

# Dealing With Digital Detractors: What You Need to Know About Responding to Negative Online Reviews

UT Law CLE  
First Friday Ethics  
July 2, 2021

1

## Online Reputation is More Important for Attorneys Than Ever Before

- April 2014 study by FindLaw.com & Thomson Reuters
  - Internet is the most popular resource for people in need of legal services (38% would use the web first, while 29% would ask a friend or relative)
- 2014 study by Hinge Marketing shows 81% of people view a lawyer's website, 63.2% use an online search to find a lawyer

2

## Who's Talking About You Online?

- Sites include AVVO.com, lawyerratingz.com, and others
- Consumer review sites, including Yelp and RipoffReport.com

3

## How You Respond to an Online Review Can Lead to Disciplinary Action

- January 2014: Chicago employment lawyer Betty Tsamis gets reprimand for revealing confidential information in a public online forum by responding to a client's negative review on AVVO.com

4

- 2013 – *In Re Skinner* (Georgia)
  - Lawyer disciplined for posting personal and confidential information about client in response to client’s negative reviews on consumer website.
- 2013 *Gwire v. Bloomberg* (California)
  - Former client accuses lawyer Gwire of “horrific fraud” and gives summary of his “incredibly unethical history”
  - Gwire responds with post calling client “proven liar,” “mentally unbalanced,” and making references to his divorce file.

5

## One Possible Response: Defamation Suit

- *Pampattiwar v. Hinson et al.* (2014 WL 943230, Ct. App. Ga. Mar. 12, 2014)
  - Divorce lawyer responds to client’s online reviews calling her a “crook” and “extremely fraudulent” with a libel suit; \$405,000 trial court verdict upheld on appeal
  - But beware the risks: the “Streisand effect,” the odds of client statements being protected opinions, potential anti-SLAPP implications, etc.

6

Find the full text of this and thousands of other resources from leading experts in dozens of legal practice areas in the [UT Law CLE eLibrary \(utcle.org/elibrary\)](https://utcle.org/elibrary)

## Title search: Dealing with Digital Detractors: What You Need to Know About Responding to Negative Online Reviews

Also available as part of the eCourse

[First Friday Ethics \(July 2021\)](#)

First appeared as part of the conference materials for the  
2021 First Friday Ethics (July 2021) session

"Dealing with Digital Detractors: What You Need to Know About Responding to Negative Online Reviews"