DECISION


Respondents and BCP thereafter executed an Agreement Containing Consent Order ("Consent Agreement"). The Consent Agreement includes: 1) statements by Respondents that they neither admit nor deny any of the allegations in the Complaint, except as specifically stated in this Decision and Order, and that only for purposes of this action, they admit the facts necessary to establish jurisdiction; and 2) waivers and other provisions as required by the Commission’s Rules.

The Commission considered the matter and determined that it had reason to believe that Respondents have violated the said acts, and that a Complaint should issue stating its charges in that respect. The Commission accepted the executed Consent Agreement and placed it on the public record for a period of 30 days for the receipt and consideration of public comments. Now, in further conformity with the procedure prescribed in Rule 2.34, the Commission issues its Complaint, makes the following Findings, and issues the following Order:
Findings

1. The Respondents are:

   a. Respondent UrthBox, Inc., a California corporation with its principal office or place of business at 535 Mission Street, Suite 1820, San Francisco, California 94105.

   b. Respondent Behnam Behrouzi, an officer of the Proposed Corporate Respondent, UrthBox, Inc. Individually or in concert with others, he formulates, directs, or controls the policies, acts, or practices of UrthBox, Inc. His principal office or place of business is the same as that of UrthBox, Inc.

2. The Commission has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this proceeding and over the Respondents, and the proceeding is in the public interest.

ORDER

Definitions

For purposes of this Order, the following definitions apply:

A. “Billing Information” means any data that enables any person to access a customer’s account, such as a credit card, checking, savings, share or similar account, utility bill, mortgage loan account, or debit card.

B. “Charge,” “Charged,” or “Charging” means any attempt to collect money or other consideration from a consumer, including but not limited to causing Billing Information to be submitted for payment, including against the consumer’s credit card, debit card, bank account, telephone bill, or other account.

C. “Clearly and Conspicuously” means that a required disclosure is difficult to miss (i.e., easily noticeable) and easily understandable by ordinary consumers, including in all of the following ways:

   1. In any communication that is solely visual or solely audible, the disclosure must be made through the same means through which the communication is presented. In any communication made through both visual and audible means, such as a television advertisement, the disclosure must be presented simultaneously in both the visual and audible portions of the communication even if the representation requiring the disclosure (“triggering representation”) is made through only one means.

   2. A visual disclosure, by its size, contrast, location, the length of time it appears, and other characteristics, must stand out from any accompanying text or other visual elements so that it is easily noticed, read, and understood.

   3. An audible disclosure, including by telephone or streaming video, must be delivered
in a volume, speed, and cadence sufficient for ordinary consumers to easily hear and understand it.

4. In any communication using an interactive electronic medium, such as the Internet or software, the disclosure must be unavoidable.

5. The disclosure must use diction and syntax understandable to ordinary consumers and must appear in each language in which the triggering representation appears.

6. The disclosure must comply with these requirements in each medium through which it is received, including all electronic devices and face-to-face communications.

7. The disclosure must not be contradicted or mitigated by, or inconsistent with, anything else in the communication.

8. When the representation or sales practice targets a specific audience, such as children, the elderly, or the terminally ill, “ordinary consumers” includes reasonable members of that group.

D. “Negative Option Feature” means, in an offer or agreement to sell or provide any good or service, a provision under which the consumer’s silence or failure to take affirmative action to reject a good or service or to cancel the agreement is interpreted by the seller or provider as acceptance or continuing acceptance of the offer.

E. “Respondents” means the Corporate Respondent and the Individual Respondent, individually, collectively, or in any combination.

1. “Corporate Respondent” means UrthBox, Inc., a corporation, and its successors and assigns.


F. “Telemarketing” means any plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services by use of one or more telephones, and which involves a telephone call, whether or not covered by the Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 310.

G. “Unexpected Material Connection” means any relationship that might materially affect the weight or credibility of a testimonial or endorsement and that would not reasonably be expected by consumers.
Provisions

I. Prohibited Misrepresentations Regarding Endorsements

IT IS ORDERED that Respondents, and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service, must not misrepresent, or assist others in misrepresenting, expressly or by implication, that an endorser of such good or service is an independent user or ordinary consumer of the good or service.

Compliance with this Provision is separate from, and in addition to, the disclosures required by Provisions III, VI, and VII, infra.

