

Authenticity, 70/20/10 Rule

MANY OF US MIGHT BE A BIT SKITTISH about planning for 2021 in light of how 2020 turned all of our plans upside down. Taking a cautious approach to anything as you plan for next year is understandable.

But going into 2021 without preparing to market your funeral home, cemetery, or cremation firm is tantamount to saying you don't *want* or *need* new clientele next year. I'm pretty sure that's not the case.

By understanding current marketing trends and the ones that are likely to continue into the near future, you can cautiously craft your marketing plan while supporting growth for your business without putting too much on the line.

What will work for you depends on the needs of your business and your target audience. Below are five tips to help you make safe investments in your 2021 marketing. But prepare to include some risk. If you perform the research, gathering, and analyzing of your data, you might discover where it could be beneficial to your bottom line to take a chance or to press more boldly into certain marketing channels or methods.

2021

1. Gear up to experiment with 70/20/10 marketing

Google the 70/20/10 rule of marketing and you'll find a couple of definitions. Google used a version of this rule that said:

- 70 percent of your content should add value for the reader and position your firm as an authority;
- 20 percent should be relevant content from others; and
- 10 percent should be promotional, specifically highlighting your goods and services.

That's actually a good interpretation of the 70/20/10 rule and one that can be easily implemented in deathcare marketing. That type of split in the content you share on social media and your blog helps keep consumers engaged and ensures they come back when they are ready to pre-plan or are experiencing a need.

But the definition I'm talking about for your 2021 marketing plan is actually that which is used by Coca-Cola. According to the brand's Content 2020 video series, it broke its marketing budget into a 70/20/10 split explained this way:

- About 70 percent of your marketing resources (time, money, effort) in this model go toward what you know works. It's the type of content, SEO, and advertising that's already driving at least some conversions.
- About 20 percent of your marketing resources should go to innovations—to improving what works. For example, if you know pre-need content works well for your audience, you might use part of your marketing budget to invest in video content on that topic to reach more consumers. If you're seeing positive trends on Instagram, you might start investing more time on that platform.
- Finally, about 10 percent of your budget can be used on higher-risk marketing. This is where you test new ideas or try engaging on a different social network or with media you haven't used before, such as podcasts or audio. Just be sure to keep your brand reputation in mind and don't swing so far out of scope that you risk alienating much of your core target audience.

Both concepts of 70/20/10 marketing can help you approach 2021 with a solid plan that works well in an uncertain environment.

2. Invest in video (or simply more video)

In 2020, more than 80 percent of businesses reported using video in their marketing efforts. That's almost a 20 percent increase from the year before.

Wider adoption of video isn't surprising. More than 60 percent of people would rather watch online videos than watch content on their televisions, and people retain more information about the message when they get it via video when compared to text. Perhaps that's one reason why 72 percent of people would rather learn about products via video.

By 2022, experts predict that video will account for more than 80 percent of internet traffic. That's 17 times the presence video had in 2017, which points to exponential growth for this marketing channel. If you're not investing in video, your message could get lost in the crowd within a few years.

Deathcare firms can start small with video. Create short videos using just your smartphone for Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, or other social sites; all you have to do is provide basic explanations, introduce yourself, or share something engaging about your day.

When you're ready, move on to longer videos for YouTube and your website. Some ideas would be to create explainer videos that talk about the steps for pre-planning or a virtual tour of your funeral home.

3. Don't stop investing in SEO

You're going to hear rumors that search is dead—that keywords and other onsite components no longer matter. Those types of declarations have been floating around for almost a decade, but guess what? Search is still alive and kicking, and it will be for quite some time.

Almost 70 percent of all online activity starts in search engines, and SEO drives 1,000 percent more traffic than social media does. With organic search accounting for more than half of all website traffic across the globe, it's obvious that keyword research, on-page content, and other SEO measures remain highly relevant.

4. Continue to build your email list

Email marketing might be an oldie, but it's still a goodie. It continues to drive impressive average returns of \$32 to \$42 per dollar spent, which makes it a very sound business decision.

Another reason to continue building your email list in 2021 is stability. In a world rocked by news cycles—and on the internet where various platforms control what you can and cannot post and who sees your content—it's important to invest in what you can control.

You don't own your social profiles and followers; you can't entirely control what happens with search engine results pages, or SERPs, or how Google will rank your pages.

Presumably, you do own—and do control—your website and your email list. If your social profiles are locked or deleted tomorrow, if a platform goes down for a few days, if your organic search rank plummets, you can still reach out to your audience via email.

Continue building a strong subscriber base by offering valuable downloads or other resources in exchange for email addresses. Deathcare firms might offer ebooks and checklists to educate people about planning memorials, veteran burials, pre-planning, or cremation, for example. You could also offer free webinars, in-person events, or access to special service packages for those who sign up.

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5. Create plans for showing up consistently and authentically

No matter what happens with your business or the world in general in 2021, have a plan for showing up regularly and authentically on your marketing channels.

Close to 90 percent of all consumers rate authenticity as a key factor in whether they choose to work with a business. Some ways to remain authentic in your marketing:

- Ensure all messaging stays true to your mission, vision, and values.
- Connect with consumers in human ways, such as introducing your staff via your social feed or showing them engaging in volunteer work in the community.
- Offer true value and share your expertise, such as blog posts that explain concepts people might be confused about.
- Respond to comments, reviews, and other communications, both privately and publicly, to demonstrate that there are caring people behind your brand.

And don't just be authentic some of the time. Consistency is a huge part of success with online marketing, especially with organic efforts such as SEO and social media.

When people can count on you to show up with content at a

regular pace, they begin to trust you more. That trust can increase the likelihood of a conversion when a family is in need or someone is ready to begin pre-planning.

That's especially true in uncertain times such as these, when people look to trusted businesses and brands to set the tone and provide consistent guidance where needed.

A lot of people focus on frequency and length: how many times a week or day you should post and the ideal length of blog posts or social media status updates. Those are important considerations, and you should definitely test to find out what's right for your business and audience.

But more than anything, you need to show up regularly. It's better to keep things simple or you risk being overwhelmed. Choose to post on your blog once or twice a week consistently rather than starting with four times a week only to end up unable to maintain that schedule.

Here's to an uneventful 2021 and solid conversions and revenue for you all. Start planning your marketing efforts now to help make that happen. ☑

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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