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door + access systems

PRECISION DOOR OF PHOENIX EXPOSED

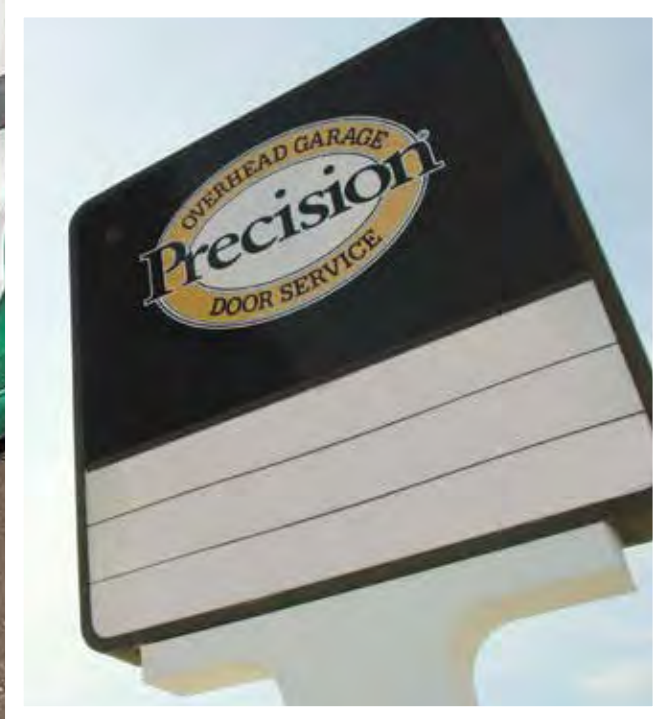
LEGAL THREATS PROMPT A REVEALING INVESTIGATION

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PRECISION DOOR OF PHOENIX EXPOSED

LEGAL THREATS PROMPT A REVEALING INVESTIGATION

Note: Precision Door of Phoenix is an independently owned and operated franchise. This story is not intended to reflect the practices of all Precision Door franchises. We gave Charan Gohlwar an opportunity to respond to the general allegations in this story, and his comments are included.

Tom Wadsworth, Editor
Certified Door Dealer Consultant

Charan Gohlwar, owner of Precision Door of Phoenix, doesn't want you to read this story.

Not only has he threatened legal action against me personally, but his lawyer has also sent ominous letters to the legal counsel of DASMA (Door & Access Systems Manufacturers Association), to the International Door Association (IDA), and to IDA's president-elect Kevin Pettiette, who was also threatened with legal action.

That's not all. In an email to me on Oct. 11, Gohlwar added a bizarre accusation: "I will not be picked upon by you because of my race and national origin."

Whaaa???

I wondered, "What in the world is Gohlwar afraid of?" After gathering a vast quantity of evidence from many of his customers and employees, we now know what Gohlwar didn't want us to know.

Our investigation has revealed that Gohlwar has built his empire of five Precision Door Service franchises by pressuring his employees to charge huge invoices to customers and by selling unnecessary parts and services at extremely high prices. (Precision Door has 91 franchise operations throughout the U.S. Gohlwar owns two in Arizona, two in Texas, and one in Maryland.)

A key tactic that Gohlwar uses to pressure these employees is requiring them to sign non-compete and non-disclosure agreements that attempt to limit their ability to work in the industry or to talk to anyone about how he does business.

What happened on Oct. 11

On the morning of Oct. 11, I received an email from Gohlwar's general manager, who had just been terminated. Knowing the long history of questionable practices at Precision Door of Phoenix, I suggested to him that we arrange a time to talk on the phone.

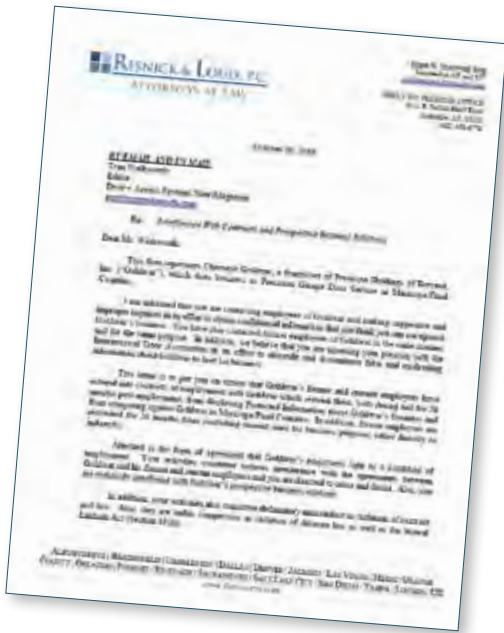
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"Gohlwar is prepared to take legal action against you in a court of law to stop your unfair and defamatory activities. Also, he will sue you for any damages that you have caused."