II. Prohibited Misrepresentations of Good or Service with Negative Option Feature

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents, and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service with a Negative Option Feature, must not misrepresent, or assist others in misrepresenting, expressly or by implication:

A. Any cost to the consumer to purchase, receive, use, or return the initial good or service;

B. That the consumer will not be Charged for any good or service;

C. That a good or service is offered on a “free,” “trial,” “sample,” “bonus,” “gift,” “no obligation,” “discounted” basis, or words of similar import, denoting or implying the absence of an obligation on the part of the recipient of the offer to affirmatively act in order to avoid Charges, including where a Charge will be assessed pursuant to the offer unless the consumer takes affirmative steps to prevent or stop such a Charge;

D. That the consumer can obtain a good or service for a processing, service, shipping, handling, or administrative fee with no further obligation;

E. The purpose(s) for which the consumer’s Billing Information will be used;

F. The date, timing, or manner by which the consumer will incur any obligation or be charged unless the consumer takes an affirmative action on the Negative Option Feature;

G. That a transaction has been authorized by the consumer; or
H. Any other fact material to the consumer concerning any good or service, such as any material aspect of the nature or terms of a refund, cancellation, exchange, or repurchase policy for the good or service.

Compliance with this Provision is separate from, and in addition to, the disclosures required by Provisions III, VI, and VII, infra.

III. Required Disclosures Relating to Unexpected Material Connections

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service, must not make any representation, expressly or by implication, about any consumer, reviewer, or other endorser of such good or service without disclosing, Clearly and Conspicuously, and in close proximity to that representation, any Unexpected Material Connection between such endorser and (1) any Respondent; (2) any other individual or entity affiliated with the good or service; or (3) the good or service.

IV. Required Removal of Demonstrations, Reviews, and Endorsements

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents must, within thirty days of the date of service of this order, take all reasonable steps to remove any demonstration, review, or endorsement, by an endorser with a Material Connection to any Respondent, of any good or service currently viewable by the public that does not comply with Provisions I and III.

V. Required Monitoring of Endorsers

IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents, and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service by means of an endorsement by an endorser with a Material Connection to (1) any Respondent; (2) any other individual or entity affiliated with the good or service; or (3) the good or service, must take steps sufficient to ensure compliance with Provisions I and III. Such steps shall include, at a minimum:

A. Providing each such endorser with a clear statement of his or her responsibilities to disclose Clearly and Conspicuously, and in close proximity to the endorsement, in any review, online video, social media posting, or other communication endorsing the good or service, the endorser’s Unexpected Material Connection to any Respondent, any other individual or entity affiliated with the good or service, or the good or service; and obtaining from each such endorser a signed and dated statement acknowledging receipt of that statement and expressly agreeing to comply with it. For the purpose of this subsection, the term “signed” may include a verifiable electronic or digital form of signature, to the extent that such form of signature is recognized as a valid signature under applicable federal law or state contract law;
B. Establishing, implementing, and thereafter maintaining a system to monitor and review the representations and disclosures of endorsers with any Material Connection to any Respondent, any other individual or entity affiliated with the good or service, or the good or service, to ensure compliance with Provisions I and III. The system shall include, at a minimum, monitoring and reviewing the endorsers’ reviews, online videos and social media postings; and

C. Creating reports showing the results of the monitoring required by Provision V.B.

VI. Required Disclosures Relating To Negative Option Features

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service with a Negative Option Feature, must not:

A. Represent, expressly or by implication, that any good or service that includes a Negative Option Feature is being offered on a free, trial, no obligation, reduced, or discounted basis, without disclosing Clearly and Conspicuously, and immediately adjacent to, any such representation:

1. The extent to which the consumer must take affirmative action(s) to avoid any Charges: a) for the offered good or service, b) of an increased amount after the trial or promotional period ends, and c) on a recurring basis;

2. The total cost (or range of costs) the consumer will be Charged and, if applicable, the frequency of such Charges unless the consumer timely takes steps to prevent or stop such Charges; and

3. The deadline(s) (by date or frequency) by which the consumer must affirmatively act in order to stop all recurring Charges.

