

Trolling for a Refund

In 2019, the average wedding cost nearly \$35,000.¹ In order to have the wedding of her dreams, Linda decided to do all the planning to stay within her \$15,000 budget. She researched and thoughtfully selected every detail of the big day—the location, the flowers, the food, the photographer, etc. One hundred of her closest friends and family shared in the celebration, and she felt that the day went smoothly.

Linda was not able to afford the best wedding photographers, but she was able to find a new photography company that had a few good reviews online. She met with the photographer in person, reviewed their portfolio, and discussed the kinds of photos she wanted. She provided the photographer with a schedule and notes on the kinds of photos that she wanted, and she felt the photographer understood what she envisioned. However, on the day of the wedding, the photographer she met with didn't show up, sending someone else instead. Linda didn't worry about it on the wedding day, but the photos appeared to be average, as if taken by an ordinary person. Some of the shots she wanted were not done, and the lighting in the video was dim. She feels that she could have had a friend do the same quality of work for free, and the \$3,000 could have helped fund other wedding plans. She contacted the photography company multiple times to ask for a partial refund without receiving a response. As a last resort, Linda mass-emailed her wedding list guests, requesting that they post bad reviews of the company on social media. The criticism that she asked her guests to post was true, and she felt that she deserved an apology and a partial refund. It was upsetting to Linda that the company ignored her messages, and even more upsetting when her best friend, Viola, criticized her request to post negative reviews on social media.

Viola is uncertain about whether to participate. Viola doesn't have respect for social media trolls, and she does not want to participate in an act she has criticized others for. Even though she believes that Linda deserved better service, Viola doesn't think that the company should be forced to provide a refund. As Linda's best friend, Viola feels that Linda expects her to post, but Viola doesn't want to. Viola thinks to herself, "Am I a bad friend if I don't do this for Linda?" Viola expressed her hesitation to Linda, and Linda got upset that she would have to justify herself to her best friend.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Should Viola honor her friend Linda's request? Why or why not?
2. Under what circumstances, if any, is it morally permissible to post negative information online in order to force a company to take action?

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/13/how-much-the-average-wedding-cost-in-2019.html>