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Within six hours, I received that bizarre email from Gohlwar. He had somehow obtained the email exchange between me and the terminated GM.

Gohlwar's email said, "I believe strongly you have an agenda against me because of my race and national origin." He boasted of his "very successful" Precision franchises and his "hundreds of awards for outstanding performance," and he trashed his GM's character and credibility.



The threat of legal action

A few days later, DASMA, IDA, IDA's president-elect, and I received the legal notices from Gohlwar's attorney. The letter to me claimed that I was "contacting employees of Gohlwar" to "obtain confidential information." (I have never done so.) The letter also accused me of "misusing your position with the International Door Association." (I have never had a position with the International Door Association.)

At the end of the letter came the big threat: "Gohlwar is prepared to take legal action against you in a court of law to stop your unfair and defamatory activities. Also, he will sue you for any damages that you have caused."

At this point, Gohlwar had successfully piqued our interest. So, our investigation began.

Note: This story includes statements from many of his customers and former employees. Since many of them have expressed fear of retaliation from Gohlwar, we will not disclose their identities.

Who is Charan Gohlwar?

Gohlwar's LinkedIn page says he purchased the Phoenix Precision Door Service in 2002. His profile states, "I am responsible for the overall growth of the company."

In 2002, several Precision Door franchises were known for abusing customers with extremely high repair bills and replacing parts and products that worked just fine.

Tracking Precision Door

On Feb. 7, 2003, the Precision Door franchise in Orlando, Fla., was exposed in a television investigation by WFTV, the ABC station there. That exposure, along with other reports of predatory activity, prompted swift reaction around the industry.

On Feb. 19, 2003, a major garage door opener manufacturer sent a strong letter of warning to Precision Door's headquarters, expressing concern about widespread allegations "that Precision Door dealers

have been engaging in improper or unethical business practices."

Then, on Feb. 28, a major garage door manufacturer also issued a letter announcing that it had removed all Precision locations from its dealer locator system, citing the franchises' "questionable business practices."

From 2003 to 2006, our magazine reported on many of those business practices. Finally, in 2006, I held a five-hour interview with Precision Door Service's (PDS) corporate management in Florida, discussing those practices. (See "The Interview With Precision Door Service," our cover story in fall 2006.) The PDS management acknowledged their sordid past and said they were working to "clean up" those practices.

The Dateline NBC investigation

However, Precision Door of Phoenix cast doubt on that claim on May 15, 2011, when Dateline NBC aired a prime-time hidden



BUSTED: "Dateline NBC" Exposes Garage Door Technicians Precision Door of Phoenix in National Spotlight

By Tom Wadsworth, Editor

Summer 2011
D+AS Newsmagazine.

camera investigation in Phoenix. The garage setup, overseen by an industry expert from IDA (Andy Pomroy), had new parts and a door that was in perfect working order with two exceptions. The door simply needed its (new) photo-eyes to be aligned and the vacation switch to be turned off.

Eight other garage door companies quickly fixed the problem for no more than \$75. Then came Ricky Killingsworth of Precision Door of Phoenix, and Ricky did what many Precision technicians were known for in the early 2000s.

He was caught charging \$527 to replace a (new) garage door opener and (new) photo-eyes that had been just installed that week. On the broadcast, Killingsworth said to Dateline, "You're wasting my f-----g time," as he packed up and drove away.

Gohlwar's response

Our magazine contacted Gohlwar about the ugly incident. At first, his company defended Killingsworth's diagnosis. However, Bill Walden, PDS president, told us, "What (Ricky) did is not what we teach," noting that "99.9 percent" of the technicians who were with Precision Door in 1999 were no longer with Precision Door.

After PDS issued a default against Gohlwar's Phoenix operation (a default is a punitive measure that can result in

termination of the franchise), Gohlwar finally admitted that Killingsworth "completely misdiagnosed the problem." PDS then told us that Killingsworth had been terminated.

In the winter issue of 2006, we published an editorial in response to the Precision story. We said, "When a company has a large percentage of technicians who are paid by commission, a history of high pricing, and a strong emphasis on call averages, you have all the makings of a rip-off feeding frenzy."

Homeowners respond

Had Gohlwar learned his lesson? Apparently not.

In the months following the Dateline broadcast, we received emails from three Phoenix homeowners. (Since our magazine only goes to the industry, it's extremely rare that we receive emails from homeowners.) These three homeowners, Nick G., Christi H., and Karen S., all cited the same predatory rip-off tactics by Gohlwar's company. In each case, the homeowner found a competitor to fix their problems for a fraction of Precision's quote.

As Christi told us, "I can only imagine the thousands of unknowing victims who have paid thousands for unnecessary repairs. It's simply shameful. I thought you might be interested to know that their practices continue."

