

# ONLINE REPUTATION IS IMPORTANT FOR CEMETERIES



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Online reputation is one of the most foundational aspects of effectively marketing your cemetery in 2020. More people now get recommendations from the internet than they do from word of mouth or other local relationships.

In fact, recent surveys have found that most people now trust online reviews even more than personal word of mouth!

No cemetery can thrive in this digital age—either during a pandemic or "normal times"—without a great online reputation. A pristine reputation conveys credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, and attention to detail. No one would ever want to select a cemetery that lacked a stellar reputation for the final resting place of their loved one.

And frankly, your reputation is more critical than ever as we continue to deal with the ramifications of the COVID-19 crisis. The year 2020 has been unlike any in memory. With everything turned upside down in so many ways, people across the country long for trust, safety, and security.

Any business that conveys trustworthiness and security has a strong upper hand over competitors that do not, and that's truer for cemeteries than it is in most other industries. A large quantity of positive reviews conveys this trustworthiness, letting people know at a glance that they can expect a positive experience with your cemetery.

So if you're still not making a point of generating positive reviews, don't wait another second. It might not seem like the most important concern given everything that's going on right now, but it really is. Here are the answers to a few questions you might have:

### Q: Is it rude to ask bereaved families for reviews?

**A:** Not at all, although I completely understand why many cemetery owners and staff worry about this.

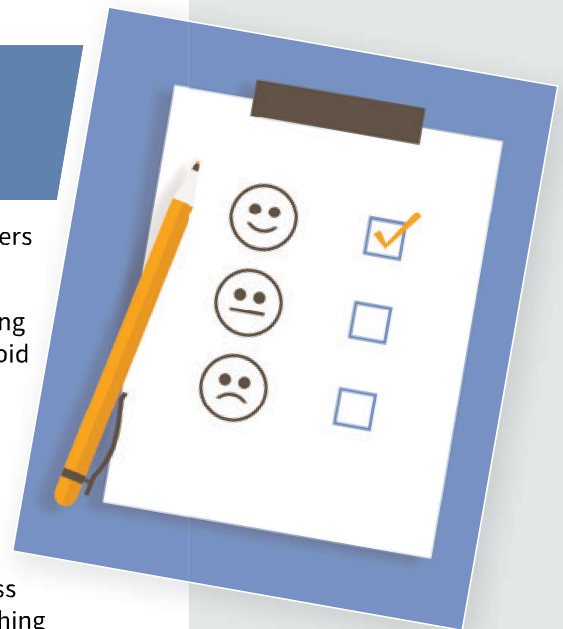
Of course, you never want to seem focused on your own needs when helping families who recently lost a loved one. But that doesn't mean you must avoid the topic of reviews.

The reality is that independent small businesses must generate positive reviews to succeed in the digital age—and that includes your cemetery. By providing you a positive review, they're helping you continue to be a benefit to your community.

Granted, you face a slightly higher "degree of difficulty" than other business owners do in soliciting reviews. If you own an auto repair shop, there's nothing easier than asking a patron for a review; it's quite different to make the same inquiry of a family member following services.

But it's not as different as it might seem. You just have to be much more thoughtful and tactful in asking for reviews than, for example, the auto repair shop owner. Tact is a key aspect of deathcare, of course, so that shouldn't be too hard.

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## Q: How should my staff and I ask for reviews?

**A:** After providing services, get a feel for a particular situation. If the family representative you're working with seems greatly satisfied and likely receptive to providing a review, you might want to (delicately) broach the subject right away.

Most often, it's better to inquire after a bit of time has passed, but that doesn't mean you should let the grass grow under your feet. Presuming that you have some type of aftercare process that includes calls and/or emails, you can incorporate a mild review solicitation in those.

There are also a variety of review solicitation software applications for this purpose. They're customizable for deathcare businesses such as cemeteries, so you can carefully craft the language to engage families in a considerate way.

## Q: What should we do about negative reviews?

**A:** Honestly, the answer to that covers a whole lot of territory—more than I have room to address here in proper detail, but here are the basics:

**Reputation monitoring:** This type of service notifies you of all reviews of your cemetery across the internet in real-time, and it's an absolute must. You must be able to respond to negative reviews (and other client concerns) as quickly as possible. Even a handful of bad reviews can do extraordinary damage to your cemetery's reputation!

**Dealing with negative reviews:** You can often mitigate the damage from negative reviews by responding to them appropriately. If you handle it right, the reviewer could update the review (from negative to positive) or remove it entirely. Always be polite and professional in responding. Your goal is to understand why the reviewer had concerns and respond empathetically.

**Handling fake reviews:** Some negative reviews are legitimate (posted by actual clients), whereas others are fake (posted by trolls, sneaky competitors, or other shady interests).

You sometimes can get fake reviews removed by reaching out to a particular platform (*such as Google, Facebook, or Yelp*). Even if you can't, you can often mitigate the damage by making a public comment that you don't have any record of working with the reviewer.

That's just the tip of the iceberg regarding negative reviews, but it gives you a place to start.

## The Big Picture

Ultimately, the most important thing is that you keep an open mind about actively generating more positive reviews for your cemetery. For many deathcare professionals, that's not an easy transition to make, but you'll find it's an incredibly beneficial one.

Your reputation is critical to defining your cemetery at a time when families are desperate for trustworthy providers, and it will remain a core element of your business once this crisis has passed.