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WHAT'S A HYBRID ONLINE MARKETING APPROACH, AND DO YOU NEED ONE?

BY WELTON HONG



You know what they say about putting all of your eggs in one basket. The metaphor is used a lot when talking about investing or retirement funds: diverse portfolios are more likely to weather financial storms better than portfolios that contain a single type of investment.

But diversification isn't beneficial only when it comes to growing your money. When investing in funeral home online marketing, you also want to spread your eggs out to multiple baskets—and for many of the same reasons.

Relying on multiple channels (the "baskets") lets you connect with more potential clientele. It also helps ensure that if one channel isn't working out, you still have a steady flow of leads from other efforts.

Multichannel marketing is also called hybrid marketing, and it combines a handful of tactics that work best for your firm to drive as many leads as possible. But the approach does more than diversify your "marketing portfolio" so you can weather a storm. You can also get a stacking effect that makes your overall marketing strategy more powerful.

The Stacking Effect of Hybrid Marketing

The traditional marketing Rule of 7 says a prospect needs to hear or see your message seven or more times before they make a purchase. Obviously, conversions sometimes come before and after those seven touchpoints.

An at-need family might convert after arriving on your website following a Google search, for example, whereas someone considering preneed services might see your messaging for an entire year before making the final decision.

While seven might not be a magic number, studies have repeatedly shown that the more positive interactions you can have with a consumer, the more likely they are to become clientele in the future.

That's where the stacking effect of hybrid marketing comes in. If you rely solely on a single channel, you limit your connections. For example, if all your eggs are in the SEO basket, you only connect with prospects when they come to the search engine to query relevant deathcare topics. And then, it's only if your pages happen to show up organically for their query and they choose to click your link.

By adding paid ads, social posts, and review marketing, you make it much more likely a consumer sees your firm's message online more than once, resulting in multiple benefits:

- You reach those seven (or more) positive touch points faster, potentially driving up your conversion rate.
- The fact that your firm appears via multiple channels can help foster the perception of authority and expertise, helping ensure consumers choose your funeral home when they're ready to make a decision.

What Channels Should You Include in Funeral Home Hybrid Marketing Strategies?

No secret formula exists for maximizing your benefits from hybrid online marketing. Every deathcare firm is somewhat unique, and you have to find the balance of various types of online marketing that work best for you. That being said, there are definitely some baskets you want to consider placing a few eggs in.

On-Site Search Engine Optimization

This is where you create compelling, relevant, and authoritative content that speaks to the things people are searching for. The goal of SEO is to connect with people who are hitting the search engines to gather deathcare information, which requires solid keyword research so you know exactly what your target audience needs right now.

Website Marketing

Many businesses stop at SEO without considering the rest of the website marketing job. If all your content does is drive traffic, you could be paying for impressive page view numbers without ever converting anyone to clientele.

Good website content does two things: It serves the immediate need by providing answers to questions or concerns while also providing a compelling roadmap for taking the next steps. The first positions you as a trustworthy expert consumers can rely on; the second helps turn those consumers into clientele.

Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing involves paying for your place in the search engine. By targeting specific keywords, user demographics, and geolocations, you can help ensure your firm shows up for at-need families that turn to Google or

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people simply browsing for more information about topics such as cremation or planning final arrangements.

Other Paid Advertising

Not everyone starts with search engines. More than 70 percent of people report using social media to find out more about businesses and services. Social ads let you get your message out on platforms where people tend to congregate online for all types of reasons.

In other cases, someone might have started with search and even ended up on your site. But they clicked away or got distracted without moving further into your funnel or making a purchase or appointment. Ads that retarget those users can show up across the web as they browse.

Either way, paid advertising that reaches outside of the search engine can help you get your message in front of potential clientele more often.

Review Marketing

Review marketing is the act of bolstering the number of online reviews you get, especially on Google. More reviews can equal better performance in search engine results. Plus, people are more likely to believe what reviewers say about you than what your firm itself publishes.

You can't control the content of the reviews (Google and other review sites frown upon this, and Google will even delete all your existing reviews if it thinks you're attempting to do so). But you can ask families if they would leave a review for your business to help increase the number of reviews you have.

Organic Social Media Marketing

Organic reach (when people see your normal social posts—the ones you don't pay to sponsor or boost) on some social networks is dismal. For many businesses, organic reach on Facebook is approaching zero.

But that doesn't mean organic social media marketing is useless. These types of social updates can humanize your firm, which is critical in a people-centric business such as deathcare. When people do interact with you on social, a warm, professional profile presence can persuade them to click on your links or contact you for more information.

In a diversified financial portfolio, your various eggs work together to support stable growth despite what one area of the economy might do. In funeral home marketing, your hybrid approach helps create stability despite the ebb and flow of online trends. An integrated approach also makes your marketing smarter and stronger, resulting in more leads and conversions. **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 or call toll-free at 888-383-2848.