In 2015, more homeowner emails came. Andrew S. was upset at a repair bill of about \$1,000, accusing Gohlwar of "ripping people off" and not returning phone calls. I suggested to Andrew that he contact PDS headquarters in Florida. He did. Soon after, Gohlwar contacted me, claiming that he had resolved the issue.

I forwarded Gohlwar's email to Andrew. He quickly replied, saying that Gohlwar's claims were "lies." Andrew said that Gohlwar had actually noted that he is experienced at taking his customers to court and that he threatened to put a lien on Andrew's home.

Further, Andrew said that Gohlwar justified his pricing by claiming that it was set by PDS. However, PDS told Andrew that PDS does not set pricing. Mike Brickner, operations manager of PDS (now the president), then informed me that the Precision corporate office was taking care of the customer's issue.

Record rip-off invoice

A few weeks later, I received the most egregious example of a rip-off invoice I've ever seen from any company in North America. The offending company wasn't

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Parts & Service Description	Price Each	Total
Master 42hp belt drive to install	799	799
inst backhang align jam	125	125
ext external sensor wire	115	115
End bearings 2-2155	159	318
Large drums	149	149
3 cables	169	507
bearings + plates	159	159
call bearing rollers	159	159
2 doors	16	32
just track spacing	149	149
safe entire door to install overhauls	149	149
		548.70

CASH CHECK
 payable to: Precision Door Service
 Discover American Express

Auth: 045232
 Fuel/Energy

Subtotal: 5066.57
 Sales Tax: 420.52
 Total: 5487.09

Technician: [Signature]
 Date: 4/14/14
 Completed:

WARRANTY OPTIONS:
 Limited Lifetime 3-Y
 No Warranty Other

April 2014 invoice from Precision Door of Phoenix.

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GDS (see pp. 48-50); it was Precision Door of Phoenix. On April 14, 2014, Gohlwar's affluent Scottsdale customer, Phillip G., was charged \$5,487.09 for two LiftMaster 1/2-HP belt drive openers and two "hardware overhauls." (Precision sometimes calls them "rebUILds.")

On April 9, 2015, at the IDA Expo in Indianapolis, I put that invoice on the big screen during my seminar on better business practices.

2015: The Gohlwar gambit

Charan Gohlwar was sitting in that seminar, and he approached me afterward. Although he never explained the \$5,487 invoice, he claimed to have hundreds of positive online reviews. Then, he invited me to come to Phoenix to present a seminar on better business practices to his employees.

I was suspicious, but it was a unique opportunity to share positive business practices with a troubled company. So I agreed to do it, with the condition that I receive no payment. Gohlwar would merely pay for my travel expenses.

Yet, before the seminar, I received another email from yet another Gohlwar customer. Dave L. said, "We feel we've been sold things we didn't need at a very inflated high price. In checking recent complaints on Precision Door of Phoenix, it appears we are not alone."

My seminar in Phoenix went on as planned on June 15, 2015. Only about 15 of his employees attended. The atmosphere in the room was very strange indeed.

Post-seminar revelations

A few months after the seminar, one of Gohlwar's employees contacted me, telling me that the entire seminar was a smokescreen. He said that it was Gohlwar's way of "keeping your friends close, but your enemies even closer." He added that Gohlwar had a way to remove and edit his negative reviews that get posted on his website.

Several employees have since told me that, immediately after the seminar, Gohlwar bragged to his staff that he had successfully paid me off. As a result, Gohlwar reportedly told his staff that they could now continue "killing it" with customers, no longer needing to worry about Wadsworth exposing his practices.



Precision Door of Phoenix was exposed again on television in 2016.

2016: On TV again

On March 30, 2016, Precision Door of Phoenix made the TV news again. Phoenix NBC station KPNX 12 aired a "Call 12 for Action" story about Denise K., a homeowner who was charged \$1,400 by Precision Door of Phoenix for a hardware overhaul that didn't even fix her problem. She actually just needed a sun shield for her photo-eyes, which was crafted later by Precision with cardboard and black tape.

After Precision wouldn't return her calls, she called KPNX. Precision Door finally refunded her \$1,400, explaining that they service "over 14,000 customers a year."

I was later told by multiple employees that the offending technician in Denise's case was Ricky Killingsworth, the same tech who was allegedly fired after the Dateline incident in 2011. I was also told by multiple employees that Gohlwar simply changed Killingsworth's name on the payroll (to "Wayne Kohls"), but kept this "heavy hitter" on staff. (Gohlwar denies this.)

2017: Another homeowner email

On Oct. 31, 2017, I received an email from another Precision Door of Phoenix customer, Gil C. of Sun City. He simply said, "Precision Door gave me two optional quotes of \$1,800 and \$2,400. Another ethical company made the repair for \$165. The Attorney General of Arizona needs to arrest these guys!"

