

UK Business Directory Scam: Case Study

I am receiving phone calls from numerous small business owners who are receiving threatening phone calls from Michael Dewhurst of the UK Business Directory.

He is threatening the bailiffs, County Court Judgements (CCJ) unless he receives immediate payment of thousands of pounds for breach of contract of a bogus internet directory listing.

DO NOT PAY ANY MONEY. THIS IS A SCAM!

If you are receiving this threatening calls, then immediately inform your local Trading Standards.

And, if you are receiving these calls, rest assured you are not alone!

What follows is the details I received from one small business owner. He emailed me this summary and has given me permission to share it on the web.

On the 13th June 2012 I was the victim of a complex fraud.

Initially my company was phoned a few times over a period of a few months by a company calling themselves "Business Directory". The caller said that my entry in their directory was due for renewal.. When I said I didn't remember ever doing business with them, they claimed that I had agreed to a two year contract and must pay. I said I had not signed any contracts and that they should go away.

I thought no more about it and then at about 3pm on the 13th June I had a call from a man called Henry Lord of "In The Red" who claimed that that he was a bailiff and that he would be at my premises at 10 to 1030am the next day to claim goods to the value of £4953.61

I expressed a complete lack of knowledge of any outstanding debt and asked him for details. He said that he was enforcing a county court judgement ref CCJ 1818333942-12

He said I had half an hour to pay or he would be there in the morning.

He was very assertive and convincing and kept repeating that he would be at my door in the morning..

He gave me the details of Mr Michael Dewhurst of Business Directory, 3rd Floor 207 Regent Street, London W1B 3HH. Telephone 01254 916345. as the issuer of the CCJ

I telephoned Mr Dewhurst who claimed that I owed him money, that I had been rolled up into their "platinum service" because I was in breach of contract and that he had managed to get a ccj against me which he was enforcing. He had an answer for everything and claimed that all he had done was legal and above board and there was nothing I could do but pay. Business Directory emailed some invoices to me.

I was very shaken up and couldn't understand how this could possibly be happening to me. I phoned an independent solicitor who advised that they could possibly have a case if they had a valid contract. As far as the CCJ went this could not be tracked down unless I knew the County Court that had issued it.

I emailed Business directory and asked which court had issued the ccj.

I would not have paid any money at this point but then 10 minutes later a man named James from Red Media Solutions Ltd., 4-6 Grimshaw Street, Burnley BB11 2AZ telephoned me.

Over the preceding months Red Media had been carrying out some SEO work for me and my website Google ranking for certain key words was vastly improved. I had built up a bit of trust in Red Media as they seemed to do what they said.

James casually asked how I was and I explained how I was having terrible trouble with Business directory. He said that several of his customers had had similar problems and that these directories got you trapped into contracts that you couldn't escape but that he knew a man who could help me get out of the situation.

He gave me the contact Liam Edwards of CCR Press Ltd, Suite 140, 111 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2HX .Telephone 07768 859870, email ledwardsccr@gmail.com

I telephoned Mr Edwards for advice and explained the situation. He told me the ccr stood for county court recovery . He said he was able to deal with the courts directly and could negotiate the debt down by up to 40% .I gave Mr Edwards the ccj number and he claimed it to be valid. He said he could stop the bailiffs calling and make the whole thing go away if I made a payment directly to him of £3000 + VAT. He said I only had moments to act or the offer would be gone. Mr Edwards said that I would receive a proper VAT receipt and a statement saying that any contracts with Business directory were null and void.

He also suggested that if I refused the bailiffs entry that the debt would probably double to £10,000

I was under extreme pressure and was in a terrible mental state. I felt physically sick and was in fear that my business would be ruined so I foolishly made the payment.

I have subsequently proved that the CCJ against me did not exist. Mr Dewhurst is a known scammer and is featured on at least one internet site .

The fraud has been reported to the police and allocated a crime number but I don't hold out much hope of getting the money back. Since making the payment I have heard nothing from Business Directory or Liam Edwards.

I have spoken to James at Red Media who is adamant that his company had no involvement in the scam and that he just gave me the advice as a favour!!

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