

Landing That **5-Star**



Convincing Clients to Post Publicly About Your Business

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MORE THAN 90% OF CONSUMERS say online reviews impact their buying decisions; and the costlier and more serious the purchase, the more reviews matter. Fewer than 10% of consumers will give businesses a chance if they see a 1-star or 2-star rating.

Deathcare businesses need online reviews to support digital reputation management and marketing. And while you don't need a perfect 5-star rating, you *do* need those reviews to trend positive overall.

Someone might be willing to overlook a lack of reviews or even buy in the face of 2-star ratings if they're only shelling out for a \$5 hamburger. That's far less likely when individuals or families are shopping for big-ticket, forever items such as burial plots or headstones.

Check out the "do this, not that" advice that follows to find out what you should—and shouldn't—do to increase the number of positive reviews for your firm.

Know Reviews Are Important...

Don't Assume People Won't Care

Start by understanding the importance of reviews for almost any business. About 9 in 10 people say they only buy products or services after reading reviews first.

Review

by Welton Hong



They might move on to a competitor if they can't find reviews about your business.

About 90% of people also start with search engines like Google when considering a significant purchase. Did you know having numerous positive Google reviews can help you connect with searchers? Reviews can help your cemetery show up in Local Pack results or catch the eye of browsers who see your 4-star or 5-star ratings.

Ask for Reviews... Don't Simply Hope People Will Leave Them

You know who leaves reviews without being asked? Mostly the few people who are upset or not satisfied with your product or service.

If deathcare businesses are passive about asking for reviews, they may find themselves with an inordinate



number of negative reviews.

You might have served hundreds of families who were quite satisfied with your services, but potential clientele won't know if four out of your five online reviews are negative.

People who are happy with your business are usually also happy to leave reviews. They simply don't always think about it. More than 60% of consumers say they're likely to leave a review if the business asks them to do so.

Prompt people to leave reviews by mentioning how it supports your business, or include a polite request and a link in any email you send them.

Answer All Negative Reviews... Don't Ignore Them

Fewer than a quarter of businesses respond to all their negative reviews. By taking the time to respond to all the negative reviews,

you can rise above the competition by demonstrating how much your business cares about clientele.

Responding to reviews—in a professional and tactful manner—also lets you tell your side of a story. Consumers who read reviews like to see responses to negative claims because it demonstrates transparency on the part of the business and helps put out-of-context claims into context.

In short, your response to negative reviews can provide consumers with

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important data that helps them decide whether they can trust you with their final arrangements.

Encourage People to Leave Reviews Where They're Comfortable...

Don't Rely Only on Google

Google has the market cornered on online reviews. It hosts more than 70% of online reviews for businesses—the second-place contender is Yelp, with only about 6% of reviews.

This math seems to indicate deathcare firms can ask for Google reviews and leave it at that. However, not everyone likes Google, and some consumers are wary of using or engaging with any Google product. When asking for reviews, give a couple of choices so you don't lose out on a review simply because someone has a distaste for the search engine giant.

Build Reviews Organically... Don't Engage in Questionable Practices

Because positive reviews are so important for online marketing and reputation management, businesses occasionally attempt to cheat the process. Here are a few methods businesses have used to increase positive reviews:

- **Posting fake positive reviews:** Some people sign up for fake accounts and post fake customer reviews.
- **Paying for positive reviews:** Other businesses reward customers or others for leaving positive reviews.
- **"Gating" reviews:** Some businesses "screen" reviews by asking customers how they would rate the service or product. If the rating is high, the customer is routed to Google to leave a review. If the feedback is bad, the

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customer is routed to a private questionnaire to leave feedback that no one else can see.

These are all questionable practices deathcare firms should avoid. At the very least, they can make your business seem untrustworthy. At worst, they could lead to all your Google reviews being removed as a penalty for going against Google's review policy.

Yes, the more reviews you have, the better. But you should be patient and gain those reviews organically by encouraging real clientele to leave them.

Flag Google Reviews That Don't Align with Google Policy...

Don't Fight with the Reviewer

Businesses aren't the only ones that have to attend to review policies. Most review sites require that reviewers be actual clients of the business in question and leave reviews that are free of profanity and relevant to the business's services or products.

Things Google doesn't allow include:

- **Offensive content:** Reviews can't include profanity or obscenities.
- **Off-topic content:** Reviewers should address the actual services or products provided by the company. Someone shouldn't, for example, leave a bad review of a retail store simply because they think the building is ugly.
- **Duplicate reviews:** The same person can't launch a campaign to bring your star level down by posting numerous reviews.
- **Fake reviews:** Other businesses or people who have not worked with your business shouldn't leave reviews for you.

When you find reviews that fit one of the above scenarios, it can be tempting to argue with the reviewer. Instead, consider taking the high road.

Leave a response that lets the reviewer (and other readers) know the review violates Google guidelines and ask them to take it down. Then flag the content so Google can review it and hopefully delete it. ☒

Welton Hong is the founder of Ring Ring Marketing and the author of *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*.

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