B. Obtain Billing Information from a consumer for any transaction involving a good or service that includes a Negative Option Feature, without first disclosing Clearly and Conspicuously, and immediately adjacent to where a consumer provides Billing Information:

1. The extent to which the consumer must take affirmative action(s) to avoid any Charges: a) for the offered good or service, b) of an increased amount after the trial or promotional period ends, and c) on a recurring basis;

2. The total cost (or range of costs) the consumer will be Charged, the date the initial Charge will be submitted for payment, and, if applicable, the frequency of such Charges unless the consumer timely takes affirmative steps to prevent or stop such Charges;
3. The deadline(s) (by date or frequency) by which the consumer must affirmatively act in order to stop all recurring Charges;

4. The name of the seller or provider of the good or service and, if the name of the seller or provider will not appear on billing statements, the billing descriptor that will appear on such statements;

5. A description of the good or service;

6. Any Charge or cost for which the consumer is responsible in connection with the cancellation of an order or the return of a good; and

7. The simple cancellation mechanism to stop any recurring Charges, as required by Provision VIII.

C. Fail to send the consumer:

1. Immediately after the consumer’s submission of an online order, written confirmation of the transaction by email. The email must Clearly and Conspicuously disclose all the information required by Provision VI.B, and contain a subject line reading “Order Confirmation” along with the name of the good or service, and no additional information; or

2. Within two (2) days after receipt of the consumer’s order by mail or telephone, a written confirmation of the transaction, either by email or first class mail. The email or letter must Clearly and Conspicuously disclose all the information required by Provision VI.B. The subject line of the email must Clearly and Conspicuously state “Order Confirmation” along with the name of the good or service, and nothing else. The outside of the envelope must Clearly and Conspicuously state “Order Confirmation” along with the name of the good or service, and no additional information other than the consumer’s address, the Respondent’s return address, and postage.

VII. Obtaining Express Informed Consent

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents, and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service with a Negative Option Feature, must not use, or assist others in using, Billing Information to obtain payment from a consumer, unless Respondents first obtain the express informed consent of the consumer to do so. To obtain express informed consent, Respondents must:
A. For all written offers (including over the Internet or other web-based applications or services), obtain consent through a check box, signature, or other substantially similar method, which the consumer must affirmatively select or sign to accept the Negative Option Feature, and no other portion of the offer. Respondents shall disclose Clearly and Conspicuously, and immediately adjacent to such check box, signature, or substantially similar method of affirmative consent, only the following, with no additional information:

1. The extent to which the consumer must take affirmative action(s) to avoid any Charges: a) for the offered good or service, b) of an increased amount after the trial or promotional period ends, and c) on a recurring basis;

2. The total cost (or range of costs) the consumer will be Charged and, if applicable, the frequency of such Charges unless the consumer timely takes affirmative steps to prevent or stop such Charges; and

3. The deadline(s) (by date or frequency) by which the consumer must affirmatively act in order to stop all recurring Charges.

B. For all oral offers, prior to obtaining any Billing Information from the consumer:

1. Clearly and Conspicuously disclose the information contained in Provision VI.B; and

2. Obtain affirmative unambiguous express oral confirmation that the consumer: a) consents to being Charged for any good or service, including providing, at a minimum, the last four (4) digits of the consumer’s account number to be Charged, b) understands that the transaction includes a Negative Option Feature, and c) understands the specific affirmative steps the consumer must take to prevent or stop further Charges.

For transactions conducted through Telemarketing, Respondents shall maintain for three (3) years from the date of each transaction an unedited voice recording of the entire transaction, including the prescribed statements set out in Provision VII.B. Each recording must be retrievable by date and by the consumer’s name, telephone number, or Billing Information, and must be provided upon request to the consumer, the consumer’s bank, or any law enforcement entity.

VIII. Simple Mechanism To Cancel Negative Option Feature

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents, and Respondents’ officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service with a Negative Option Feature, must provide a simple mechanism for the consumer to: (1) avoid being Charged, or Charged an increased amount, for the good or service and (2) immediately stop any recurring Charges. Such mechanism must not be difficult, costly, confusing, or time consuming,
and must be at least as simple as the mechanism the consumer used to initiate the Charge(s). In addition:

A. For consumers who entered into the agreement to purchase a good or service including a Negative Option Feature over the Internet or through other web-based applications or services, Respondents must provide a mechanism, accessible over the Internet or through such other web-based application or service that consumers can easily use to cancel the good or service and to immediately stop all further Charges.

B. For consumers who entered into the agreement to purchase a good or service including a Negative Option Feature through an oral offer and acceptance, Respondents must maintain a telephone number and a postal address that consumers can easily use to cancel the good or service and to immediately stop all further Charges. Respondents must assure that all calls to this telephone number shall be answered during normal business hours and that mail to the postal address is retrieved regularly.

IX. Monetary Relief

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that:

A. Respondent UrthBox, Inc. must pay to the Commission $100,000, which Respondent UrthBox, Inc. stipulates its undersigned counsel holds in escrow for no purpose other than payment to the Commission.

