

Some feel wronged by online dating service

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A local online dating site is getting out there, thanks to product placement in three major movies and TV segments on "Dr. Phil" and "Live With Regis and Kelly."

But Kirkland-based Perfectmatch.com also is getting a bad reputation among some consumers who say the site didn't find them a perfect match at all — and didn't respond when they tried to get a refund.

In the past year, the Consumer Protection Division of the state Attorney General's Office has collected 18 complaints about the company. The Better Business Bureau has processed more than 30 since the company's launch in 2002.

Lots of dating services have complaints. There are hundreds of Better Business Bureau complaints on file against Perfectmatch competitors Match and eHarmony. But both of those services have good standing with their local bureaus, while Perfectmatch has an unsatisfactory rating with the bureau here. The state Attorney General's Office gave up on some consumers' complaints when the company didn't respond to letters.

"The last year and a half for Perfectmatch has been a very exciting period," Chief Executive Duane Dahl said. "We've experienced a tremendous amount of growth, and certainly from that growth we've had a couple of challenges."

Perfectmatch has doubled its staff in the past year and has 3 million members, Dahl said. Much of its growth can be attributed to a pre-Valentine's Day "Dr. Phil" show last year that featured the company.

"I like Dr. Phil and I kind of trust him," said Penny Galpin, a widow from Monroe, N.C., who signed up for the site last year. "I personally don't think he would knowingly be involved with someone who is like that."

Perfectmatch says Galpin was one of about 207,000 people who paid \$99 that day for a four-month promotional membership.

Galpin says she called Perfectmatch to cancel moments after signing up because she had changed her mind. The telephone operator promised her it was taken care of, she said, but soon she started getting bills.

Galpin said she couldn't reach Perfectmatch again and ended up disputing the charge through Bill Me Later, the company that handled her payment. Bill Me Later stopped sending her bills.

This update on on online dating is prepared by Emily Heffer of Seattle Times Consumer Affair and brought to you by www.datingservices-online.net

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