

7 Notable Marketing Statistics



... and What They Mean for Your Funeral Home

I probably don't need to remind you of what author Mark Twain said about statistics, and even if I *did* remind you, at first it seems like too cliché a way to kick off this article.

Then again, while the quote is often attributed to Twain, it didn't originate with him. In fact, he claimed that when he first heard it, it was attributed to British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. (Despite there being no evidence of Disraeli ever having done so.)

So now that I *might* have told you something new, I don't feel so bad about dusting off this old relic:

"There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics."

Of course, Twain (or Disraeli or whoever actually conceived this observation) would have been shocked to see the degree to which statistics bend the truth in contemporary society, particularly in three specific fields. Obviously,

I'm referring to:

1. **Politics.**
2. **Fantasy football.**
3. **Digital marketing.**

For the purposes of this article, let's stick to No. 3. And yes, even as someone who makes a living by helping funeral homes with their marketing (much of it online), I must admit you'll find a lot of questionable statistics out there.

They're not bogus, per se, but they're definitely misleading. Let's be frank: A large part of marketing is promoting a particular viewpoint. It's not too hard to bend certain statistics to make them seem more (or sometimes less) influential than they actually are.

But that doesn't mean statistics

should be ignored. It's just that we have to critically differentiate between the ones that matter and the ones that don't.

That's especially true for the death-care industry, because many of the stats you'll find on a general Google search won't relate specifically to the services a funeral home provides. This is one area where our industry really is different from either e-commerce or standard brick-and-mortar businesses such as retail or hospitality.

With that said, certain recent online marketing statistics actually do fit the bill for funeral homes, so let's cover seven of them – along with an explanation of what each one means to you as a funeral professional:

1 Your bounce rate increases 50% if your webpages take two seconds or more to load.

This one is critical for any type of business that generates leads from a website. “Bounce” is when someone immediately leaves your website without taking any action whatsoever.

As I’ve always said, a funeral home website isn’t just an online home for your business – it’s a marketing tool. You want to keep your bounce rate as low as possible, which means ensuring your page load speed is fast. If you’re not sure, speak with your webmaster (or whoever handles the technical aspects of your website).

2 Voice search currently accounts for about 15% of all searches, but that's growing VERY quickly.

Voice-controlled smart speakers have been flying off the shelves over the past year, and Americans of all ages are getting used to asking Google, Siri and Alexa for all sorts of information.

Some analysts believe voice will account for close to half of all searches by the end of 2020. That means you shouldn’t wait to optimize your funeral home website for voice search.

3 U.S. adoption of smart speakers is forecast to reach 55% by 2022.

I’m sticking with the voice search topic for a moment so it really sinks in. Right now, only about 13% of households own smart speakers, but that’s more than *double* the number from a year earlier.

Older Americans particularly love the utility of using smart speakers with screens. They can easily video chat with loved ones, pull up recipes (with video guidance) in the kitchen, get reminders about birthdays and so on. Voice search will be a huge part of the market in just a few years, so now is the time to act.

4 Video content has been shown to more than DOUBLE website traffic.

Funeral homes are missing out on a great opportunity when they don’t

include video on their websites – and this remains the case for most independent firms today.

Obviously, all content on your website must be discreet and reverent, but there’s no reason you can’t have short videos introducing yourself and your staff. If you do volunteer events in your community, post videos of those, too. You bolster credibility and social proof while adding SEO-rich video content to your site.

5 Over 90% of search engine users haven't made up their mind when they type in a search query.

That might sound obvious at first – why would they be searching if they’d already made up their minds – but it’s actually not.

People often have a particular business in mind when they do a search, but that doesn’t mean they’re rock-solid on using that provider. They might want to take a look at reviews or see how the website looks before moving forward.

How your funeral home presents itself online determines whether you get the call. You could lose a potential call by having bad reviews, too few reviews, or an outdated, nonsecure site.

By contrast, if you have a great site, you very well might get the call when a searcher discovers problems when looking up one of your competitors. That’s why you always need to put your best foot forward.

6 About 85% of clicks to a website still come from organic listings on search engine result pages.

To be clear, that’s no knock on pay-per-click ads, which can be very powerful in driving traffic to your funeral home site, especially in the short term while your search engine optimization efforts gain steam over a number of months.

I’m including this stat simply as a reminder that organic (aka “free”) listings remain incredibly important to generating calls off the internet. Just because you’re running PPC ads doesn’t mean you can ignore your SEO efforts.

SEO is far from dead – people still tend to click on an organic listing before a paid one. That’s why it’s so critical to improve your website’s search ranking overall and to regularly appear in the Google 3-Pack of featured funeral homes in your area. You only get there by improving (and maintaining) your SEO.

Every year, more people decide on a burial or cremation provider by looking up information on the internet. Modern technology has made that easier than ever. You can’t afford to let your SEO slide.

7 Google completely dominates U.S. search market share with 93% of mobile search and 88% of desktop search.

That doesn’t mean you should completely ignore other search engines such as Bing (about 5%) or Yahoo (about 3%). But it does mean Google must always be your first priority – and second priority, and third, etc. Only start concerning yourself with other search engines once you’ve completely locked down your digital marketing strategies for Google.

Are there benefits to the other two? Sure. You can run ads much cheaper on them, just as it’s much cheaper to run ads in a community newsletter than in the *New York Times*.

And it’s also true that Bing benefits from being the default search engine for Microsoft Windows computers, so some consumers (particularly seniors) are less likely to switch search engines.

So, a comprehensive online marketing strategy for a funeral home can include Bing and Yahoo, just like a diverse investment portfolio can include some oddballs and longshots.

But you should never take away from your focus on Google to concern yourself with those small fries. If you’ll forgive a callback to the fantasy football mention, that’s like drafting a kicker before a quarterback.

Make sure everything you’re doing ensures your best possible visibility on Google. Once that’s set, you can see about squeezing some return on investment out of the others. •