Essay: Scientology False advertising re refunds. Time for Class Action

From Larry Brennan, a former high-ranking Scientologist.
IMHO it is time for a class action suit against David Miscavige and organized scientology for, amongst other things, false advertising and fraud relating to what they say and do with respect to refunds and repayments to dissatisfied customers.

First of all, here are a few broad facts:

1) scientology promotes that it will refund payments to dissatisfied customers. It has even made that clear in its filings with the IRS as part of getting its “non profit”, tax exempt recognitions from the IRS;

2) it professes to be a religion with religious scriptures and yet, unlike other religions, demands ten of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars from its “parishioners” in order to share many of those “scriptures” with them. And it uses very hard sell, abusive and some times even illegal tactics to get many of those parishioners to pay such monies. They couch those payments in deceptive terms such as “fixed donations” when they are in fact mandatory payments for their services;

3) countless people are in fact dissatisfied with those services and want their money back. Yet the vast majority do not get their money back while organized scientology holds countless millions of dollars of these payments, accruing interest daily.

So how can it be that an organization that widely promotes that it will return monies to dissatisfied public has so many dissatisfied public who want their money back and yet do not in fact get it back?

IMHO it is because “the church” is guilty of blatant false advertising and fraud in their promotion to public and in their statements to governments on the subject of the return of monies to dissatisfied public.

“The church” has adopted a policy that monies will be returned only in two cases:

I) if the money was “on account” and not actually “used for services”; and/or

II) if the request for repayment was made within three months of “the service” being delivered.

Furthermore, it lays out something which on the surface sounds “fair enough”. It says that it has a “Claims Verification Board” that exists simply to “verify” that the monies were paid prior to returning them to the “parishioner”.

Oh but what a tangled web of deceit, lies and fraud is woven behind these seemingly innocent “policies”.

The facts are that “the church” is completely focused on money and has no real intention of returning same to anyone. They have in fact worked out many ways to prevent others from getting their money back that they do not mention in their promotions to either individuals or governments about this subject.

First of all, most people usually have the take the services to find out they were dissatisfied or in fact the services themselves were of a fraudulent nature and did not in and of themselves produce the results promised in “church” literature.

This means that perhaps the vast majority of potential claims for the return of monies paid are not in fact money any longer on account but rather are in the category made by “the church” of having to be claimed within three months of taking the service.

It is here where the most insidious and hidden fraud lies. “The church” has it rigged so that most people can never in fact claim a return of monies within three months of taking the services.

Just a few things that support this are:

1) I believe that just about anyone who made such payments did so because they believed “the church” would deliver the result promised. And many of those people made those payments under great “hard-sell” duress. But when they took the service and found that they did not get the results, they were told by “the church” that it was their fault and that they needed other handlings. These “handlings” be they “ethics”, “qual” or whatever would be dragged out to last well over the three months allotted for refund of payments;

2) the people taking the service were strictly forbidden, under severe penalties, from talking about their dissatisfaction with anyone else, nor could they look elsewhere (such as the internet) for help and so had no one else but organized

scientology to go to in order to handle their dissatisfaction;

3) due to the very nature of the mental aspects of all this, it can take decades, not three months, for one to come to terms with the fraud perpetuated on them through the services they took. Very, VERY few people in my opinion are able to see through the lies in just three months;

4) perhaps the worst of it all, is that the church says that you will be declared a “suppressive person” if you get a return of monies. That means that if you are dissatisfied with your services and get the return of monies that they so widely promote as available, then in the eyes of “the church” you are a suppressive person. And this means that you will immediately lose all contact to family, friends and work that still remain in scientology. Most people will go through hell before they will give up their loved ones. And this prevents almost anyone from making their claim within three months, if ever. NO WHERE does “the church” say broadly in its benign-sounding promotion to potential paying public about refunds available that, should the person get the money back, they lose their family, friends and contacts still in scientology. Nor do they tell that part of it to the IRS or other governmental organizations. Oh how insidious that is!!!!

Now let’s look at the “Claims Verification Board” (CVB) routing form itself to see how this works.

I just got the current copy of the two page routing form this month.

If by some miracle the person wanting money back managed to rise above all the points covered earlier and in fact make his/her claim within three months, the routing form itself is rigged to stop the claim. Yet they will try to force you to do the routing form as they usually included language about it when you paid them the money.

The purpose of the routing form is NOT to get you your money back. Its stated purpose is: “To give the person seeking a refund or repayment a procedure which lays out what he is supposed to do”.

