

# MEMENTO MORI



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## The Forgotten Pandemic



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Remains**

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# Knock'em with **Dead** Storytelling!

*Commonalities  
Between Marketing  
and Deathcare*

by Welton Hong



## **F YOU GOOGLE THE TERM “ONLINE MARKETING”**

or related topics, you get thousands of articles filled with industry tech-speak and terms someone made up for his or her own processes or best practices.

Phrases you might see include “closed-loop marketing,” “churn rate,” “split testing,” “customer acquisition cost,” “drip campaign,” and “unicorns.”

Yes, unicorns.

If those weren’t enough, the marketing world is rife with abbreviations and acronyms. Experts throw around letters such as B2B, CTR, CTA, BoFu, MoFu, ToFu, and PPC. And, no, I’m not making them up. For example, ToFu stands for “top of the funnel,” which is a real thing in sales and marketing.

Given all these terms and the concepts behind them, it’s easy to understand why deathcare professionals might avoid learning more about online marketing or even trying new things when it comes to getting the word out about products and services.

If I had to learn the technicalities behind cremation, perfect embalming techniques, or even read all the regulations involved in running a cemetery, I might balk, too.

But I don’t have to know all those exacting technicalities to get involved in the pre-planning process or plan a memorial. Deathcare pros like you are there to bridge the gaps between what needs to happen and what I know.

SHUTTERSTOCK / VISUAL GENERATION

In the same vein, you don't have to know everything about online marketing. Pros are available to bridge the gap for you. And you might be surprised that in some ways, the gap isn't that big once you know how to think about marketing.

Marketing speak gets technical quickly, but death-care pros familiar with celebrations of life already know some basic principles.

For example, you already know about celebrations of life whether you run a funeral home or provide other types of services related to final arrangements. And celebrations of life have a surprising amount in common with online marketing.

### It's About the Story

A celebration of life is often concerned with honoring or telling the story of the deceased. Whether that is done via videos and photo slides, music, the choice of the location, or anecdotes shared by family and friends, the point is to share and celebrate what made that person unique and why that person was loved.

Online marketing is often about telling the story of your business and how it serves clientele. As with a celebration of life, you can do that in a lot of ways, including publishing blog posts, making videos, and sharing on social media.

Stories work in marketing for the same reason people take comfort in them during funerals or celebrations of life: They remind people that we share in being human. When you use storytelling, you are not a firm, you are a group of caring, professional people who do what you do for reasons that potential clientele can understand and take heart in—and that builds trust.

### Rules? Break Them When It's Right

Celebrations of life don't follow some of the traditional practices of funerals or even memorials. Sure, there are societal or cultural values that might reign over these events depending on the location and family. But one of the main points of opting for a celebration of life is that you can work outside of some of those norms in the name of honoring the deceased.

If you Googled online marketing to check out some of those terms and acronyms I listed above, you probably noticed something about rules and best practices: Everyone thinks they know what they are, and marketers write a lot of content with titles like "7 Things You're Doing Wrong with PPC Ads."

And, yes, there are some rules you should probably keep in mind when it comes to online marketing. Just as

a celebration of life must follow the laws of the location, your online marketing should stay on the good side of Google guidelines and industry advertising regulations.

But you don't have to follow every so-called "rule" that someone lays out for marketing. Best practices do not always apply to every business.

Here's an example: According to marketing wisdom from sources that run a lot of analytics, blog posts with 1,500 or more words perform better on average in search engine results pages. But that's only an average based on a wide range of topics and industries; your deathcare content might not require 1,500 words to provide value.

It is important to think about your target audience, your business needs, and how to align the two to create online marketing strategies that work for you.

### Serving the Needs of Visitors

Let's be honest: Celebrations of life might be about honoring the deceased, but the beneficiaries of the event are those who attend. They get closure, comfort, or a good feeling that they did right by their loved one.

Just as the celebration of life isn't for the deceased, your marketing strategies are *not just for you*.

