

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BEFORE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Commissioners: Robert Pitofsky
Mary L. Azcuenaga
Janet D. Steiger
Roscoe B. Starek, III
Christine A. Varney

In the Matter of)	
)	
JEANETTE L. DOUGLASS,)	DOCKET NO. C-3727
individually and as an officer and)	
director of Computer Business Services, Inc.)	DECISION AND ORDER

The Federal Trade Commission having initiated an investigation of certain acts and practices of the respondent named in the caption hereof, and the respondent having been furnished thereafter with a copy of a draft of complaint which the Chicago Regional Office proposed to present to the Commission for its consideration and which, if issued by the Commission, would charge respondent with violations of the Federal Trade Commission Act; and

The respondent, her attorney, and counsel for the Commission having thereafter executed an agreement containing a consent order, an admission by the respondent of all the jurisdictional facts set forth in the aforesaid draft of complaint, a statement that the signing of said agreement is for settlement purposes only and does not constitute an admission by respondent that the law has been violated as alleged in such complaint, and waivers and other provisions as required by the Commission's Rules; and

The Commission having thereafter considered the matter and having determined that it had reason to believe that the respondent has violated the said Act, and that complaint should issue stating its charges in that respect, and having thereupon accepted the executed consent agreement and placed such agreement on the public record for a period of sixty (60) days, and no comments having been filed thereafter by interested parties pursuant to §2.34 of its Rules, the Commission hereby issues its complaint, makes the following jurisdictional findings and enters the following order:

1. Respondent Jeanette L. Douglass is an officer and director of Computer Business Services, Inc. Her principal office or place of business is at 19348 Flippen Rd., Westfield, Indiana 46074.

2. The acts and practices of the respondent alleged in this complaint have been in or affecting commerce, as "commerce" is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act.

3. The Federal Trade Commission has jurisdiction of the subject matter of this proceeding and of the respondent, and the proceeding is in the public interest.

ORDER

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this order, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Business venture" means any written or oral business arrangement, however denominated, whether or not covered by the Federal Trade Commission's trade regulation rule entitled "Disclosure Requirements and Prohibitions Concerning Franchising and Business Opportunity Ventures," 16 C.F.R. Part 436, and which consists of payment of any consideration for:

A.

- C. In a print or electronic advertisement, the disclosure shall be in a type size, and in a location, that is sufficiently noticeable for an ordinary consumer to see and read, in print that contrasts with the background against which it appears.

Nothing contrary to, inconsistent with, or in mitigation of the disclosure shall be used in any advertisement.

3. Unless otherwise specified, "respondent" shall mean Jeanette L. Douglass, individually, and each of his agents, representatives and employees.

4. "In or affecting commerce" shall mean as defined in Section 4 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 44.

5. "Automatic telephone dialing system" shall mean as defined in the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(1).

I.

IT IS ORDERED that respondent, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale or distribution of any business venture, shall not misrepresent, expressly or by implication:

- A. that consumers who purchase or use such business ventures ordinarily succeed in operating profitable businesses out of their own homes;
- B. that consumers who purchase or use such business ventures ordinarily earn substantial income;
- C. the existence of a market for the products and services promoted by respondent;
- D. the amount of earnings, income, or sales that a prospective purchaser could reasonably expect to attain by purchasing a business venture;
- E. the amount of time within which the prospective purchaser could reasonably expect to recoup his or her investment; or
- F. by use of hypothetical examples or otherwise, that consumers who purchase or use such business ventures earn or achieve from such participation any stated amount of profits, earnings, income, or sales. Nothing in this paragraph or any other paragraph of this order shall be construed so as to prohibit respondent from using hypothetical examples which do not contain any express or implied misrepresentations or from representing a suggested retail price for products or services.

II.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale or distribution of any business venture, shall not represent, expressly or by implication, the performance, benefits, efficacy or success rate of any product or service that is a part of such business venture, unless such representation is true and, at the time of making the representation, respondent possesses and relies upon competent and reliable evidence that substantiates such representation. For purposes of this order, if such evidence consists of any test, analysis, research, study, or other evidence based on the expertise of professionals in the relevant area, such evidence shall be "competent and reliable" only if it has been conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by persons qualified to do so, using procedures generally accepted in the profession to yield accurate and reliable results.

