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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Company Selling Fake Twitter Followers Permanently Banned



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced that a company selling fake Twitter followers to celebrities, professional athletes, comedians, television actors and others is permanently banned from the practice. The lifetime ban comes after an investigation by the Florida Attorney General's Office into the social media company Devumi. The company, formerly based in Palm Beach, sold hundreds of millions of fake followers, known as bots, to an estimated 200,000 customers nationwide.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Social media fraud is serious deception and can give users unwarranted influence. Through the use of bots, consumers may be tricked into believing a product, person or message is much more popular than it actually is. It should go without saying, don't believe everything you see on the internet, and this is just one example of how technology can be used to create false realities."

The Florida Attorney General's Office recently secured an agreement with Devumi Inc, Devumi, LLC, and the owner, German Calas, Jr. to stop the company's deceptive social media practices. The investigation uncovered allegations that Devumi advertised itself as a social media marketer, promising to generate traffic from natural persons. Instead, the company sold automated bot traffic from artificial social media accounts.

These fake accounts enabled social media influencers to artificially increase followers and mislead consumers, by creating the perception that products or people online possessed stronger, more active social media followings or endorsements. The bots were designed to give the appearance that real people were expressing opinions, sharing information, or otherwise engaging in social media activity.

As part of the agreement, Devumi Inc, Devumi, LLC, and Calas, Jr. are prohibited from:

- Purchasing, guiding, controlling, or managing any social media accounts generated using any natural person's personal information, regardless of whether such social media accounts originated within Devumi, from Calas, Jr., or via third-party providers;
- Utilizing any natural person's personal information without that natural person's express, written consent to generate products or services;
- Scraping any natural person's personal information without express, written consent, regardless of whether that information is available to the public;
- Advertising, selling, or offering to sell products or services from natural persons when the products or services are from bots;
- Making any misrepresentation regarding or fraudulently endorsing any individual, product or service;
- Providing paid endorsements without clearly and conspicuously disclosing that the recipient compensated Devumi or Calas, Jr. for same;
- Making any representation in the course of providing paid endorsements which would lead a consumer acting reasonably to believe that the social media accounts making the endorsements are owned or operated by natural persons when in fact such accounts are bots; and
- Misrepresenting that Devumi's or Calas, Jr.'s products or services are approved by any social media platform or are risk-free.

In addition, Devumi and Calas, Jr. are required to pay $50,000 in investigative fees and costs to the Florida Attorney General's Office.