Then, in 2018, I received word from three other Gohlwar customers. In January, Gohlwar's tech went to the house of Victoria C. of Sun City, a retired senior citizen living on a fixed income. Precision Door of Phoenix charged her \$2,000 for a fix that (she later learned) should have cost \$450.

In September, John F. of Phoenix was irate after calling Precision Door to fix a broken hinge. He watched the tech replace

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PRECISION DOOR SERVICE OF PHOENIX 7632 E GREENWAY RD #100 SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85260 (92) 242-2228				ESTIMATE OCTOBER 25, 2017 CHRISTIAN F-ARCENIEGA ESTIMATE GOOD FOR 90 DAYS CENTER DOOR (LO)			
GOOD				BEST			
218R	ITEM	QUANTITY	RATE	8365	ITEM	QUANTITY	RATE
218 X 1-3/4" X 31"	OIL TEMPERED, HIGH CYCLE TORSION SPRING (RED)	1	\$249.95	LIFTMASTER 8365 1/2HP BELT-DRIVE OPENER WITH MYG TECHNOLOGY		1	\$709.95
234B		1	\$249.95	INCLUDES ONE REMOTE CONTROL			
234 X 1-3/4" X 31"	OIL TEMPERED, HIGH CYCLE TORSION SPRING (BLACK)	1	\$195.00	LM 7-BELT	1	\$129.95	
LABOR		1	\$195.00	LIFTMASTER 1-PIECE 7 BELT-RAIL			
LABOR				LM 830X FACTORY WARRANTY	1	\$0.00	
LUBE & TUNE		1	\$99.95	LIFETIME - MOTOR AND BELT RAIL, 1 YR - PARTS-ELECTRONICS			
DOOR LUBRICATION & TUNE-UP				LIFETIME SPRINGS AND HARDWARE WARRANTY	1	\$0.00	
8365		1	\$799.95	LIFETIME PARTS WARRANTY ON SPRINGS AND DOOR HARDWARE, 90 DAYS ON LABOR			
LIFTMASTER 8365 1/2HP BELT-DRIVE OPENER WITH MYG TECHNOLOGY				CLGPAY (4)	1	\$1,850.00	
INCLUDES ONE REMOTE CONTROL				16" LONG PANEL ALMOND 12"			
LM 7-BELT		1	\$129.95	COUPON	1	-\$300.00	
LIFTMASTER 1-PIECE 7 BELT-RAIL							
LM 830X FACTORY WARRANTY		1	\$0.00				
LIFETIME - MOTOR AND BELT RAIL, 1 YR - PARTS-ELECTRONICS							
LIFETIME SPRINGS AND HARDWARE WARRANTY		1	\$0.00				
LIFETIME PARTS WARRANTY ON SPRINGS AND DOOR HARDWARE, 90 DAYS ON LABOR							
SUBTOTAL \$1,724.75 TAX \$143.15 TOTAL \$1,867.90				SUBTOTAL \$2,279.90 TAX \$189.23 TOTAL \$2,469.13			

This customer told us, "The Attorney General ... needs to arrest these guys!"



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the hinge in a few minutes and “put a couple squirts of oil on the hinges.” Precision later emailed him a bill.

John was shocked; he had been charged \$150 for the lube and \$250 for the hinge, minus a \$100 “discount.”irate, he called to complain. They offered him \$100, but a few weeks later, he received a check for \$49. John told us, “I’m telling my neighbors to stay away from this jackass.”

Messing with the wrong customer

In November 2018, Amy M. of Goodyear had a door with a broken spring. She said that Precision’s tech wanted to rack up a \$2,200 ticket with a new door, claiming that the door was “damaged irreparably.” Amy thinks the tech thought she would fall for it because she is female.

When he claimed that the spring was broken because of a failure to perform routine maintenance, she told him, “Our garage door system HAS been properly maintained; we have records.”

Amy is a residential insurance adjuster who represents a realty firm that has “never spent more than \$800” to replace a door. When she asked the tech to point out the door damage, he became “defensive and agitated.”

“The simple fact is, there was no damage to the garage door,” she told us. “He knew it, and I knew it. He’d been caught in a lie.” She later had the door fixed for \$168 by another company who confirmed that “there was absolutely no physical damage to the garage door.”

Unbelievable online reviews

These customers portray Precision Door of Phoenix as a company known for deception, deep price gouging, and unnecessary repairs. The company’s online reviews, on Google, Yelp, Facebook, on Precision’s own website, or wherever, tell a mixed story. On the whole, those online reviews are positive, even *unbelievably positive*.

