



GEORGIA CEMETERY ADVISOR

GCA's e-newsletter



President's Message

I am honored to serve as President of the Georgia Cemetery Association

We had a successful convention in Cartersville, Georgia and I am looking forward to what the GCA has to offer this 2019-2020 season. We are hard at work on workshops, seminars, and an exciting combined convention in Atlanta! Thank you for your membership!

Nick Startup

President

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Cemetery Business
Success

GCA CONVENTION 2019



Top-notch
Speakers

Making Connections



Vendors
Dedicated to
taking your
business to
the next level



Unmatched
Education



HEADED TO ATLANTA 2020!

The GCA Hits Hot 'Lanta for its next Convention

The GCA will be partnering with North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and the SCCFA for an epic convention and expo in Georgia's capital city next year. Right in the heart of Atlanta, we will gather to experience outstanding speakers, see what's new in our

industry, and find products that will change the way you do business and give you the competitive edge! ***Do not miss this opportunity to take your business further than it's ever been!***

SEMINARS 2019-2020

The GCA is hard at work on new educational seminars that that will be announced in the coming issues of the Advisor. Stay tuned!

WORKSHOP WEDNESDAYS

Our web-based video series is a great opportunity to learn more about hot-topics in our industry in the comfort of your own office or home.

This series is taught by industry professionals who are experienced in the subject matter. You will gain applicable knowledge that will allow you to take your business to the next level.

The GCA will be announcing its next Workshop in the August Newsletter, so keep reading!



CEMETERY BUSINESS SUCCESS

Welton Hong

RingRingMarketing.com

Don't Be Bashful When Asking for Reviews

I want to tell you about one marketing initiative cemetery owners *really* need to do if they want to ramp up their revenue now and in the future. It's also the one thing many deathcare professionals don't especially *want* to do—which probably isn't a coincidence. If more of them felt comfortable doing it, it wouldn't be such a challenge.

Which is too bad, because once they get the hang of it, it's really not hard at all. So, I hope you're asking, "What do I need to do?"

You need to get used to *asking the families you serve for reviews*.

I know. For some of you, I might as well be encouraging you to spend a day at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Asking someone to review your cemetery feels like you're back in high school and asking someone for a date.

On the other hand, in the deathcare realm, at least you do a lot better than most funeral home owners. I've worked with many who treat soliciting reviews as akin to pulling teeth.

Regardless, in this digital age, the *online* reputation of local businesses has overtaken *offline* reputation—and by that, I mean community word of mouth—in importance.

I recently searched for Google reviews of cemeteries in 10 American cities with metro area populations over 200,000. You would expect numerous cemeteries in each of these major metro areas to have close to 100 reviews by now. But that's not the case.

Granted, some cities had at least one big fish, sometimes two. Military sites generally do the best. For example, Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver had an impressive 97 Google reviews in summer 2019.

Regardless, in most areas, the most-reviewed cemeteries averaged somewhere between 15 and 25 reviews. And again, those were the *most-reviewed* ones. Once you got down to the fourth or fifth in the list, we're talking reviews in the single digits.

This is understandable to a certain degree. Many deathcare businesses still don't prioritize aggressive marketing in general. They're less inclined to promote themselves online.

Granted, people in general are less inclined to take it upon themselves to review a cemetery that interred their loved one than they would be to review a hotel or restaurant. It's just not something that quickly comes to mind.

But that also goes to the very point I'm making: If you ran a hotel or restaurant, you wouldn't have to be aggressive about soliciting reviews. You would get them whether you want them or not.

When you're running a cemetery, you must take the initiative. If you don't set goals for positive review generation and stick to them, you'll never hit the quality and quantity "tipping points" that will make your firm dominate local competitors in search results.

Even worse, if you're sitting back and being entirely passive about online reviews, about 80 percent of time you'll either be receiving no reviews or negative ones.

Families don't necessarily think to submit a review of a cemetery, especially when the passing of their loved one is still fresh in their minds. You could provide the most amazing service in the history of the profession, but it won't necessarily occur to the family to review you.

That's why you must get comfortable with the notion of reaching out. Do so thoughtfully, of course; it's also obviously a good idea to only inquire among families who clearly felt very positively about the grounds, the particular gravesite or mausoleum, and your service, of course. (If you're not entirely sure, you should wait for the next one. A severely negative review can do more harm than 10 or 15 positive ones.)

This is also a good place to note that Yelp, despite being one of the biggest names in consumer reviews, prohibits business owners from directly soliciting reviews. You could try, of course, but if you got caught, Yelp can hit you with some serious penalties.

So I suggest you focus on Google reviews and Facebook reviews, which are really just as powerful as Yelp for deathcare online reputation anyway. If you give it a shot, I think you will be very pleased with the results.

“In this digital age, the *online* reputation of local businesses has overtaken *offline* reputation”
