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In Search of Two Truths and a Lie

The Online Marketing Technology Edition

by Welton Hong

CAN YOU SPOT A MYTH ABOUT ONLINE MARKETING TECHNOLOGY? Find out in this game of Two Truths and a Lie.

Funeral directors and certified celebrants are the masters of rapidly understanding what truly mattered in the life of a decedent. They're just as gifted at getting to know the close family members and friends. All the information they glean informs their ability to make a life celebration special.

But not everyone finds this process so easy. For example, when corporate cowork-

which statement is false. When the game is done, everyone knows at least three facts about one another. They've also hopefully shared some laughter and are able to move on to get to know each other better in other ways.

As with coworkers or others you've never met before, it can be difficult to get to know a new topic. That's especially true

- About 65 percent of marketing leaders currently use marketing automation to create content for their sites and campaigns.
- About 85 percent of digital display ads in the United States are programmatic, which means AI automates ad buying and placement.

What do you think? Which of those statements is the lie? Read on to get the details behind each of these statements.

The Truth About Chatbots and Marketing

True: Around 80 percent of customer service chats are resolved by artificial intelligence before a person gets involved.

When companies use AI, they're able to resolve a wide range of marketing and customer service queries without a human getting involved. Chatbots are able to answer questions about business hours and products, and they can even take orders or handle tasks, such as upgrading or closing an account.

If you use online chat options to interact with other service providers, you've probably been served by a chatbot and not even realized it. Companies such as American Express, Intuit, Starbucks, MasterCard, Fandango, and Lyft all use chatbots to process orders, meet customer service needs, and suggest upsells or products to consumers.

That might all sound well and good for standard businesses, but you're undoubtedly wondering what it has to do with the funeral industry. Is there room in the people-centric deathcare industry for chatbot use?

In fact, the answer is *yes*, especially when it comes to marketing and lead handling.

Consider this scenario: A woman is looking for information on preplanning during the late evening or even the middle of the night. She lands on your website,



ers from disparate departments gather for a project or when students get together at a camp or retreat, the atmosphere is often awkward at first. People don't know much—if anything at all—about each other; and breaking the ice can seem like a lot of work.

Enter Two Truths and a Lie, an icebreaker game used by people of all ages. If you've never played this game, it follows a simple set of rules. Each person introduces him- or herself by sharing three "facts." Except one of those facts is a cleverly disguised lie.

The rest of the group attempts to guess

when it's a technical or complex topic such as online marketing technology.

With that in mind, to help you break the ice and get to know this topic better, let's play a quick game of Two Truths and a Lie.

Hi, I'm Online Marketing Technology ...

And here are two truths and a lie about me:

- About 80 percent of customer service chats are resolved by artificial intelligence (AI) before a person gets involved.

and in her late-night ponder, she is primed to take action to find out more. But you're not "open" (except for immediate needs, of course), so most likely no one will get back to her until the morning.

Come the next morning, she is tossed suddenly into daily life. She may get busy and forget for days or weeks that she meant to look into prearrangement.

Now imagine that a chatbot is deployed on your site. It welcomes the late-night visitor and asks if any help is needed.

For an immediate need, the chatbot can be programmed to call or text a funeral home or crematory manager so he or she can get back to the family immediately.

If it's not an immediate need—if instead the person is interested in pre-planning—the chatbot can schedule an appointment, provide links to helpful articles, solicit an email address, or even offer a free download of your pre-planning checklist.

You can do a lot with chatbot marketing, and machine learning has reached a point where chatbots sound more like caring people than robotic artificial intelligence—as long as they're properly programmed.

The Truth About Marketing Automation

False: About 65 percent of marketing leaders currently use marketing automation to create content for their sites and campaigns.

It's true that between 65 and 75 percent of marketing leaders use *some sort* of marketing automation, but it's not used to create actual content for landing pages, social posts, blogs, and other pages.

Machine learning has come a long way, but it's still very far from being able to author high-quality, authoritative content that makes the grade on Google. Computers have mastered playing chess, but being able to write good content people will actually read? That's still a long way off.

Instead, marketers are engaging in automation measures in other areas. Ad buying, chatbots, automated email drip campaigns, A/B split testing, and retargeting are all examples of tasks where marketing automation can play a critical role.

Retargeting is an ideal example that can be used by marketers in deathcare. While it's a bit more complex, the basics work as follows:

Someone uses a search engine to look up a topic—for example, cremation—or he or

she visits the site of a crematory. Maybe the visitor clicks through to various pages on that site or signs up for more information, but he or she doesn't ultimately make a purchase or appointment.



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That person's IP address (their online identifier) is now associated with a potential interest or need for cremation services. As he or she browses the web, that person sees ads for your cremation services because automations are retargeting his or her IP address. The goal is to get that person to remember he or she was interested in those products and to circle back to make a purchase decision.

A/B split testing is the process of evaluating various tweaks in your marketing campaigns to see which one returns better results. Is email subject line A or B better? Should your content be 300 or 400 words? Should the link be at the top or bottom?

The tweaks are literally endless, and manually testing these considerations can use up a lot of time and energy. Computers are much more efficient at running scenarios and analyzing the numbers, making automation ideal for this task.

You can see with just these two examples why so many people are using marketing automation and why maybe you should, too—just not for content!

The Truth About Programmatic Advertising

True: About 85 percent of digital display ads in the United States are programmatic, which means AI automates ad buying and placement.

The main reason so many marketers use automation in ad management is that

If people were manning all these processes, it would look more chaotic than the stock exchange, and they still wouldn't get the job done right.

it's more efficient. Deathcare professionals can't sit at their computers all day bidding on keywords and ad placements.

Even professional marketers that deal with ads on a full-time basis can't do this. If people were manning all these processes, it would look more chaotic than the stock exchange, and they still wouldn't get the job done right.

To understand why automation is a must with online advertising, consider this quick primer on how programmatic advertising works.

First, someone clicks on a site that displays these ads. The site places the space for that individual ad view for auction. The automated ad marketplace includes numerous advertisers, who all bid on the ad. The highest bid scores the spot, and the relevant ad is displayed to that *one user* during that *one pageview*.

It's a process that takes place in microseconds, so it has to be automated. But that doesn't take the people completely out of the process. Deathcare businesses that want to use online advertising set up campaigns—or pay someone to set them up—that are preprogrammed with rules for the AI to follow.

You can set parameters for your target audience, including demographics and online behaviors, as well as what types of sites you want your ads to appear on. You can also set a budget for your ads so the AI doesn't make bids over a certain amount or stops bidding once intended marketing spend is depleted.

Get to Know Online Marketing Technology

Now you know more about online marketing technology than you did when you started reading this article. But remember that Two Truths and a Lie was never designed to make a group of people fast friends—it simply *breaks the ice*.

Similarly, this article isn't meant to provide a comprehensive guide to marketing technology. But now you have a starting point to find out more by contacting the right experts or reading more on the topic. ☑



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



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