



Which categories draw the most complaints?

by Angie Hicks, founder of Angie's List

IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING to me to see which service categories receive the most positive and negative reviews from Angie's List members. So, for the past eight years, we've taken an in-depth look at which categories get the highest grades and which ones get the lowest.

For seven straight years, including 2011, home warranty companies have received the most complaints. Forty-six percent of reviews from members who have a home warranty and reported on their experience last year gave poor grades — either a D or F overall.

All too often, though, consumers don't clearly understand what's covered under a home warranty, such as plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling, and appliances. Most members who submitted complaints about warranties in 2011 say they experienced poor communication and were dissatisfied with the work done. I recommend finding out what your warranty covers, and perhaps more importantly, what it doesn't cover. And always remember to check company reviews on our site.

Also back on the most complained about list are Internet service providers, property management companies, mobile and landline phone service providers, and wedding service categories, such as bridal shops and wedding planners.

Banks and credit unions are new to the most complained-about list. Our members handed

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out poor grades after taking issue with changing fees, unsatisfactory communication from banks on their policies, and poor customer service. We've already seen some banks respond to feedback by changing their fee structure. That kind of action is the exact reason why we track which services receive the most complaints.

Auction services, boating sales and service, mattress sales, and travel agencies are also new to the most complained-about list. Dissatisfied members who reported spending money with these companies say they weren't provided a service as advertised. We want to make consumers aware of industry pitfalls and service issues, and remind you to always do your research before you hire.

Companies that were least complained-about — from piano tuners to graphic designers and home organization services — certainly range in their scope of services, but they all have something in common: They're more personalized and the providers often develop long-lasting relationships with customers.

My hope is that more companies want to improve their relationship with their customers. Feedback, both positive and negative, should only make a company get better so it can provide the best service possible. ☺

Angie's List 2011 most complained about service categories

- 1 Home warranty companies*
- 2 Internet service providers*
- 3 Banks/credit unions 
- 4 Property management companies*
- 5 Auction services 
- 6 Boating sales and service 
- 7 Mattress sales 
- 8 Mobile and landline phone providers*
- 9 Wedding professionals – bridal and tuxedo shops, planners*
- 10 Travel agencies 

Angie's List 2011 least complained about service categories

- 1 Piano tuning 
- 2 Mailbox repair 
- 3 Hauling services* 
- 4 Graphic design 
- 5 Dryer vent cleaning*
- 6 Ceiling fan installation* 
- 7 Home organization services*
- 8 Lighting services* 
- 9 Glass block services 
- 10 Screen repair*

*Repeat appearance on this list