

# Yelp to let businesses comment publicly on reviews

April 9 2009, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

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(AP) -- The review Web site Yelp, which has garnered some criticism from the businesses put under its microscope, will soon let those businesses and others respond publicly to customers' critiques.

In an e-mail sent to some of Yelp's most active users Thursday, the San Francisco-based company solicited feedback about an upcoming feature that will let businesses post replies to user reviews. Businesses must first register for a free [business](#) owner's account. After a business posts a reply on the site, Yelp will alert the reviewer by e-mail.

Currently, businesses that want to challenge a review or correct any errors can only contact the reviewer via the Web site. The business has had no option to post a direct reply on the site - something that business owners have long complained about.

Yelp plans to activate the reply feature in a week or two.

The decision to add this feature comes amid complaints from businesses reviewed on the site, some of which have questioned how the site works. News reports have cited other issues, including allegations from businesses that Yelp offered to obscure negative reviews or move up positive ones in exchange for advertising dollars. Yelp denies it and blames a misunderstanding.

Jeremy Stoppelman, Yelp's co-founder and [chief executive](#), said allowing businesses to comment on reviews has been under consideration

for some time. He said the company has been hearing "concerns of business owners, especially when it comes to factual disputes."

Although Yelp has been concerned that businesses might use such comments as a way to strike conflict with users, Stoppelman said that interactions in private messages between businesses and reviewers have been mostly positive thus far. That has made the company more comfortable about adding the direct-reply capability.

"We're confident business owners will realize they're talking in public and that they need to put their best foot forward," he said.

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