

How to Remove Harmful Craigslist Ads

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Craigslist has become an invaluable resource for people in the U.S. and across the world to advertise services, sell products and even meet like-minded people. Although a large majority of Craigslist users utilize the classified ads website for legitimate transactions or interactions, some use it to advance their own interests by exploiting others and interfering with legitimate business relationships.

For instance, we have seen people publish our clients' personal information on Craigslist to take advantage of and harass them; jeopardize individual clients' employment; and interfere with clients' personal relationships. In other cases, we have seen disgruntled customers alter genuine ads for clients' services and construct fraudulent ads in such a manner that they appeared to have actually been posted by our clients. Ultimately, this behavior caused significant financial damage.

Craigslist prohibits certain types of content from being published on its website, including postings that are false, misleading, deceptive or fraudulent; offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening or malicious ads; and those containing anyone's personal, identifying, confidential or proprietary information. Nevertheless, some users do post these types of harmful ads on Craigslist, and they do so for one reason: the anonymous authors believe they can shield themselves from liability because they do not have to submit personal identifying information to publish the ads.

Identifying Anonymous Users

We have had success identifying anonymous Craigslist users that create false ads and post them onto the website. The typical process involved in identifying these anonymous Craigslist users – which is acknowledged by Craigslist in its privacy policy – involves:

1. File a lawsuit where the plaintiff is located;
2. Issue a subpoena to Craigslist in California requesting identifying information related to each uniform resource locator, or URL;

3. Craigslist will then notify its user their identity is being sought, and give them a period of time to respond; and
4. If the user does not object, Craigslist will disclose their account information (which typically consists of an email address and the Internet Protocol, or IP, address from which the post originated).

Once you receive the correct IP address, you can identify and issue a subpoena to the service provider that assigned the IP address, in order to reveal the identity of the subscriber. We have been able to identify these anonymous Craigslist users, name them as defendants in lawsuits and obtain court orders by agreement or default judgment. These court orders can be submitted to Craigslist or the various search engines to facilitate the removal of false ads.

This multi-tiered litigation process has helped limit the impact of false Craigslist ads on our clients' businesses and personal lives. If you need assistance in dealing with a harmful Craigslist page, contact us.

For more information, contact Whitney Gibson at 855.542.9192 or wcgibson@vorys.com. Read more about the practice at <http://www.internetcrisesattorneys.com/>.