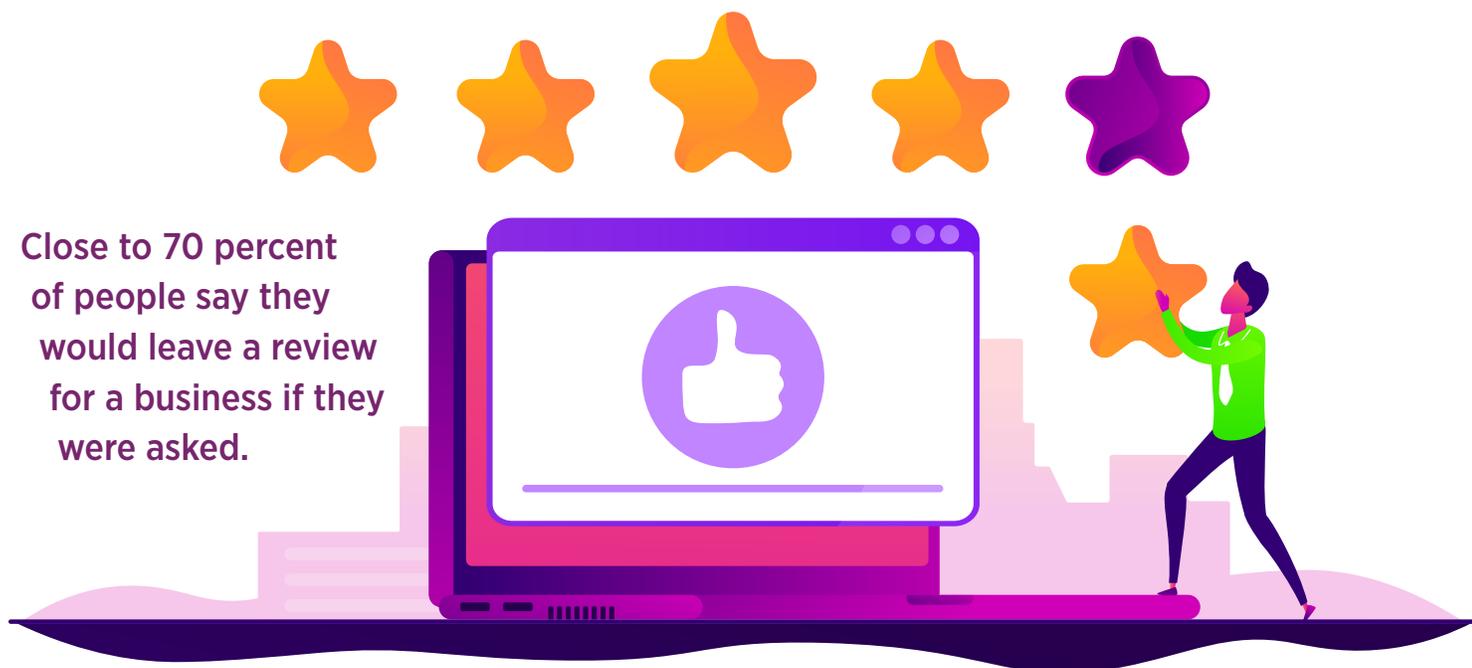
Sure, the end goal is to drive more sales. But typically, the best way to do that is by creating marketing that speaks to your target audience. Marketing that helps your potential clientele without giving away the actual goods makes it more likely those people will remember you in their time of need or when they are ready to start pre-need planning.

The key to doing this successfully is relevance. More than 40 percent of marketers say about a fifth of their marketing-spend is wasted. Most of that waste is because they are using the wrong strategies or communicating via the wrong channels to reach their target audience.

Consider how you might counsel a family who isn't sure how to make a celebration of life most relevant. You would likely tell them to gather information about their loved one. Ask those who knew him best, look through his home, or brainstorm what they already knew.

The same tactics work with marketing. You gather information about what your target audience is looking for via keyword research and content audits. You determine what existing customers appreciate by looking at your own data. You might look to industry benchmarks to discover even more. Then you use all that data to make your marketing strategies more relevant.

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## Get Others Involved

One person, no matter how much he or she cared for a recently passed loved one, might have a difficult time pulling off a compelling celebration of life. These events work best when many people are invited to participate—whether that’s getting involved in the planning, being part of the ceremony, or simply attending.

The same is true with online marketing—in a number of ways.

First, one person in your organization handling all of the marketing decisions and work can be a bad setup. That’s a lot to put on a single individual, which means you might burn that person out.

Plus, creative wells only run so deep. Eventually, one person’s ideas are likely to stagnate, which can lead to lackluster marketing that doesn’t move the needle. Instead, rely on the entire team to contribute ideas and help carry out marketing initiatives.

Second, keeping your marketing 100 percent in-house can be a mistake for the same reasons. Eventually, your team might run out of time or ideas for improving your strategies.

Your employees are experienced in deathcare, and they all have other obligations. By bringing in an expert marketing partner, you help remove some of the burden from your staff while relying on knowledgeable advice and new thought processes that can improve marketing performance.

Finally, don’t forget about your clientele. You probably know that word of mouth is powerful, but did you know that review marketing is almost a requirement in

today’s world? The vast majority of consumers—about 97 percent—read online reviews before they make a decision about a local service provider. Most users say the content of those reviews play a role in whether they choose a business, and if a business has no reviews, consumers might question whether it’s legitimate.

It’s also not enough to have garnered a few positive reviews at some point in your firm’s history. About 85 percent of searchers do not consider reviews older than three months to be pertinent.

So remember to invite your clientele to be part of your marketing strategy by leaving an online review. Close to 70 percent of people say they would leave a review for a business if they were asked.

If you want to point them to a specific location, Google is typically your best bet. Google reviews can positively impact your search engine optimization or SEO, and they show up in search engine results pages or SERPs when someone searches relevant local keywords. Your business listing alongside a good star rating makes it more likely someone might click through to learn more.

As you can see, online marketing may be technical, but some of the basic concepts aren’t nearly as puzzling as you might think. Often, you can apply what you already know to best interact with your target audience online. ☑

**Welton Hong** is the founder of Ring Ring Marketing and the author of *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*, 2019 Edition.