

Three Key Online Credibility Mistakes You Might Be Making

—and How to Fix Them

By Welton Hong

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Trustworthiness is a foundational aspect of virtually any successful business—and obviously, that’s especially true in death care. Families need to know their loved ones will be cared for properly from the time of passing through final disposition.

To establish that trust, cremation providers can’t just *say* they’re trustworthy—they need to *show* it. That’s where credibility comes in.

In this context, I’m specifically referring to *online* credibility, which is somewhat different than offline (or “real world”) credibility. When it comes to attracting cremation clientele over the Internet, what ultimately matters is how your business communicates its trustworthiness there.

When people visit your website, do they get the impression you have a legitimate, professional operation? Do they see real people (you and your staff) there, people they feel they can trust? Are you delivering informational content, indicating your knowledge of cremation and recent innovations? Are you displaying testimonials and lots of positive reviews? Do you have a business profile video that conveys your professionalism?

If not, you might well be facing credibility issues with your business. As more people every year go online to choose among

cremation providers, the businesses that exhibit trustworthiness will capture the lion’s share of their local market.

Here are some of the biggest mistakes I’ve seen cremation businesses make, along with how to rectify them:

You’re Camouflaging Your Experience

This actually happens all the time: More than a few cremation providers go out of their way to conceal their own extensive experience and history.

It typically occurs when a long-established funeral home creates a separate direct cremation arm to compete in that value-priced segment. It doesn’t want this direct cremation spinoff to reflect negatively on its distinguished funeral home (and its higher-priced “cremation with a service” offerings), so it pretends the two entities are essentially unaffiliated.

It sounds sensible at first. It’s also usually a bad idea.

Unless your direct cremation service is so value-focused that it’s truly the lowest-priced option in the area—which is hard to do, considering the bargain-basement prices some operations advertise—you can’t compete just on price. You need to impress online searchers in other areas, such as legitimacy, professionalism, and trustworthiness.

This is where the extensive history of your funeral home comes in. Visitors don't trust a website that seems anonymous, with no pictures of real people on it. They don't trust a site that has no "About Us" page detailing an actual history.

That doesn't mean your direct cremation website must (or should) replicate your funeral home site, but you also shouldn't be overly worried about the association. If you've been providing cremations for a long time, *say so*.

Make sure the visitor knows you're not a fly-by-night operation or just a "facilitator" of cremations, instead of an actual death care professional with a crematorium. Include a robust "About Us" page that showcases you and your staff. Tell your story and why you're the best choice in your area for cremation.

You're Not Generating Enough Reviews

You need reviews, reviews, reviews—and more reviews.

Yes, I've taken the "location, location, location" mantra of real estate agents even further. And yes, I know it sounds a bit silly. But that's how important reviews are for establishing your credibility in 2018 and beyond.

In this digital age, generating a wealth of positive reviews is one of the most powerful ways to improve credibility, improve search engine optimization (SEO), and convert online visitors into clientele.

I meet funeral directors who believe online reviews are intended for other industries, not death care. They don't think families check out reviews for cremation providers. Some ponder aloud whether it's distasteful to even inquire about reviews from satisfied clientele.

While I understand where these concerns come from, I promise you, there's nothing wrong with pursuing online reviews. Of course, it should be done with more nuance than in other industries, but it should still be embraced.

If your business only has a handful of reviews or a mediocre overall rating, that's a big problem. Great reviews (and testimonials) establish credibility, which remains an important consideration for potential clientele—even for direct cremation.

As for testimonials, keep in mind that these are most effective if visitors can see they're from real people (and families) who appreciated the service you provided. Always make sure to get permission to post a testimonial. When you do, try to use full names.

Some sites create fictional testimonials, and these are pretty obvious, especially when they only include a first name or just a first name and an initial. A full name conveys credibility.

Your Website Is Thin on Content

The more high-quality, original content a website has, the stronger its credibility. And here, I'm referring to credibility not only with people but with Google and other search engines.

If your website is thin on content, it will have trouble converting visitors into clients. What you really want is to stand out from your local competition, and great content makes that happen.

At the very least, you need a moderate amount of content to look legitimate. If the pages comprising the site only have a few paragraphs of boilerplate material, you've evinced no credibility with visitors. They'll "bounce" (leave the site) immediately.

But a dearth of content is just as problematic for SEO. When your SEO is strong, you rank higher in local results for "cremation" and related keywords in your area. That's huge, especially with more people using mobile devices now. Only a few results show up without scrolling on a mobile device, so it's critical to rank highly.

Now, I realize you're not in the content business. You won't want to commit staff resources toward creating website copy and blog posts to your site. And I actually agree with that.

The best content, obviously, is typically provided by professional writers. You also take a credibility hit if written copy isn't well written, grammatical, and free of typographical errors, so it's sensible to turn to a professional. It's definitely a wise use of your marketing budget—and hopefully you have one of those, because that's necessary these days as well.


Also remember that "content" isn't only text. Images can be content. Videos can be content. Infographics can be content. Anything related to death care, in whatever form, can be the basis for your content strategy.

Conclusion

I know I've given you a lot to consider, but in today's highly competitive climate, these really are the steps cremation providers need to take to succeed.

From a business perspective, the industry is very different than it used to be. That's partially due to the rapidly rising popularity of cremation, but it's also due to the far greater influence of technology in today's world.

We're never going back to a time in which people researched services in printed Yellow Pages or simply asked their friends. Referrals through families and houses of faith now have less influence as well. As you know, cremation rates are higher in areas where people typically don't have roots and strong community connections.

Your present and future clientele are turning to the Internet to choose among you and your competitors. The credibility you display online will determine whether you get those cases. 



Welton Hong is the founder of Ring Ring Marketing® (www.RingRingMarketing.com) 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.