

# Purplebricks Canada Offered Employees Days Off For Made Up 5-Star Reviews

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## Forbes



Purplebricks Canada has offered its employees paid days off in exchange for made up positive reviews on Facebook and Google.

In an email sent by Purplebricks Canada marketing department to the company's whole 200-people staff, exclusively obtained by this reporter, the online estate agent told employees to ask their family and friends to leave glowing online reviews—"whether or not" they were Purplebricks customers.

"No need to fabricate stories, just an 'I think Purplebricks is great,' or 'Purplebricks is the future of real estate' would be fantastic!" read the email, which was sent by one of the company's marketing directors in March 2019.

The email invited to leave the reviews on Purplebricks Canada Facebook pages or 5-star rating reviews on Google Reviews. The employees then had to take screenshots of the reviews they "helped generate" as proof and send them back to the company's marketing department.

"The staff member who accumulates the most reviews from family and friends will win a PAID DAY OFF!," the email continued.

A review on Google and one on Facebook by the same person would "count" as two reviews.

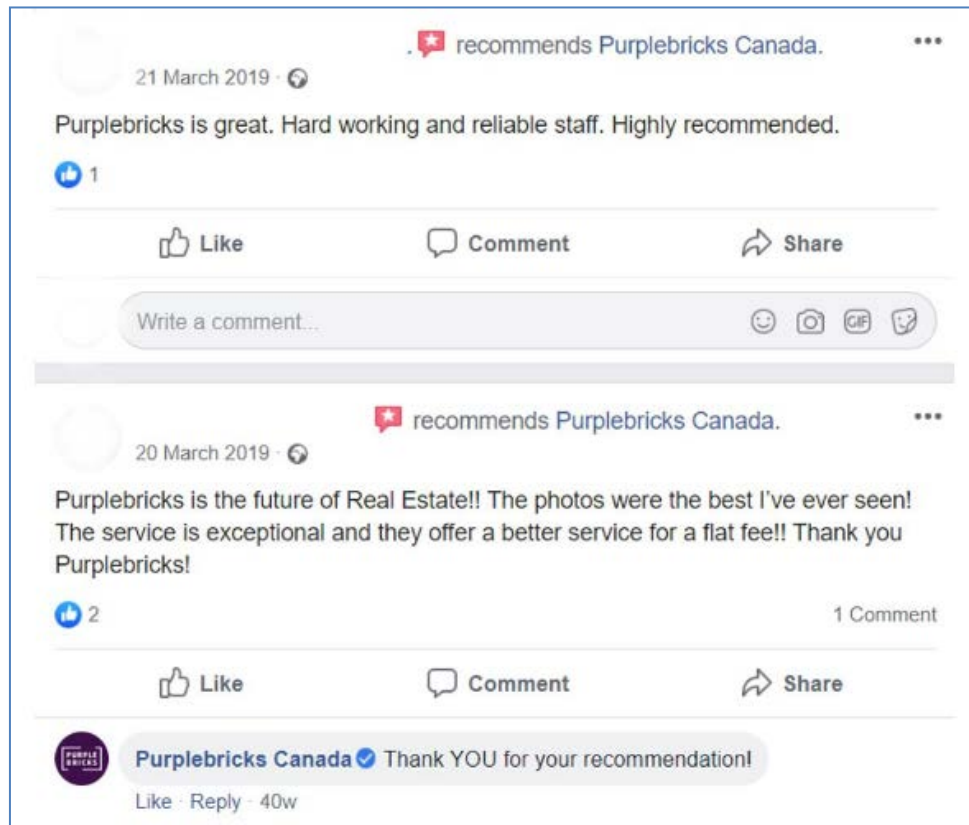
The marketing department, however, discouraged estate agents from posting reviews themselves, as "fake reviews" would violate the websites' terms and conditions.

"Here's what you must not do: 1. Submit your own reviews (that includes using accounts under names other than your own). 'Fake' reviews would violate our terms of use agreements and could get us into hot water! 2. Ask clients for their reviews, as we have several client review incentive programs already running."

The email explained that when real estate broker platform ComFree was acquired by Purplebricks, in 2018, they "weren't able to bring our stellar Facebook and Google reviews with us."

Purplebricks was therefore asking its employees to help "boost our online reviews" and "inspire the trust that will win us more signs in the ground!"

"Thanks for helping our company grow," the email concluded.



A former Purplebricks Canada employee, who received the email, said: "I sent a copy of the email to Facebook, who did nothing with it. I also sent it to Google, but received no reply."

The former employee, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they didn't participate. "I'm not sure who 'won' the incentive," they added. "When I received the email I was disgusted that Purplebricks thought it necessary to cheat to get reviews. They asked us to get friends and family, who had never used the service, to post 5-star reviews online, focusing on Google and Facebook, and I was even more disgusted to find that so many of my colleagues went along with it. It's deceiving to the public."

Purplebricks Canada issued the following statement: "[This] was an isolated and misguided initiative. It followed the name change from Comfree to Purplebricks and the refusal of Google and Facebook to transfer the reviews that were already on their sites; it will never happen again. Purplebricks Canada recognises that it's vital for all reviews to be genuine and authentic—and we work hard to earn positive feedback from our customers through our expertise and great service."

A spokesperson for the company said that the email, "though sent in good faith", was "a complete one-off" and was "an error of judgement."

"We only offered this incentive once, in March 2019, and it generated only a handful of reviews," the spokesperson added.

Purplebricks was founded in the U.K. in 2014. In July 2018, it acquired the ComFree Network in Canada from Yellow Pages Digital & Media Solutions for around \$50 million.

We're reaching out to you today because we need your help.

As we all know, online reviews are a major force influencing our daily purchasing decisions. What you may not know? When we transitioned from ComFree to Purplebricks, we weren't able to bring our stellar Facebook and Google reviews with us 😞 We're asking you to help boost our online reviews and inspire the trust that will win us more signs in the ground!

**Here's what you need to do:**

1. **Ask your family and friends** – whether or not they've used ComFree or Purplebricks – to leave us a review on the [Purplebricks Canada Facebook page](#) or a 5-star rating on Google Reviews (each province has its own page: [Ontario](#), [Alberta](#) and [Manitoba](#)). No need to fabricate stories – just an "I think Purplebricks is great," or "Purplebricks is the future of real estate" would be fantastic!
2. **Take screen shots** of all the reviews you've helped generate and send them to [marketing@purplebricks.ca](mailto:marketing@purplebricks.ca)

**Here's what you must not do:**

1. Submit your own reviews (that includes using accounts under names other than your own). 'Fake' reviews would violate our terms of use agreements and could get us into hot water!
2. Ask clients for their reviews, as we have several client review incentive programs already running.\*

**The staff member who accumulates the most reviews from family and friends will win a PAID DAY OFF!\***

*Yes, we'll count a review on Google and one on Facebook by the same person as 2 reviews!*

You have until March 31, 2019 to get those screenshots in to us.

Thanks for helping our company grow.

The British online estate agent has already been in the spotlight for its online reviews. In September 2019, [an investigation by WIRED UK](#) found evidence that Purplebricks selectively screened reviews in order to skew its online ratings to be more positive.