III.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale, or distribution of any business venture or any product or service that is part of any business venture in or affecting commerce, shall not:

- A. Use, publish, or refer to any user testimonial or endorsement unless respondent has good reason to believe that at the time of such use, publication, or reference, the person or organization named subscribes to the facts and opinions therein contained; or
- B. Represent, in any manner, expressly or by implication, that the experience represented by any user testimonial or endorsement of the product represents the typical or ordinary experience of members of the public who use the product, unless:
 - 1. the representation is true and, at the time it is made, respondent possesses and relies upon competent and reliable evidence that substantiates the representation; or
 - 2. respondent discloses, clearly and prominently, and in close proximity to the endorsement or testimonial, either:
 - a. what the generally expected results would be for users of the product, or

- b. the limited applicability of the endorser's experience to what consumers may generally expect to achieve, that is, that consumers should not expect to experience similar results.

Provided, however, that when endorsements and user testimonials are used, published, or referred to in an audio cassette tape recording, such disclosure shall be deemed to be in close proximity to the endorsements or user testimonials when the disclosure appears at the beginning and end of each side of the audio cassette tape recording containing such endorsements or user testimonials. Provided further, however, that when both sides of an audio cassette tape recording contain such endorsements or user testimonials, the disclosure need only appear at the beginning and end of the first side and the end of the second side of the audio cassette tape recording.

For purposes of this Part, "endorsement" shall mean as defined in 16 C.F.R. § 255.0(b).

IV.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale or distribution of any business venture utilizing, employing or involving in any manner, an automatic telephone dialing system, shall disclose, clearly and prominently, and in close proximity to any representation regarding the use or potential use of an automatic telephone dialing system to transmit an unsolicited advertisement for commercial purposes without the prior express consent of the called party, that federal law prohibits the use of an automatic telephone dialing system to initiate a telephone call to any residential telephone line using an artificial or prerecorded voice to transmit an unsolicited advertisement for commercial purposes without the prior express consent of the called party unless a live operator introduces the message. Nothing in this paragraph or any other paragraph of this order shall be construed so as to prohibit respondent from making truthful statements or explanations regarding the laws and regulations regarding the use of automatic telephone dialing systems.

V.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Jeanette L. Douglass shall for a period of five (5) years after the last date of dissemination of any representation covered by this order, maintain and upon request make available to the Federal Trade Commission for inspection and copying:

- A. All advertisements and promotional materials containing the representation;

- B. All materials that were relied upon in disseminating the representation; and
- C. All tests, reports, studies, surveys, demonstrations, or other evidence in their possession or control that contradict, qualify, or call into question the representation, or the basis relied upon for the representation, including complaints and other communications with consumers or with governmental or consumer protection organizations.

VI.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Jeanette L. Douglass, for a period of five (5) years after the date of issuance of this order, shall deliver a copy of this order to all current and future principals, officers, directors, and managers, and to all current and future employees, agents, and representatives having responsibilities with respect to the subject matter of this order, and shall secure from each such person a signed and dated statement acknowledging receipt of the order. Respondent shall deliver this order to current personnel within thirty (30) days after the date of service of this order, and to future personnel within thirty (30) days after the person assumes such position or responsibilities.

VII.

accompanying consent decree) in federal court alleging any violation of the order, whichever comes later; provided, however, that the filing of such a complaint will not affect the duration of:

- A. Any Part in this order that terminates in fewer than twenty (20) years;
- B. This order's application to any respondent that is not named as a defendant in such complaint; and
- C. This order if such complaint is filed after the order has terminated pursuant to this Part.

Provided, further, that if such complaint is dismissed or a federal court rules that the respondent did not violate any provision of the order, and the dismissal or ruling is either not appealed or upheld on appeal, then the order will terminate according to this Part as though the complaint had never been filed, except that the order will not terminate between the date such complaint is filed and the later of the deadline for appealing such dismissal or ruling and the date such dismissal or ruling is upheld on appeal.

By the Commission.

Donald S. Clark
Secretary

SEAL

ISSUED: March 24, 1997