

OLDHAM, ROBERTS & POWELL FUNERAL HOME



Terrell Cobb of Oldham, Roberts and Powell Funeral Home, Richmond, KY is shown taking delivery of a 2018 Chrysler Pacifica First Call Van, purchased from John Muster of Muster Coaches.

Muster Coaches 1-800-274-3619 Calhoun, KY

Struggling To Get More At Need Calls?



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The Bereavement Cruise announces 2020 Dates



FOUNTAIN INN, SC— *Journeys of Hope Healing and Health, LLC* has announced that The Bereavement Cruise IV is set to sail April 16-26, 2020. The cruise will depart from Port Canaveral, Florida on Royal Caribbean's *Harmony of The Seas*. Ports of call include: Philipsburgh, St. Maarten, San Juan, Puerto Rico and Perfect Day at CocoCay, Bahamas. The Bereavement Cruise Conference will take place on the days that the ship is out to sea and will be held in a private, state-of-the-art conference center located on board. The special programming, available just for the group, will be led by top experts in the field of grief who will come from across the world to provide workshops, group activity sessions and small group meetings during the cruise.

The event includes a special night of remembrance with a walk to remember on the top deck, under the stars. There are a limited number of spots available for guests who wish to bury their loved ones at sea in a special, private ceremony provided by the ship's captain and staff.

Guests will have plenty of time to relax, spend time with new friends, and enjoy the three beautiful ports of call, as well as off ship excursions and all the amenities of this spectacular ship. The bereavement cruise is a healing opportunity for those who are grieving. It does not matter how much time has passed since the loss.

Almika Pryor, owner and licensed funeral director of **Priority Funeral Experience**, located in Houston, TX, will be joining the team of grief experts participating in the Spring 2020 Bereavement Cruise. Mrs. Pryor will be the first funeral director to attend The Bereavement Cruise. In addition, Mr. and Mrs. Pryor have generously offered to sponsor the attendance and participation for a grieving family that their funeral home has served.

A second, four-night cruise is planned for the fall of 2020. Visit www.j3hhh.com for details. Contact Glen Lord at 603-791-0999, glen5189@yahoo.com, or Linda Findlay at 315-725-6132, lf6643@yahoo.com, for more information about how you can sponsor a family or pro-

How to Respond to Negative Reviews on Yelp

By *Welton Hong*

You pride yourself on delivering high-quality, compassionate service, but you know the saying about pleasing all of the people all of the time. If not, I'll summarize: It's impossible.

No matter how hard you try or how great your service is, you almost certainly will get negative reviews on occasion, whether on Yelp or other sites. But businesses can't afford to shrug these reviews off as part of the business process.

Why not, if they're inevitable? Because a large majority of the population begins any type of purchase decision online, and about 85 percent of consumers say they trust online reviews just as much as recommendations from friends or family.

Leaving negative reviews untouched can lend them legitimacy. It also means you pass up the opportunity to turn a challenge into a positive online marketing opportunity.

Here's what businesses in the death care industry should do when they see those one-star or two-star reviews on Yelp:

First, take a moment to cool down. It's not easy to do, especially when you're sure the negative review was undeserved, but rising blood pressure and the color in your cheeks do you no favors when you respond to negative reviews.

I'm not saying to sleep on it; you should respond to negative reviews quickly. But you might want to step away from the computer, take some deep breaths, and get a drink of water. Once you're sure you can respond with logical facts and the excellent customer service you want to be known for, return to the review.

Next, contact the reviewer privately to see if you can resolve the issue offline.

Log into your Yelp business account at Biz.Yelp.com, click Reviews on the left-hand menu. Find the negative review and click on Direct Message under that review.

Thank the reviewer for the feedback and let the person know you will call right away to address the situation. This serves two purposes:

Consumers venting in the form of a review will want



Welton Hong



Let's Chat

By Kristan Dean

"If I am cremating, why do I want anything other than direct, simple, cremation?" While I hope that this question seems odd to you, I believe that some, possibly many, in our industry continue to believe that most cremation families only want a direct cremation. Can you imagine me asking, "If all I want is a burial why do I need anything other than a burial plot?" Of course not.

So why do so many believe that a cremation family's first choice is to want direct cremation and that it is our job to show them that they want and need more? Do we think that all cremation families care about is price? Is it because we think cremation families want us to do as little as possible for them? While I applaud us for understanding that cost can be a factor, I cannot imagine how hard it is to think that a family wants you to do as little as possible because I believe, scratch that, I *know* that you want to do everything that you can to help the families that you serve.

To be honest it never occurred to me that anyone in our industry would ever think that a family's first choice would be direct cremation. I always thought that this was a service you provided because you know how hard it is on a family when they cannot afford anything else. I never imagined that a family would choose direct cremation if they were able to do more so it never occurred to me that anyone would think that direct cremation is what most cremation families want.

So why are the first few results from my google search for cremation MA, I am in Massachusetts, links to direct cremation and how much this service costs? To be honest I am not sure. This is why I am asking you. Do you think that cost is the biggest, dare I say only, concern for crema-

tion families? Worse, is it because you think that cremation families do not value the services that your funeral home or cemetery provides?

Are these some of the reasons why you think it is your job to show cremation families why they want and need more than direct, simple, cremation? I would like to suggest that this thinking is backwards. What happens if you believe that cremation families want and deserve your very best? That they understand how important a service is and that they want one just as much as your burial families?

It is possible that our own assumptions about cremation families are *why* so many of them say, "All I want is a direct, simple, cremation." Ok, this is probably not the only reason, though I imagine it is one of the reasons, and it is probably a big one. So how do we change it? Maybe the first step is just admitting that we are a part of the problem. Once we do that, I think it will be easier to see that this assumption is wrong because cremation families need you and they want your best.

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.

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indeed, reach out to that person so they know you're acting on the complaint! This also puts your effort on record, should you need to report the review to Yelp later.

Next, assuming the review came from a family you actually served (as opposed to a truly fake review), call the family to see what you can do to deal with the issue.

If you're able to address the issue offline, your negative review could transform into a five-star review. A large number of reviews can be mitigated just by reaching out and resolving the issue. Many people later leave follow-up reviews at higher star levels, noting that the business made a mistake but took actions to make it right.

However, not everyone is amenable to an apology or an effort to resolve issues, and some reviews are simply entirely fake. (You obviously can't resolve an issue when you didn't provide any service to begin with.)

In these cases, click on the Public Comment button under the review on Yelp, to share your side of the story, and it will be displayed publicly directly under the negative review.

This is critical. When people see negative reviews and the owner never responded, they're simply going to assume the reviews are real. Regardless of whether a negative review is real or fake, make sure any public comment you make is professional.

Remember that families or individuals considering your services in the future may see your responses. It's important to carry your brand message and tone through all online communication, even when you're frustrated by a poor review.

If the review is clearly false, flag it for review by Yelp. Click on the three dots next to the top of the review to report it. You can report reviews for factors such as hate speech, containing false information or being driven by a conflict of interest.

Always try to handle the issue yourself, first privately and then (if still necessary) publicly, before flagging a review. If you skip ahead to flagging, it's less likely anything will be done about the review. When you try to resolve the issue first, Yelp sees your paper trail and can make a better determination about whether the review should be removed.

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.FuneralHomeProfus.com.