-year-old father ... dialed the impostor rather than the original GDS.

Shortly thereafter, my family was charged over \$3,000 for an upgrade and install of a new motor. It wasn't long before issues started to arise with balancing the door and keeping it in its track. We attempted to have it serviced by the "mimic" GDS a number of times to no avail. **They actually attempted to charge us and point the finger at us for tampering with the door.**

After calling ... the real GDS, I realized that ... we had been duped. The real GDS came and went to great lengths to resolve a problem created by someone else. I hope that this account will help to shut down the impostor GDS and will educate the public that the real GDS is a well-organized, ethical, good-hearted team of professionals.

—Joseph Hyslop, Sims Builders, Houston, Texas

GDS continues to advertise and operate here in California despite the fact that their license is suspended. I've been working closely with the investigator from the contractors' licensing board, but the board appears to be unable to shut them down. GDS operates in the open, advertising on the Web and in mailers. **The law appears to be toothless, and victims multiply.**

—Alex Galenes, Escondido, Calif.

Comments From Door Dealers

I had to sue GDS a few years ago for using our domain, twincitygaragedoor.com, with an added "s", twincitygaragedoors.com. For about eight years, this tactic diverted unsuspecting customers from us and caused us to lose an unknown quantity of business.

More importantly, our stellar reputation in the Twin Cities was besmirched. I spent much time responding to complaints to the BBB, Angie's List, and even the Attorney General. Customers think we have wronged them, but it's never us; it's always GDS. **Nothing in my 31 years in the garage door business has been this much of a problem.**

—Lisa Donabauer, Twin City Garage Door, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.

I was speechless, shocked, and saddened after reading about the horrible and illegal tactics of the "other" GDS. Here at my GDS, our techs have a simple rule. We want them to treat every client as they would want their own mom, sister, or grandmother treated. There is no need for, nor should there be any tolerance for, deceptive and illegal business practices. This hurts all of us.

—Rob Greenberg, Garage Door Specialists, Wheeling, Ill.

This GDS article is just what we needed to gain momentum to begin fighting this company. **They are a disgrace to our industry.** I hope to get many more involved in the battle. I have sent your article to local television stations and urged them to do their own reports.

—Jack Kaelber, Martin Door & Window, St. Peters, Mo.

We've had customers complain to us when GDS was the offending company. **It's frustrating to have our good reputation tarnished by such a company.** I called (them), but I was put on hold, and they eventually hung up on me. The only way small local businesses like us will survive is if businesses like this are exposed as the unethical, ruthless, immoral people that they appear to be.

—Patrice Pualani, Garage Door Service & Sales, Loveland, Colo.

We compete with GDS in the greater San Diego area. Since our name is similar to theirs, we receive several calls a week from disgruntled customers. They figure that it must be us that ripped them off. **In spite of GDS's license being revoked, they are still in full operation. I have never seen such an "in your face" rejection of authority.**

—Steve Qualls, Garage Door Specialists, Temecula, Calif.

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I'm hopeful that all those involved will get what they deserve.

- Randy Oliver

As the owner of Cedar Park Overhead Doors, I was surprised when another company was outbidding me for my own company name on Google Pay Per Click. I was also surprised that the new company in town was named “Cedar Parks CHOICE Overhead Doors.” Then customer complaints started coming in about overcharging and poor work, and we realized that it was actually GDS. **We called their number and asked if this was Cedar Park Overhead Doors. The salesman told us they bought us out!**

Your article is exactly our experience. It addressed almost every concern of mine.

—Don Grenier, The “Real” Cedar Park Overhead Doors, Austin, Texas

I appreciate all of the research you did to write such a complete story on GDS. **I'm hopeful that all those involved will get what they deserve, which in my opinion is some jail time and hopefully huge fines.** I hope your article gets the attention of the news media and [that] more stories are done to expose GDS for who they are.

—Randy Oliver, Hollywood Crawford Door, San Antonio, Texas

Unfortunately, we've had a number of legal battles with these guys involving the type of consumer confusion and fraud you reference in your article. **It just amazes me that there isn't some state or federal authority that can address these ongoing violations over their deceptive advertising and business practices.**

—Steve Pascuzzi, DH Pace Overhead Door Group, Olathe, Kan.

Comments From Manufacturers

I owned a trade publishing company for 20 years. I was impressed that you had the guts to publish the “Worst Garage Door Company” article, but you relied on a lot of public records. **It was good, hard, and impactful journalism in a sea of advertorial publications.**

—Richard Woltjer, VP marketing, HySecurity, Kent, Wash.

I am grateful that our industry is committed to protecting the customer and the reputation of the industry on behalf of honest businesses and the wonderful customers that we have the privilege of serving.

—Jodi Boldenow, owner, Industrial Spring, Minneapolis, Minn.

I believe your GDS article should be awarded the “best article of the decade.” The article was very hard on GDS, but it was needed to expose them and to warn others that they can also be exposed if they act badly.

—Roy G. Bardowell, CDDC, formerly with Guardian, Phoenix, Ariz.

I have been involved for over 40 years in marketing communications and have covered literally dozens of industries and their trade journals. I cannot recall any of them focusing so unblinkingly on a specific company in their midst to call them out as you have done. **The research and depth of coverage was worthy of a big city newspaper, and it was engagingly written. Bravo!**

*—Jonathan Nettelfield, principal at VOX
(agency for SlipIt Industries), Yorktown Heights, N.Y.*

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