

The Funeral Professional's #1 Resource for Business Growth and Profitability | March/April 2020

# FUNERAL

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## BUSINESS ADVISOR MAGAZINE™

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# OVERCOME PRENEED'S BIGGEST PITFALL

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BY WELTON HONG

**Q**uick history lesson: SEO is roughly 28 years old. Experts believe this internet marketing method took its first fledgling steps sometime around 1991.

By the late '90s, SEO was entering its adolescent stage—with all the awkward rebellion you might expect. It was the heyday of black-hat SEO practices, which persisted into the new century. Starting in 2000, Google began to take over search, applying rules and molding SEO into what it is today. And the search giant continues to make changes.

Just like a human grows from a helpless infant into adulthood—with all the complex changes that go along with that—SEO has come a long way in about three decades. And with so many rapid changes, it can be difficult to keep up with what's true about SEO today.

Find out how much you know (or not) about current SEO with this quiz. Simply read each statement and determine whether you think it's true or false. Then check the answer key to find out if you're right or to pick up some helpful information for deathcare marketing:

1. You don't pay for search engine optimization.
2. The right SEO company can guarantee placement at the top of SERPs.
3. You should try to rank for keywords with lower search volumes.
4. Keyword density is no longer important.
5. The most important factor when it comes to backlinks is how many you have.
6. The speed of your site is a critical SEO factor.
7. You have to submit your site to the search engines for it to rank.
8. When in doubt, just do what the big companies are doing.
9. A site that isn't mobile-friendly can be a huge negative hit for your online marketing.
10. Online reviews aren't important when it comes to SEO.
11. When it comes to content marketing, quality trumps quantity.
12. Video marketing doesn't help your SEO performance.
13. Paid search automatically improves your organic SEO results.
14. Every page on your site should have more than 1,200 words.
15. Using technology to obstruct people from leaving negative reviews online is a legitimate strategy to ensure positive reputation.

#### Answer Key

**1. False.** You might not pay for your organic search results listing. But the work it takes to rank in the competitive world of SERPs costs you in either time or money. DIY approaches may seem "free," but they infringe upon customer-facing tasks (which could impact revenues) and come with internal labor costs.

**2. False.** A good SEO company can do a lot, and that often includes helping you connect with more families or potential clientele online. But search engine ranking is complex and not controlled by any outside entity, so anyone who makes guarantees about top-spot ranking is selling something they can't deliver.

**3. True.** Low-volume keywords are less competitive. If one is highly relevant to your deathcare services, you can more easily connect with a specific audience by targeting it. That doesn't mean you should only chase low-volume keywords; a varied SEO strategy that includes a range of keywords is typically best.

**4. True.** Keyword density refers to how many times keywords appear in relation to the number of words on the page. It used to be a huge SEO factor, but not today. It's more important that you have the right keywords in prominent on-page locations, such as in H2 headers or a first paragraph. When it comes to counting keywords, just be sure you aren't overusing them. Google considers keyword stuffing to be SEO abuse and might rank your page lower because of it.

**5. False.** The most important backlink factors are authority and relevance. If your backlinks are from pages that aren't relevant to your content—or if the linking pages are low quality—the links don't help with ranking. Best case scenario is a neutral impact to SEO, but too many low-quality backlinks can actually lower your place in SERPs.

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**6. True.** Google incorporated page load speed into ranking factors in 2010, and it's only become more important over time.

**7. False.** Search engine bots automatically crawl new pages. Site plugins can help make this process faster in some cases, and a few situations may warrant submitting your site. But that's fairly advanced SEO, and you can skip it without feeling much of an impact if your site and content is quality.

**8. False.** Every site (and every deathcare company) is unique. What works for another business may not work for your firm. It's always best to test new SEO methods and tweak them to work best for you and your target audience.

**9. True.** As of mid-2018, Google is going with mobile-first indexing. That means it indexes and ranks based on the mobile version of your site first. If you don't have one—or it's not very user-friendly—you could be losing big in SERPs.

**10. False.** Google itself has said online reviews are a ranking signal. It also says that responding to your online reviews can improve your SEO.

**11. True.** Google's mission since 2000 seems targeted on improving the quality of search results it presents to users. It's better to publish one high-quality piece of content a week than three or four pieces with no authority, relevance, or expertise.

**12. False.** Including video in your online marketing can help you grow your revenue up to 49 percent faster than efforts that don't include this media. Video is one of the most engaging media types online, so it helps drive up behavioral metrics that

play a role in ranking. And you can also include keywords in video captions, titles, and meta tags for enhanced SEO.

**13. False.** While paid search (SEM) and SEO often go hand-in-hand, each taking benefits from the other, SEM doesn't automatically guarantee an SEO boost.

**14. False.** SEO gurus weigh in on this one periodically, and the current consensus on "best word count" ranges from around 1,000 to more than 3,000. But the truth is that the right word count is whatever you need to appropriately cover your topic—no more, no less.

**15. False.** This is called review gating, and it could get all your hard-won Google reviews removed. Instead, concentrate on encouraging satisfied families to leave a review if you're looking to boost your star rating.

How did you do? Regardless of how you did, it is important to understand search engine optimization (SEO). Users trust search engines and having a presence in the top positions for the keywords the user is searching, increases the web site's trust, thus increasing traffic. **FBA**

Welton Hong is the founder and marketing director of Ring Ring Marketing (FuneralHomeProfits.com), which specializes in helping funeral homes convert leads from online directly to the phone line. Welton also is a speaker at funeral home conferences and the author of Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes. Reach him by email at [info@ringringmarketing.com](mailto:info@ringringmarketing.com) or call toll-free at 888.383-2848.



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