Take, for example, the company’s own website at www.precisiondooraz.com. It reports 3,908 customer reviews that average an amazing 4.92 stars out of five, with 96.4% of all customers granting the company a perfect 5-star rating.

You may be thinking, “It’s not possible for any company on earth to achieve such a rating.” And you may be right. We talked to several ex-employees who told us that Gohlwar is able to delete or edit negative reviews on his website and that he urges employees to post positive ones.

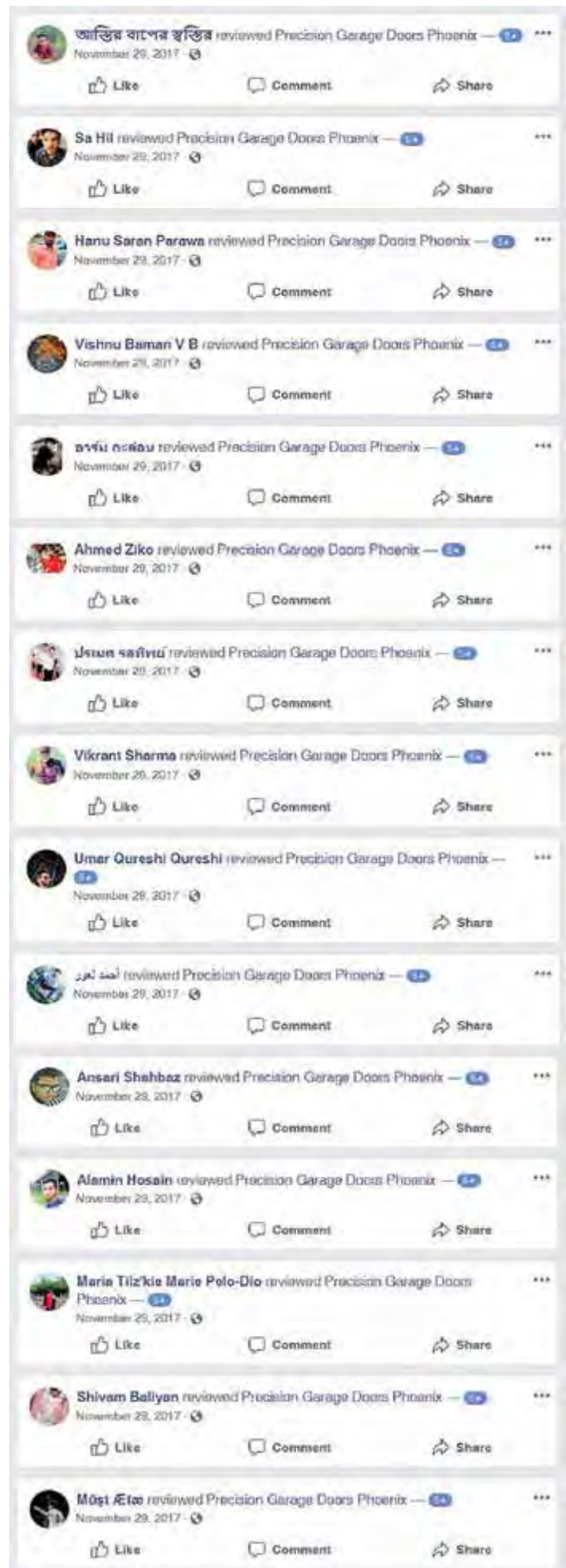
Reviews from 8,000 miles away

Overall, the company’s Google and Facebook reviews are also positive. His Facebook reviews average 4.4 stars out of five, which is “based on the opinion of 175 people.”

But here, a closer analysis tells a different story. There are only 11 Facebook reviews in 2018, and seven of the 11 (64%) give the company only one star or “do not recommend.”

Looking deeper into 2017, we found 83 5-star reviews that were all posted in the span of two days: Nov. 28-29, 2017. The names of these 83 reviewers caught our eye. We looked closer and checked the locations of most of these reviewers, and none of them *even lived in North America*.

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These are among the 83 5-star reviews for Precision Door of Phoenix from people who don’t even live in America.

Yelping for help

Yelp reviews also tell a different story. Of the 157 Yelp reviews posted since 2011, exactly 100 (64%) are 1-star ratings. More recently, of the 36 reviews since Jan. 1, 2018, 24 (67%) have only one star. These negative reviews are also quite specific in detailing deceptive practices, extreme price gouging, and unnecessary repairs. (See sidebar below.)

One of the few positive Yelp ratings came from Stephanie W., who wrote, “Fantastic!! Super quick service, really nice guy that knew what he was doing!!” Yet, her picture is on her review, and ex-employees have positively identified her as Stephanie Whitaker, Gohlwar’s finance manager.

