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When You Can't Please Everyone: Dealing with Negative Google Reviews

By Welton Hong

Google reviews, and reviews in general, are powerful online marketing tools. Almost all people (97 percent) read reviews for local businesses before making a decision about goods and services. And they use those reviews as fodder for purchasing decisions; 90 percent say positive reviews impact buying decisions and more than 85 percent say negative reviews do too.

With so much riding on reviews, keeping an eye on them and managing them is synonymous with managing your online reputation. It's a good idea to take an interactive,

proactive approach to reviews on all the major sites, but if you only have bandwidth to tackle one on a regular basis, Google is your best bet.

Google reviews are tied to search engine results, and your deathcare company's Google star rating is often prominently placed in map and Google My Business results. If first impressions are everything, you certainly don't want a poor Google star rating weighing down your business ship. At the same time, even funeral homes with stellar customer service reputations and a bevy of qualified, experienced staff members won't please everyone all of the time.

Less-than-stellar reviews happen occasionally for legitimate reasons, and they happen more often for illegitimate ones. Here's what you need to know to deal with both:



Welton Hong

Dealing with Legitimate Negative Reviews

For this purpose, legitimate negative reviews are defined as any low-star review coming from a person to whom you actually provided service. You might (or might not) feel the content in the review itself is warranted, but it's not a fake review in that it didn't come from a bot, a competitor, or an actual client or family.

Here are some best-practice steps for turning a negative review into a positive word-of-mouth marketing situation:

1. Start by reaching out privately to the individual to resolve the issue. Sometimes, low-star reviews are a result of misunderstandings, and taking the step to make things right can shift the wind in your favor. Once you resolve the situation and the individual seems satisfied with the outcome, consider asking if they will update the review. When potential clientele see this activity on review sites, they know that you're a company backed by caring, professional people who want to do a good job for those they serve.
2. Next, leave a public message letting the reviewer (and others) know that you have reached out. This way, if the person never responds or a resolution isn't reached, other people see that you are responding to situations and care.
3. Finally, if all else fails, leave a response to the review with your side of the story. Always take a respectful, tactful tone, but let others know the truth about what services you provided or how the situation occurred, especially if it was not your or your employee's fault.

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Let's Chat

By Kristan Dean

Every time we get on a plane, a voice comes on to tell us, please remember to put on your own oxygen mask before you try to assist others. What happens when we take this instruction off the airplane? Are you saying: I get it. It makes sense. I must make sure that I am ok first so that I am better able to help others. Now, what happens when you hear the question: How can you be more kind?

Are you thinking about all of the ways you can be kinder to others? I am right there with you. Regardless of how many times we hear it on an airplane or life itself reminds us that we cannot give our best to others if we do not make sure we are ok first...we do not always take heed. Proof: Even with this logic at the front of your mind, I bet when you read the words—how can I be more kind—that your mind bucks and takes you back to all of the ways you can be more kind to others again.

Why do the instructions we hear on the plane, the ones that make perfect sense to us off the plane, fall flat in real life? There are many reasons. The first that comes to my mind is when we see the question—how can I be more kind—the voice within us, the one that wants us to be the best person we can be...pipes in...then our brains relay the ways that we can be kinder to others while it mutes the parts where our inner voice tells us how to get the tools we need.

How does this happen? Aren't our voices within and our thoughts the same thing? Short answer: They can be. The problem is: we give up control to our thoughts because we think that our brains have the best answers. They are powerful. Our minds can bring us to amazing answers.

The problem is that they can also stop us in our tracks

with loops of what ifs and worry. Which leads us to the question: How can we be our kindest self if our minds are looping in worry and what ifs? Worse: how can we even think about being kind if our thoughts are always berating us for the mistakes we make?

Are you asking...What is the oxygen mask for that or how do we stop the thought madness? If you are like me the oxygen mask your brain needs is peace. The question is how do we get peace into our minds when they are anything but peaceful? Please tell me your thoughts. Let's help each other get the tools we need to empower our minds so that we may be our kindest and best selves.

Please reach out to me by email me at kristan@mooneytunco.com or give me a ring at 781-331-5308. Prayers you are having a beautiful day when you read this column.

In 2000 Kristan Dean began working with her family to bring Merry Christmas From Heaven® to all who need the gifts' message of Comfort, Love, and Faith. Today she is the Vice President of Marketing and one of the primary members of her family's Bereavement Ministry.

Thanks, in great part, to the thousands of funeral directors and retailers nationwide who make Merry Christmas From Heaven® a part of their communities, countless numbers of families reach out to their family every year. Their bereavement ministry helps families realize that those in Heaven live forever in our hearts. Their love is with us always.

Prior to Mooney TunCo, Inc. Kristan worked with companies nationwide helping them build revenues by creating greater sales opportunities through the use of sales intelligence and marketing alignment.

Blogs Funeral Home & Cemetery News Contributors share insights and exchange ideas.
www.nomispublications.com

Responding to reviews makes your company seem more human in an industry that thrives on human contact and care. But do remember that sympathies may automatically lean to the clientele when others consider a deathcare services review, so be kind and careful in how you respond.

Dealing With Fake Negative Reviews

While it certainly hurts to see that someone wasn't happy with your services, it can be even more frustrating to face fake reviews. And they're more common than you might think: About 75 percent of people have seen one or more fake review online in the past year, and that only accounts for fake reviews that could be identified as such.

Why would anyone leave fake reviews? They can be attacks from competitors willing to engage in black-hat marketing tactics, internet trolls who simply don't have better things to do, or someone who has a grudge against your company, (or you, or one of your employees). But you don't have to sit passively and take these attacks. Here's how to fight back:

1. First, conduct some due diligence. Make sure this is an actual fake review. Remember, just because you don't like it doesn't necessarily make it fake.
2. If it is fake, leave a response to the review noting that you don't have a record of serving this person or asking the reviewer to contact you so you can respond to the situation. Obviously, you're not waiting on a fake reviewer to reach out, but taking the high road in a public forum lets others see that you're professional and care about providing quality service.
3. Flag the review and report it as fake. You can do this via your Google My Business dashboard.
4. Ask other people to flag the review too. Google doesn't even look at the review until five or more people have flagged it, so ask your employees or trusted family members to log into their own Google accounts for this purpose. It only takes a minute to flag a false review.

Flagging the review doesn't automatically mean it will be removed. Google looks at the review and decides whether to remove it. But following the steps above and ensuring you've done everything you can to publicly show you're handling things on your end can help impact Google's decision.

Moving on From Negative Reviews

Not every negative review becomes a positive opportunity, and not every fake review goes away. And that's okay, because your star level on Google doesn't need to be perfect to inspire trust and confidence in individuals and families looking for

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death care services.

Instead of dwelling on the negative review that can't be changed, do what you can to foster good reviews to tip the scales in your favor. Tactfully encourage families who were satisfied with your services to leave reviews.

When it comes to being found online or fostering trust in consumers, having a lot of reviews that are mostly (but not necessarily all) positive is a more powerful position than having just a few reviews, even if they're all perfect.

Welton Hong is the founder of Ring Ring Marketing® and a leading expert in creating case generation from online to the phone line. He is the author of Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes. For more information, visit www.FuneralHomeProfis.com.