FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

For Release

Publishing.com to Pay $1.5 Million for Misleading Consumers about How Much Income They Could Earn Using the Company's Products and Services

Online self-publishing company must clearly disclose when testimonials are incentivized or come from someone with connections to the company

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Tags: Consumer Protection | Bureau of Consumer Protection | Advertising and Marketing

Publishing.com LLC and its two principals will pay $1.5 million and be required to substantiate earnings claims in the future to settle Federal Trade Commission charges that the company and its operators misled consumers about how much money they were likely to earn using their products.

"Consumers, including workers, need accurate information up front about potential earnings to make an informed decision about how to invest their time, money, and efforts," said Christopher Mufarrige, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "This case advances the Commission's priority of protecting American workers from deceptive and unlawful conduct."

Publishing.com advertised, marketed, and sold online self-publishing programs and services. According to the FTC , since 2018, Publishing.com has sold its programs and services to consumers with claims that it will provide the education, mentorship, tools, and technology to allow consumers to earn a substantial income publishing e-books and audiobooks online.

The company primarily advertised two programs – AI Publishing Academy (AIA) and Publishing Accelerator. AIA is Publishing.com's self-publishing course, which can cost up to $1,995, and Publishing Accelerator is an add-on program the company started selling in 2022 to supposedly provide additional coaching and other services. In marketing these programs, the company used

free online videos to entice consumers to purchase what it describes as a foolproof, passive income system.

The FTC alleged that Publishing.com CEO Christian Mikkelsen and Chief Product Officer Rasmus Mikkelsen claimed that they have personally used this system to obtain significant wealth through online self-publishing. For example, in a promotional email, Christian Mikkelsen claimed consumers can "copy the EXACT system hundreds of my students use to make $1k to $3k a month in passive income."

Most consumers who bought Publishing.com's products and services, however, never achieved the income the company promised in its advertising, according to the FTC's complaint. Consumers who sought refunds under the company's "no questions asked" guarantee allegedly discovered that Publishing.com imposed many additional conditions, which were often buried in fine print or the company's lengthy terms of service, that made it difficult or impossible for them to get their money back.

In addition, the complaint alleges that while Publishing.com frequently highlighted positive consumer reviews and testimonials to market its program, the company often failed to disclose when reviews were written by company employees or other people, including relatives of the Mikkelsens, who might be biased by their connection to the company. The company also failed to disclose that some of the positive testimonials were incentivized: the company offered various prizes, cash, and additional services, in exchange for providing positive testimonials. At times, the complaint states, Publishing.com even conditioned refunds on consumers providing positive testimonials.

To address the deceptive conduct alleged in the complaint, the proposed order prohibits Publishing.com and the Mikkelsens from:

- making earnings claims unless they are not misleading and they have a reasonable basis to support them;
- making the specific misrepresentations detailed in the complaint, as well as misrepresentations concerning material facts in the sale of any product or service;
- failing to disclose terms and conditions of any cancellation or refund policy or failing to promptly honor a consumer's cancellation or refund request in accordance with company policies; and
- making misrepresentations regarding endorsements and reviews.

The order also requires the company and the Mikkelsens to disclose any unexpected material connections with endorsers or reviewers and any payments or other incentives for posting reviews.

Today's action aligns with the FTC's Joint Labor Task Force launched by Chairman Andrew N. Ferguson in February 2025. The Commission created the cross-agency Labor Task Force to root out and prosecute deceptive, unfair, and anticompetitive labor-market practices that harm American workers. Noting that the FTC's dual consumer-protection and competition mandate makes the agency uniquely well-suited to address these worker harms, Chairman Ferguson's Labor Task Force harnesses expertise from the agency's Bureau of Consumer Protection, Bureau of Competition, Bureau of Economics, and Office of Policy Planning.

The Commission vote to accept the consent agreement was 2-0.

The FTC will publish a description of the consent agreement package in the Federal Register soon. The agreement will be subject to public comment for 30 days, after which the Commission will decide whether to make the proposed consent order final. Instructions for filing comments appear in the published notice. Comments must be received 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. Once processed, comments will be posted on Regulations.gov.

NOTE: When the Commission issues a consent order on a final basis, it carries the force of law with respect to future actions. Each violation of such an order may result in a civil penalty of up to $53,088.

The Federal Trade Commission works to promote competition and protect and educate consumers. The FTC will never demand money, make threats, tell you to transfer money, or promise you a prize. Learn more about consumer topics at consumer.ftc.gov, or report fraud, scams, and bad business practices at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. Follow the FTC on social media, read consumer alerts and the business blog, and sign up to get the latest FTC news and alerts.

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