What ex-employees think

So far, this article has only told you what customers think. When we received the

input of Gohlwar’s ex-employees, the portrait of Precision Door of Phoenix turned much darker. We talked to eight former employees, both male and female, representing managers, office workers, and technicians. Since most of them expressed a fear of retaliation from Gohlwar, we will identify them with fictitious names.

“Doug” expressed a common concern, saying, “It’s Charan’s M.O. to get the lawyer involved to trump up some charge and put you through the wringer. It’s the kind of bullying tactic he would use.”

My contacts with employees began after I delivered the seminar in Phoenix in June 2015. In the months after the event, I received emails from three different employees. “Kate,” for example, an office worker, told us, “I saw first-hand what they do to people ... It’s a scam, the whole company.” She wished that she had reported its practices to the “3 On Your Side” consumer reporter at a local TV station.

Precision Door of Phoenix: Customers Yelp for help



- Brad S. (Scottsdale). His 77-year-old mother had an exterior keypad that didn’t work, even after her neighbor replaced its 9-volt battery. Precision Door said that the keypad and the entire opener needed to be replaced at a cost of over \$1,000. She refused. The next day, it was learned that the battery was still in its clear plastic wrapper. “I put the battery back in, and the door works perfectly again. What a scam!”
- Dr. Russ M. (Gilbert). He was charged \$914.17 to replace springs. The job took 20 minutes, and “he charged me hundreds in labor on top of a service fee and anything else they could come up with.”
- Mike M. (Scottsdale). “I had to call the Scottsdale Police to get these guys off my property! ... I had to pay them \$2,700 to get them to leave with a police escort. You don’t charge \$850 for a garage door motor when it’s \$200-\$300 on Amazon. Springs for \$400 apiece when they are \$20-\$40? These guys know the con game to the max. FYI - all the reviews on their website are bogus.”
- Maria M. (Gilbert). “My belt came off the track on my opener. The guy told me that we needed a new opener, springs, and rollers (and) quoted \$2,500. I called another company ... and they repaired it for \$175. Everything works fine again.”
- Anne B. (Phoenix). She accidentally backed into her garage door. Precision told her that she needed to “change the door and even the motor,” quoting \$2,200. The next day, a competitor fixed it for \$59.
- Stephanie W. (Surprise). gave them 4 stars. “Fantastic!! Price was what I expect for calling in the morning and having my problem fixed the same day. Definitely will use them again.” (Stephanie’s photo was included with her review. Ex-employees have identified her as Precision Door’s finance manager, Stephanie Whitaker.)
- Julie L. (Scottsdale). “These guys should be shut down!” They wanted to fix a door problem for over \$2,000, but another company fixed it for \$225. “These guys are con men and clearly trained by the company to do it.”
- Michael A. (Phoenix). “I’m chagrined to admit this but I gave those people \$1,800 for new springs. ... No new opener, no new garage door, JUST DOOR SPRINGS. ... All this after I explained to them that at that time I needed to be extra careful about spending money for extra or unnecessary items.”

Abusive commission scheme

A core problem at Precision Door of Phoenix is a commission scheme that motivates technicians to run up the customer’s bill, often at *technician-determined* prices and adding items that are not needed. Several techs cited this scheme as a major concern.

Here’s a general idea of how it works, as described to us by several former employees.

Let’s say a technician installs a residential operator that costs Gohlwar \$215 (e.g., from LiftMaster). The tech (who is paid solely by commission) will be paid a commission on the “gross profit” for that sale. Gross profit was defined as the amount beyond the “parts cost” for that item, which Gohlwar sets at \$300 for that operator.

As “Alan” told us, the cost of the parts charged to the tech was always inflated; it was never the actual cost to Precision. This inflated “cost to employees” guarantees that Gohlwar gets the initial profit.

Doing the math

So, if the tech sells that (\$215) operator for \$300, he gets \$0. If he sells it for \$600, he might get 15 percent commission (\$300 profit x .15 = \$45). If he sells it for \$900, he might get 18 percent commission (\$600 profit x .18 = \$108). In this \$900 scenario, Gohlwar would get the initial \$85 (\$300 minus \$215) plus \$492 (\$600 x .82) for a total of \$577.

In other words, Gohlwar gets a profit from the markup to the employee, and then he gets more profit from the sale to the customer.

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Technicians say the lowest commission that they can earn is 10 percent. But they get the maximum 18 percent commission when the total sale is over \$800.

This scheme motivates them to jack up the price and the total sale as much as possible. “You always felt you had to inflate the price to make money,” said Alan.

At the same time, if technicians were timid about these ruthless tactics, their paycheck would suffer. “This (scheme) was a sore spot with me,” said Doug. “It puts the tech in the spot where if you don’t sell other parts, regardless of whether they are needed, you could barely make a living.”