In a “NOTE TO THE CLAIMENT” on the form, “the church” makes it clear to the claimant that he/she must take the form in hand and see each person on the routing form, do the steps required with each person and then ensure it is mailed to the CVB.

He/she must see a “CHAPLAIN” and do what handlings the chaplain says to do. When all “handlings” are complete and he/she still wants a refund, he/she must get a signed statement of what the chaplain did, get all cancelled checks, invoices and receipts, do some paperwork with them and then take that all to a treasury secretary.

He/she also has to acknowledge that an “administrative charge” will be made by the CVB. No where does it say how much the charge will be.

Then, somehow, the claimant has to get from the treasury secretary various different statements from the "Technical Secretary", the “Qualifications Secretary” and the “Flag Banking Officer” and then put all this together and send it to the CVB.

For anyone doing a routing form in most orgs that involve this many people good luck getting it through timely. But here it is even worse, you have to subject yourself to “handlings” by people who DO NOT want you to complete this form and who will get in trouble if you do complete this form. Every “stop” conceivable will be put on your actions to prevent this from going any further.

And remember, there is no time commitment for this form. You probably have to go out of town, stay in a hotel or whatever and be away from work while you somehow push this form through wherever the organization to whom you gave money is located.

Heaven forbid that you want money back from more than one organization (say a local org, flag and “the ship”) as you would have to go to all these places and separately do such a routing form for each one.

Now if by some miracle the CVB, in its own time, agrees that some portion of your money will be paid back (you don’t get to see that alleged “Board”) they inform the local Flag Banking Officer and the claimant by mail of the decision and arbitrarily decide what “the administrative charge” is.

Now, months later or whatever, when the claimant gets the above communication back from the CVB and the routing form back, he/she must go again to the organization, take it to an ethics officer, do whatever “actions” are listed and then you must fill out and sign a release, waiver and writ of expulsion (note: you sign all the above before you get any money back).

Now you, as an expelled person who may no longer have contact with your family, friends or anyone else still in

organized scientology, must somehow take all this to the treasury secretary again with the written “attest” of the ethics officer and then somehow the org/orgs will give you back your money. There is no time limit put on this in the routing form. Could be days, weeks, months or years until the organization has the money to pay you.

And remember, you must do this for every organization from which you want your money back.

And here is a great one: The routing form says “If you have any difficulties in using this routing form or need any assistance in proper use of routing forms, please contact the Senior Routing Form I/C Int”. What????????? Who is that? How do you contact him/her? Does this mean that if you are stuck at flag in part one of your routing form that you somehow appeal to this unnamed person for help and just sit there out of town and away from work to wait and see if and when he/she will reply? Scheeesch!!!

Bottom line folks is that the whole “church” promotion about “friendly” refund policies is nothing more than false advertising and a complete fraud IMHO.

How many of you are out there now, dissatisfied and wanting your money back but have given up on it? Well you have been defrauded and you are the victims of false advertising. I believe that civil complaints can be made to relevant governmental bodies on this matter and a class action suit successfully prosecuted if we get together on this.

Through civil complaints perhaps we can get appropriate governmental bodies to take actions to force “the church” to cease lying about and otherwise misrepresenting their refund policies.

For example, I think that “the church” should have to include a very specific written briefing to all prospective payers for services that, should they request and get a refund of the monies they are being asked to pay now, all of their family, friends and business associates that remain in good standing with “the church” will be forced to disconnect from them. The church policies about suppressive persons should be made available and it made clear that they will be considered suppressive persons simply by virtue of getting a return of monies.

Additionally, “the church” should be forced to change its “CVB” policies so that all monies are returned within seven days of request (or some other appropriate finite number of days).

And, given the nature of the “services”, there should be no time limit for making a refund request.

These sort of things are needed to prevent false advertising and fraud on this subject.

I say send your information to Factnet along with anything else covered in their questionnaire. See this post:

http://groups.google.com/group/alt.r...20e202cc0cdcff

Let us each who wants a refund compare notes and resources and see what can be done about this. Together we have an overwhelming, compelling story. We just need to get together on this more. The Factnet thing is a great start.

If anyone is already dealing with an attorney or legal help center, I suggest we get our respective representatives in touch with each other now.

We can do something about this! It’s really just one man that stops us. That would be David Miscavige. The rest of corporate scientology is nothing more than his alter ego IMHO.

SME