

MEMENTO MORI



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Remember You Must Die

The Making of
Memento Mori

2020 ICCFA
Annual
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Onsite Issue

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Write the Blog, but....

by Welton Hong



You're a bit skeptical about this blogging thing, I bet. Don't worry, I'm used to it. I consult with deathcare clients every day of the work week. They include many very smart businesspeople, men and women who are open to all sorts of ideas to generate more revenue for their businesses.

They're all ears when I tell them about the benefits of pay-per-click ads, the enduring importance of SEO, and how critical it is to generate excellent online reviews. They're engaged and excited.

Then I mention that they should start blogging, and everything comes to a screeching halt.

So really, it's a good thing that some deathcare professionals may have stopped reading this article after the headline, because if that group includes your competitors, you have a massive advantage.

Outsourcing Your Blog

You run a funeral home, or a direct cremation service, or a cemetery. Or you have another business closely related to deathcare.

You don't run a publishing company. You're not a journalist. You're not a writer.

Granted, some of you probably do enjoy writing at times, but I'm sure most of you would rather focus on the main job at hand. And that's fine.

Just like you contract out for work you either can't do yourself or don't have time to do, you can do that for your blog. There are lots of great online resources to find freelance writers who can write three, five, even 10 blog posts for you every week.

Granted, you should take your time in finding the right person for the job. Make sure to review clips of the writer's previous work. Make sure he or she writes well, spelling everything correctly. The last thing you want to worry about is having to correct your blogger's grammar and punctuation.

You always should review the work before allowing it to be published to your website, at least for the first several months. But remember that you'll ultimately be responsible for everything published on your blog. If your freelancer posts something offensive, profane, or simply inappropriate in a deathcare context, that will come back on you.

That's why I recommend most deathcare business owners review everything before it's published. Only once you trust the writer 100 percent should you even consider letting him or her publish directly to your blog.

Technically, you could save money by DIY blogging. But you're also using up time and energy that way. If you or your staff happen to have enough downtime during the week, sure, try blogging in-house. But

most businesses will find it more efficient to outsource the writing.

Finding Topics to Discuss

Most people in the deathcare industry automatically think there is nothing to blog about. It's obvious to them what topics other business types might blog about, but the very idea of writing several times a week about cremation, cemetery plots, or funerals strikes them as absurd.

Here's the thing: You can (and should) write about aspects of your business that would be interesting to readers. Here are some ideas:

- Share news you find online about alternative funerals or green policies in deathcare.
- Talk about new ideas for pet memorials
- Discuss creative concepts in cremation urns (sports, movies, music, etc.).

You can easily think of 75 to 100 ideas with just a little brainstorming. But you're actually not limited to deathcare topics. Frankly, your blog will be more interesting to potential readers if you offer plenty of variety:

- *Your audience:* You know the target demographics of the families and individuals you serve. Most often, your clientele will be older. Statistically, you might also work a little more often with women. With that in mind, many of your posts should cover topics of interest to older women.
- *Health:* You can post plenty of content about healthcare—specifically, how to live a healthy life as you age. It's the type of content you'll see in

publications such as AARP magazine or Prevention magazine. In fact, you can use those as resources.

- *Reposting:* Don't reinvent the wheel every time you come across source material. You can simply write a few lines providing context

and then link to the source article. You'll always get better SEO from your blog if you're regularly linking out to authoritative sites.

- *Lifestyle:* Consider writing about money and estate management, vacation ideas for seniors, caregiving, technology for seniors, and so on. Think about anything a person over age 60 might find interesting and write about it—or direct your freelance writer to do so.
- *Deathcare:* You'll want at least 25 percent of your posts (but preferably more) to mention themes related to your industry. That's because Google and other search engines will notice those terms in your posts and their headlines, providing your website more authority (in Google's eyes) for deathcare. Consequently, you will rank much

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better in organic search listings in your area. Some examples:

- *Etiquette*: You could do a series of posts about funeral/visitation etiquette. The posts could include what to wear, how to address the family, how to handle certain religious and cultural customs, etc.
- *Support*: Grief support is another topic with lots of potential. Many funeral home sites include a page of links to resources, but in a blog, you can directly provide grief education and support.
- *Local programs*: If you have relationships with local grief programs/support groups, do a post on each. You can even have a local expert provide guest posts for you, either directly paid or for exposure.
- *Preplanning*: Another possible topic is preplanning services, regardless of whether your particular business is involved with prearrangement.

Remember, not everything has to directly connect to something you do. It just has to relate to deathcare themes.

You might want to brainstorm ideas in-house and direct a contract writer to execute them, or you could direct the freelancer to do the brainstorming and include that as part of the pay per post. It's really up to you. The key is simply to ensure you're posting strong content and doing so regularly.

Once You Start, You Can't Stop

Speaking of regularity, I'll admit this is one potential downside to starting a blog. It's kind of like starting a family. You can't decide after a couple of years that it's just not right for you. Once you're in, you're in for the long haul.

Here's why: Nothing looks worse for a business (in deathcare or otherwise) than having a blog that hasn't been updated for a long time. If people today pull up your blog and see that the last post was in 2018, you might as well be hanging up a "Business Closed" sign on your website. The nature of a blog is that it's consistently updated. You must keep feeding the beast.

Look at it this way: Blog A has 750 posts, each one at least 500 words, and it was being updated five times a week—but there have been no new posts for 18 months. Blog B has 50 posts, most of them only 200 words, and it posts twice a week—but it's been posting consistently.



Which blog has more credibility with both potential clientele and Google? That's right, it's Blog B.

So don't bite off more than you can chew. Start off slow. Publish small posts a couple of times a week. You need at least two, but don't feel the need to ramp up right away. Include an image with each post whenever possible, because that increases human engagement and generates more SEO.

Just be sure that once you start, you're committed to updating the blog regularly. If you can't keep up, honestly, then it's better to not have a blog at all.

If you blog and reach a point where you just can't continue for whatever reason, you should remove the blog from your website—either permanently or temporarily. Or you might be able to deactivate it until you're ready to restart, and that's fine. Just don't leave it up there with nothing but outdated posts.

But let's assume you've been posting twice a week for a few months and you're ready to ramp it up. Just add one day a week for the foreseeable future. But never go too fast. You always want to keep the quality high. You need to be as detail-oriented in your blog posts as you are in your normal day-to-day duties, because your blog will reflect on how you do business.

A blog is a major undertaking, but adding a blog to your marketing efforts will deliver excellent ROI (*return on investment*) for your deathcare business.

And believe it or not, you might even enjoy it. ■

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