Gohlwar said that paying techs by commission is “very common” for garage door companies in the U.S. He added that his residential technicians were the only ones on commission; he has commercial techs who are paid hourly and some installers who are paid by piece rate.

He also denied pressuring employees to charge huge invoices. “I have always asked my technicians to be up front with the customers and always give them three options to choose from,” he said.

Fluid pricing

Most dealers set the pricing for all items. But at Precision Door of Phoenix, Gohlwar’s technicians say that they can set the price. Gohlwar denies this, saying that he personally sets the prices and that his technicians “cannot set their own prices; (it’s) not possible.”

Yet, his ex-employees say that Gohlwar tells them to set a price that depends on their assessment of the gullibility or affluence of the customer. *Is she clueless about parts pricing? Do they have a nice house? Does he drive a nice car?*

Gohlwar told us that these allegations are “baseless.” Yet, as “Josh” told us, “When Charan pushed us to generate big tickets, he would frequently tell us that certain nice houses should be able to generate tickets of \$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000, or whatever.”

As we’ve seen on several Precision invoices, techs can also charge *hundreds extra* for the operator rail, the remote, photo-eyes, and sensor wire, even though they are normally included with the operator.

Installation (e.g., \$195) is also an add-on fee, and its amount appears to have little or no relation to a reasonable hourly labor

rate. As customers and their invoices indicate, a tech’s hourly rate could be calculated at hundreds of dollars per hour.

The real money-maker

Broken springs, however, are seen as the real money-maker, and the same basic commission scheme applies. A broken spring opens the door to selling “hardware overhauls” or “rebuids” that replace the springs, rollers, cables, end bearing brackets, and center bearing for prices that can exceed \$1,300, which often exceeds the price of a completely new door.

Josh told us that a \$1,400 overhaul would generate “no less than \$1,200” in “gross profit.” However, Gohlwar could change the alleged “parts cost” on every job. Josh said, “One time, the parts could cost you \$100, the next time it could be \$140, the next time it could be \$165, then it could be \$100 again.”

Manipulating parts costs

Gohlwar denied manipulating parts costs. He said that items are charged (to employees) “at cost,” but that “shipping is added to all parts.” He added, “My technicians are very

“One time, the parts could cost you \$100, the next time it could be \$140, the next time it could be \$165, then it could be \$100 again.”

happy with their pay. In 16 years, I have never heard a single tech complain to me or my CFO about the cost of parts.”

Other former techs confirmed that parts costs are manipulated, which hurts their pay. They also complained that Gohlwar wouldn’t let them know the parts cost. Doug told us that these fluctuating parts costs would make technicians “blow their gaskets on all the office staff.”

“Jeff” was one of these furious techs. He told us, “I have proof of them messing with the books and defrauding and stealing over \$8,000 of my money through their manipulation of percentages and obvious fraudulent accounting.”

Josh was also irate about this system. “I left the company because I was disrespected, lied to, and stolen from,” he said.

“Slaying the customer”

Yes, Gohlwar’s system is bad for the tech, but it’s very bad for the customer. Doug said

that “Charan’s whole thing is to ‘slay the customer.’” He would push the techs to “sell for higher and higher prices” and to “do it for your family.”

“Mike” told us that he had a relative who was a victim of Precision Door of Phoenix. “She had a broken spring, and they charged her \$249 each for two springs, plus a full overhaul,” he said. “They got her for about 1100 bucks. Parts only cost \$100.”

As “Jay” put it, “Flat rip-off money is where the profit is.” He disliked Gohlwar pushing techs to replace the spring pad on every job, charging as much as \$200 for this piece of wood.

Several ex-employees reported that Gohlwar’s scheme results in ticket averages between \$500 and \$600. Gohlwar told us that his call average for the past two years is “equal to or less than” the call average of similar-sized garage door companies throughout the U.S. Yet, in our experience, typical call averages nationwide are hundreds of dollars less than \$600.

To some, Gohlwar’s scheme may seem like “smart business.” Dan Apple, however, thinks the system is “terrible.” Apple, now a

door dealer consultant, is a former president of IDA, IDEA, and Apple Door, with dealerships in several cities.

“That system is terrible for the customer, terrible for the technician, and ultimately terrible for the business,” said Apple. “Such a plan will eventually come back to bite you.”

Applying the pressure

While this scheme inherently motivates techs to rack up a big bill, Gohlwar adds his own pressure to make sure it works. “He belittles anyone who does not produce big numbers,” said Jay.

Gohlwar denied this, saying, “In 16 years as an owner, I have never belittled any of my employees.”

Yet, two ex-employees specifically mentioned that Gohlwar called the techs “dogs and bitches” at a Tuesday meeting.

Most of our sources also noted how Gohlwar praised “heavy hitters” for their

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huge invoices. As “David” told us, these “killers” were sent to the jobs at affluent homes. “They were put up on the pedestal,” said Doug. “They got to work in better areas (neighborhoods with higher incomes), with better work schedules, and better trucks.”

