Reputation Management Work Extends Into AI Answers

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Google updated its review snippet structured data documentation on July 24, 2026, adding explicit language that sites should not include fake or undisclosed incentivised reviews on the page or inside their structured data markup. The Reputation.org notes that the change is narrower than it first reads and more consequential than its placement in developer documentation suggests.

The narrowness matters first, because the guideline is widely being described as a ban on incentivised reviews and it is not one. The issue named is undisclosed incentivisation. A review written in exchange for a benefit such as money, a discount, a voucher, or a free product is not automatically excluded; a review written in exchange for one of those without clear and prominent disclosure of that fact is. Reviews not based on genuine experience are covered separately.

Placement is what gives it weight. The guideline sits inside the rules governing star-rating eligibility in search results, which means it carries a consequence beyond editorial preference. Breaching a structured data guideline can result in a manual action, and where one is applied Google may disregard the review markup on the page and withdraw its rich-result eligibility. A business that loses star ratings from its search listings

loses them across every query where the listing appears.

The wider implication is where the firm places the emphasis. Structured data is one of the primary ways a machine reads a business's own claims about itself, and those claims increasingly feed systems that summarise rather than list. When an assistant assembles an answer about whether a business is well regarded, it draws on review content and review markup among other signals. A tightening of the disclosure standard applied to that markup is a signal about what those systems intend to treat as trustworthy input. The firm's work in that area is described at thereputation.org/ai-cleanup.

"Reputation work used to end at the listing, because the listing was what a person read," said Joshua Albanese, spokesperson for The Reputation.org. "Now something reads the listing on the person's behalf and gives them a sentence. If a business has incentivised reviews in its markup without saying so, that is not just a rich-result problem anymore. It is an input into what a machine tells people about that business."

For businesses that run a review incentive of any kind, the practical step is to find out whether the incentive is disclosed and whether those reviews appear in markup. Many operators do not know what their own structured data contains, because it was implemented by a developer or generated by a plugin and has not been examined since. The check is quick and the remedy is usually a configuration change rather than a rebuild.

The firm distinguishes this from the review-platform question, which is governed separately. Platform policies determine what may appear on a profile hosted by that platform. Structured data guidelines determine what a business may assert in the markup on its own website. A business can be compliant with one and not the other, and the two are frequently managed by different people.

Where damaging or fabricated content has already been absorbed into summarised answers, the firm's position is that the work runs upstream rather than at the answer itself. Nobody edits a generated answer directly. What can be addressed is the underlying content those systems read, and outcomes there depend on the policies of each source platform. The firm's broader service is described at thereputation.org/reputation-management.

The firm's summary view is that disclosure standards are converging across contexts. The same principle now appears in federal review rules, in platform contribution policies, and in structured data guidelines, and a business that discloses plainly satisfies all three without tracking each separately.

Businesses can review the firm's services at thereputation.org.

About The Reputation.org The Reputation.org (operated by Aurawave Inc.) is a national brand and crisis reputation firm that works to remove damaging content, reviews, articles, and records before they become permanent in search and AI answers, then shapes what people and AI find instead. Services span reputation management, crisis management, review and content removal, and reputation monitoring for businesses and high-stakes individuals.

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