

Yelp to show reviews it automatically filters

April 6 2010, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Yelp, seeking to combat allegations that the online reviews site manipulates its users' feedback on local businesses, will now let visitors see the items that had been automatically removed by software meant to catch unreliable content.

Starting late Monday, [Yelp](#) is adding links to take visitors to those once-hidden [reviews](#) - a change that gives businesses and individuals a rare peek at decisions rendered by the popular startup's software.

Although the site won't detail why each review has been shunned from a company's Yelp page, which shows information such as its hours and location along with photos and reviews, readers may be able to draw their own conclusions after seeing the hidden content.

Yelp CEO and co-founder Jeremy Stoppelman said Monday that the company wants to make people understand that Yelp does give all businesses fair treatment, despite allegations that advertisers are favored.

"You'll be able to dive into the content yourself and make your own judgment," he said.

Since it started letting [consumers](#) post reviews six years ago, Yelp has used an automated program to weigh reviews and sift out those that are potentially unreliable, such as a negative review that a pizzeria owner might write about a [competitor](#).

Still, business owners have long complained about the way positive and

negative reviews can come and go from their pages on Yelp.

At least three lawsuits seeking class-action status have been filed against the site by a dozen small companies alleging that reviews are manipulated depending on whether a company advertises on the site. The businesses claim they've been pressured to advertise on the site in exchange for getting negative reviews squashed.

Yelp, based in San Francisco, says it doesn't manipulate reviews aside from letting advertisers choose one review that they want to feature at the top of their page. Although such featured reviews have been clearly marked as such, the company is getting rid of it entirely. It will be replaced in the next few weeks by a feature that lets advertisers post a video to their Yelp pages.

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