But, for the less-ruthless technicians, it was a different story. “There is a constant fear of backlash from Charan if you didn’t perform to his standards,” said Jeff. “We all felt obligated to sell for as much as we could,

Since the company posts photos of its employees on its website, it’s not hard to track the longevity of specific employees. Of the 33 named employees on their website in October 2017, only 17 were still there a year later.

David said, “There are scores of former Precision technicians who are working at other businesses in the Phoenix area.”

The mysterious “Onion Router”

Several ex-employees reported that

He said, “If you are committed to using Precision Door for your home, you would be better off pulling out \$1,000 from your bank account, lighting it on fire, and attempting the repair yourself.”

We then asked him, “What should future Precision employees know about working for Precision Door of Phoenix?”

He said, “You will be paid half of what you are promised, you will work twice the amount of hours you are told, and you will not get the same truthful answer from any of the management that control your fate.”

“We all felt obligated to sell for as much as we could, otherwise we would get \$400 paychecks for working 60-hour weeks.”

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If you didn’t produce, said Jay, Gohlwar’s “game plan is to starve you out.” If you didn’t please Gohlwar, he added, you’d be sent to fewer jobs and less-profitable jobs.

High-interest loans

Gohlwar’s alleged manipulation of employees could also extend into their personal finances. Doug claimed that Gohlwar hired people who might be indebted or in financial trouble. He then would loan money to these financially strapped employees.

You might think that this was a benevolent gesture, but Josh said, “The loans were purely predatory.”

Gohlwar denied this, saying, “I am not a money-lending company.” He added that tech requests for loans are denied 80 percent of the time. Gohlwar said that he even paid a \$4,500 deductible for one employee’s knee surgery and was never paid back.

Jeff was one of the loan recipients, borrowing over \$1,000 from Gohlwar. “The only reason I received the loan is because of the lack of calls and opportunities given to me during my work with Precision,” said Jeff. “While techs without any morals were given five to six calls a day, I was given two if lucky.” Gohlwar set Jeff’s loan’s interest rate at 20 percent, but others tell us that the effective rate was actually much more.

High turnover

Why would anyone stay employed at such a place? Many don’t. “We had a high turnover rate,” said Doug. “We would probably lose one or two guys every month.”

Gohlwar uses an “Onion Router” to damage competitors online. An onion router (aka TOR, “The Onion Router”) is a software tool that masks a computer’s true IP address.

With this tool, you can post negative reviews for competitors or click on a competitor’s Google Pay-Per-Clicks (PPC) ad, causing them to pay for the click. If you do it multiple times, you can use up the competitor’s allowance of clicks, which forces your ad to the top of the list.

Gohlwar said, “I have never heard the term ‘TOR,’ nor do I use any such means.”

Mike, however, said that Precision Door of Phoenix used the Onion Router because they had previously been caught using manual

“Charan was paying him and his wife (at home) to click on all of A1’s ads until it moved Charan’s company to the top of the page.”

methods to manipulate competitors’ online status. David reported that Gohlwar ordered one employee (Jeremy) to use the Onion Router to “keep A1 Garage Door’s rating down.”

Mike witnessed Jeremy using the Onion Router at work in Precision’s office. Jeremy told him that “Charan was paying him and his wife (at home) to click on all of A1’s ads until it moved Charan’s company to the top of the page.”

Concluding thoughts

We asked Jeff, “What should future customers know about Precision Door of Phoenix?”

A typical Precision Door?

Last year, 23 Precision Door companies around the nation were recipients of Angie’s List Super Service Award. Precision Door of Phoenix was not one of them.

Currently, 123 Precision Door technicians hold at least one of the certifications offered by IDEA (Institute of Door Dealer Education and Accreditation). Precision Door of Phoenix has no IDEA-certified technicians.

Of all the dealers in the greater Phoenix area, five are IDEA accredited. Precision Door of Phoenix is not one of them.

Since Precision Door franchises are now found in 91 markets across the country, readers will certainly be asking, “Are all Precision Door dealers like Precision Door of Phoenix?”

We think not, but PDS management will need to respond to that. And we plan to give them that opportunity in our upcoming spring 2019 issue.

Back to the question

So, we return to our original question: “What in the world is Gohlwar afraid of?” As it turns out, it is much more than we imagined.

Will he sue us for this fact-based article that quotes so many of his own customers and employees?

Perhaps, but we think he could spend his time and money more profitably by cleaning up his own house, treating customers with respect, treating his own employees with respect, and running an honest, respectable business.

We think PDS management would agree. ■

To respond to this story, send an email to the editor at trw@tomwadsworth.com.