B. Such payment must be made within 8 days of the effective date of this Order by electronic fund transfer in accordance with instructions provided by a representative of the Commission.

X. Additional Monetary Provisions

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that:

A. Respondents relinquish dominion and all legal and equitable right, title, and interest in all assets transferred pursuant to this Order and may not seek the return of any assets.

B. The facts alleged in the Complaint will be taken as true, without further proof, in any subsequent civil litigation by or on behalf of the Commission to enforce its rights to any payment pursuant to this Order, such as a nondischargeability complaint in any bankruptcy case.

C. The facts alleged in the Complaint establish all elements necessary to sustain an action by or on behalf of the Commission pursuant to Section 523(a)(2)(A) of the Bankruptcy Code, 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(2)(A), and this Order will have collateral estoppel effect for such purposes.
D. All money paid to the Commission pursuant to this Order may be deposited into a fund administered by the Commission or its designee to be used for relief, including consumer redress and any attendant expenses for the administration of any redress fund. If a representative of the Commission decides that direct redress to consumers is wholly or partially impracticable or money remains after redress is completed, the Commission may apply any remaining money for such other relief (including consumer information remedies) as it determines to be reasonably related to Respondents’ practices alleged in the Complaint. Any money not used is to be deposited to the U.S. Treasury. Respondents have no right to challenge any activities pursuant to this Provision.

E. In the event of default on any obligation to make payment under this Order, interest, computed as if pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1961(a), shall accrue from the date of default to the date of payment. In the event such default continues for 10 days beyond the date that payment is due, the entire amount will immediately become due and payable.

F. Each day of nonpayment is a violation through continuing failure to obey or neglect to obey a final order of the Commission and thus will be deemed a separate offense and violation for which a civil penalty shall accrue.

G. Respondents acknowledge that their Taxpayer Identification Numbers (Social Security or Employer Identification Numbers), which Respondents have previously submitted to the Commission, may be used for collecting and reporting on any delinquent amount arising out of this Order, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. § 7701.

XI. Customer Information

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that Respondents must directly or indirectly provide sufficient customer information to enable the Commission to efficiently administer consumer redress. Respondents represent that they have provided this redress information to the Commission. If a representative of the Commission requests in writing any information related to redress, Respondents must provide it, in the form prescribed by the Commission representative, within 14 days.

XII. Acknowledgments of the Order

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that Respondents obtain acknowledgments of receipt of this Order:

A. Each Respondent, within 10 days after the effective date of this Order, must submit to the Commission an acknowledgment of receipt of this Order sworn under penalty of perjury.
B. For 3 years after the issuance date of this Order, the Individual Respondent for any business that he, individually or collectively with any other Respondents, is the majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, and the Corporate Respondent, must deliver a copy of this Order to: (1) all principals, officers, directors, and LLC managers and members; (2) all employees having managerial responsibilities for conduct related to the subject matter of the Order and all agents and representatives who participate in conduct related to the subject matter of the Order; and (3) any business entity resulting from any change in structure as set forth in the Provision titled Compliance Reports and Notices. Delivery must occur within 10 days after the effective date of this Order for current personnel. For all others, delivery must occur before they assume their responsibilities.

C. From each individual or entity to which a Respondent delivered a copy of this Order, that Respondent must obtain, within 30 days, a signed and dated acknowledgment of receipt of this Order.

XIII. Compliance Reports and Notices

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents make timely submissions to the Commission:

A. One year after the issuance date of this Order, each Respondent must submit a compliance report, sworn under penalty of perjury, in which:

1. Each Respondent must: (a) identify the primary physical, postal, and email address and telephone number, as designated points of contact, which representatives of the Commission, may use to communicate with Respondent; (b) identify all of that Respondent’s businesses by all of their names, telephone numbers, and physical, postal, email, and Internet addresses; (c) describe the activities of each business, including the goods and services offered, the means of advertising, marketing, and sales, and the involvement of any other Respondent (which Individual Respondent must describe if he knows or should know due to his own involvement); (d) describe in detail whether and how that Respondent is in compliance with each Provision of this Order, including a discussion of all of the changes the Respondent made to comply with the Order; and (e) provide a copy of each Acknowledgment of the Order obtained pursuant to this Order, unless previously submitted to the Commission.

