



*Looking for a
Fairy Tale Ending
with* **Your
Facebook**

by Welton Hong

Develop a Plan to Conquer the Wizard and the Sorceress

PERHAPS YOU'VE RECENTLY READ FAIRY TALES to your children or grandchildren (possibly over Zoom or FaceTime, given lockdown lifestyles of the past year). Or perhaps you remember them fondly from your own childhood.

They all have some factors in common. Most have a moral lesson, characters, magic, obstacles or tasks, and a happily-ever-after ending.

No one can completely guarantee a “happily ever after” for marketing efforts—the results depend on your effort and budget, skills and knowledge, and sometimes a bit of luck. But the other common fairy tale components can be used to illustrate important tips for marketing on Facebook in 2021 and beyond.

Allow me a bit of whimsy as I explain how Facebook marketing and advertising relate to this metaphor.

The Moral Lesson

One of the original intents of all stories—not just fairy tales—was to pass down lessons to future generations or share knowledge with people in neighboring lands. These tales used the experiences of others (even if they were fictional) to demonstrate the dangers inherent in certain actions, lifestyles, or decisions. They also pointed out the potential benefits of more appropriate actions and decisions.

Deathcare firms can learn these types of lessons by looking at the actual experiences of others. For example, one year for International Women's Day, the appliance company, Miele, created a Facebook graphic to join in the celebration:

“May all women always remember to embrace what makes them unique! Happy International Women's Day!”



Marketing?

The text sat above an image of four women dressed professionally and gathered joyfully around a cake. The cake sat atop a washer and dryer set.

While Miele's message might have been well meaning, it was quickly panned by consumers. Many interpreted the actual message as *"Embrace what's unique, but don't forget to do the laundry."*

The moral lesson learned from this particular social media fail tale is that businesses on Facebook should consider the full context and potential translations of their messages. In a sensitive industry such as death-care, this is even more important.

Organic Reach

About 70 percent of American adults use Facebook. We know that a small percentage of your followers will see any given organic post (unless you pay to "boost" it). The average organic reach for Facebook posts from small and midsize businesses is less than 3 percent.

What does that mean? If 1,000 people follow your deathcare business on Facebook, fewer than 30 people (on average) actually see each of your organic posts in their timelines.

However, if you stumble into a Facebook marketing faux pas like the one noted above, you can bet a lot more people are going to see it.

And while you might buy into the adage that "no press is bad press," many businesses that have been through this will disagree with you.

Social media marketing failures often go viral as people share them, so you can find plenty of news articles and blog posts rehashing what not to do and why.

The benefits of paying attention to these lessons from others include:

- Decreased likelihood that you'll fall afoul of your own Facebook marketing faux pas.
- Protection for your firm's reputation online.
- Better ability to engage with your target audience in meaningful, authentic, and uncontroversial ways.

The Characters

Characters are why we care about stories. Kids want you to keep reading the story of Hansel and Gretel to them because they want to know whether the children escape the witch and the forest. They care about the outcome.

As a burial and/or cremation services provider, you have to do the work to get your Facebook followers and others to care about the outcome. Here's the secret trick to doing this: Make them the characters—not you, your products, or your business.

Certainly, you should humanize your business and staff when possible. Consumers are more likely to turn to

people they can trust than a faceless business, especially for something as near and dear as final arrangements.

But the story you're telling needs to position your potential clientele as the character. Followers will care more about the outcome of the story when they're at the heart of it. This can drive up conversion rates, so ensure your Facebook marketing tells people what you can do for them.

You should also ensure your marketing is well targeted and caters to your audience's preferences. That might mean ensuring your content targets the right income range or provides options that reflect the religious or cultural traditions of the target audience.

But it also might mean attending to small (but significant) details. For example, 80 percent of people don't like when sound automatically plays on videos—it's so annoying that it can immediately create a negative impression of your business in someone's mind.

The Magic

No wizards, wands, or fairy godmothers here. The "magic" of Facebook marketing and advertising comes down to technology.

This is especially true for advertising. Remember that 3 percent organic-reach statistic? One way that funeral homes and other deathcare firms can get around it is by "boosting" posts, essentially paying Facebook to turn them into native ads. A very small amount of money can create a massive benefit here.

Facebook advertising is easy enough to launch that it might feel a bit magical. The platform provides a campaign "wizard" (well, maybe there is some magic involved) that makes it easy to use Facebook's robust data sets to ensure the right people are seeing your post.

Some options you have with paid Facebook posts:

- Targeting existing followers who might not otherwise see the post.
- Targeting non-followers who might be interested in the post based on their other Facebook and internet activity.
- Targeting active Facebook users that meet campaign criteria, such as those of a certain age, gender, or income level.

Obstacles or Tasks

In a fairy tale, the obstacles and tasks are the meat of the adventure. The character must defeat a dragon or a witch, outwit the guardian of a bridge or tower, weave gold into straw, or gather some special ingredient or treasure. Often, there's a frightening villain.

In our Facebook fairy tale, the "villain" would be the algorithm. This refers to the analytics and processes that decide who sees which posts on the social media platform. Comparing it to the sorceress in a fairy tale



By understanding what you're facing and creating a plan that includes strong organic content plus paid Facebook advertising, your firm can continue to create value on Facebook in 2021 and beyond.

is pretty apt because the algorithm is powerful, and it's always changing.

Facebook demystified its algorithm a bit in 2020, saying that it wanted to help users understand the *ranking signals* and how to use them to engage with each other or manage their own platform experiences.

Ranking signals are the types of things Facebook looks at in determining whether a piece of content should be shown to a particular user.

Like most other platforms and search engines, Facebook didn't lay out all its secrets in detail. But it disclosed some factors that might determine how information is shown to people, including:

- **Which accounts and pages users typically interact with.** Facebook assumes if you interact with a business or person a few times online, you may be interested in seeing more content from them.
- **The media types included in the post.** Videos, links, and photos are more likely to show up for certain users.
- **The overall popularity of a post or your past posts.** If your content is getting a lot of attention, Facebook assumes it's valuable, so it starts showing your posts to more people.

Armed with that information, deathcare firms can fight the algorithm by engaging in a virtual "quest" against it. Some steps to take on this quest include:

Reviewing Facebook analytics so you know which of your posts perform best

Create more of that type of content—the more popular your content is, the more people see it.

Learning to create content that increases likes, shares, and comments

In the hierarchy of social engagement, shares are most important—then comments and likes, in that order. So concentrate on creating posts with links and other content that people will want to share with others.

Engaging with users

Respond to questions and comments to keep people interacting with your page. You might also want to share relevant content from others periodically.

Testing various types of media to see what performs best for your audience

Try photos, images, infographics, videos, and links.

The End

Ultimately, the end of this story concludes not with a "happily ever after" but with a potential increase in Facebook engagement and conversions coming from social media.

By understanding what you're facing and creating a plan that includes strong organic content plus paid Facebook advertising, your firm can continue to create value on Facebook in 2021 and beyond.

And that's no fairy tale. ☑

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