2. Additionally, the Individual Respondent must: (a) identify all his telephone numbers and all his physical, postal, email and Internet addresses, including all residences; (b) identify all his business activities, including any business for which such Respondent performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and any entity in which such Respondent has any ownership interest; and (c) describe in detail such Respondent’s involvement in each such business activity, including title, role, responsibilities, participation, authority, control, and any ownership.
B. For 10 years after the issuance date of this Order, each Respondent must submit a compliance notice, sworn under penalty of perjury, within 14 days of any change in the following:

1. Each Respondent must submit notice of any change in: (a) any designated point of contact; or (b) the structure of the Corporate Respondent or any entity that Respondent has any ownership interest in or controls directly or indirectly that may affect compliance obligations arising under this Order, including: creation, merger, sale, or dissolution of the entity or any subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this Order.

2. Additionally, the Individual Respondent must submit notice of any change in: (a) name, including alias or fictitious name, or residence address; or (b) title or role in any business activity, including (i) any business for which such Respondent performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and (ii) any entity in which such Respondent has any ownership interest and over which Respondents have direct or indirect control. For each such business activity, also identify its name, physical address, and any Internet address.

C. Each Respondent must submit notice of the filing of any bankruptcy petition, insolvency proceeding, or similar proceeding by or against such Respondent within 14 days of its filing.

D. Any submission to the Commission required by this Order to be sworn under penalty of perjury must be true and accurate and comply with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, such as by concluding: “I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on: _____” and supplying the date, signatory’s full name, title (if applicable), and signature.

E. Unless otherwise directed by a Commission representative in writing, all submissions to the Commission pursuant to this Order must be emailed to DEbrief@ftc.gov or sent by overnight courier (not the U.S. Postal Service) to: Associate Director for Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20580. The subject line must begin: In re UrthBox, Inc.

XIV. Recordkeeping

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondents must create certain records for 10 years after the issuance date of the Order, and retain each such record for 5 years, unless otherwise specified below. Specifically, Corporate Respondent and Individual Respondent for any business that such Respondent, individually or collectively with any other Respondents, is a majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, must create and retain the following records:

A. accounting records showing the revenues from all goods or services sold;
B. personnel records showing, for each person providing services in relation to any aspect of the Order, whether as an employee or otherwise, that person’s: name; addresses; telephone numbers; job title or position; dates of service; and (if applicable) the reason for termination;

C. copies or records of all consumer complaints and refund requests, whether received directly or indirectly, such as through a third party, and any response;

D. all records necessary to demonstrate full compliance with each provision of this Order, including all submissions to the Commission; and

E. a copy of each unique advertisement or other marketing material making a representation subject to this Order.

XV. Compliance Monitoring

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, for the purpose of monitoring Respondents’ compliance with this Order:

A. Within 10 days of receipt of a written request from a representative of the Commission, each Respondent must: submit additional compliance reports or other requested information, which must be sworn under penalty of perjury, and produce records for inspection and copying.

B. For matters concerning this Order, representatives of the Commission are authorized to communicate directly with each Respondent. Respondents must permit representatives of the Commission to interview anyone affiliated with any Respondent who has agreed to such an interview. The interviewee may have counsel present.

C. The Commission may use all other lawful means, including posing through its representatives as consumers, suppliers, or other individuals or entities, to Respondents or any individual or entity affiliated with Respondents, without the necessity of identification or prior notice. Nothing in this Order limits the Commission’s lawful use of compulsory process, pursuant to Sections 9 and 20 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 49, 57b-1.

XVI. Order Effective Dates

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Order is final and effective upon the date of its publication on the Commission’s website (ftc.gov) as a final order. This Order will terminate on May 14, 2039, or 20 years from the most recent date that the United States or the Commission files a complaint (with or without an accompanying settlement) in federal court alleging any violation of this Order, whichever comes later; provided, however, that the filing of such a complaint will not affect the duration of:
A. Any Provision in this Order that terminates in less than 20 years;

B. This Order’s application to any Respondent that is not named as a defendant in such complaint; and

C. This Order if such complaint is filed after the Order has terminated pursuant to this Provision.

Provided, further, that if such complaint is dismissed or a federal court rules that the Respondent did not violate any provision of the Order, and the dismissal or ruling is either not appealed or upheld on appeal, then the Order will terminate according to this Provision as though the complaint had never been filed, except that the Order will not terminate between the date such complaint is filed and the later of the deadline for appealing such dismissal or ruling and the date such dismissal or ruling is upheld on appeal.

By the Commission.

April J. Tabor
Acting Secretary

SEAL:
ISSUED: May 14, 2019