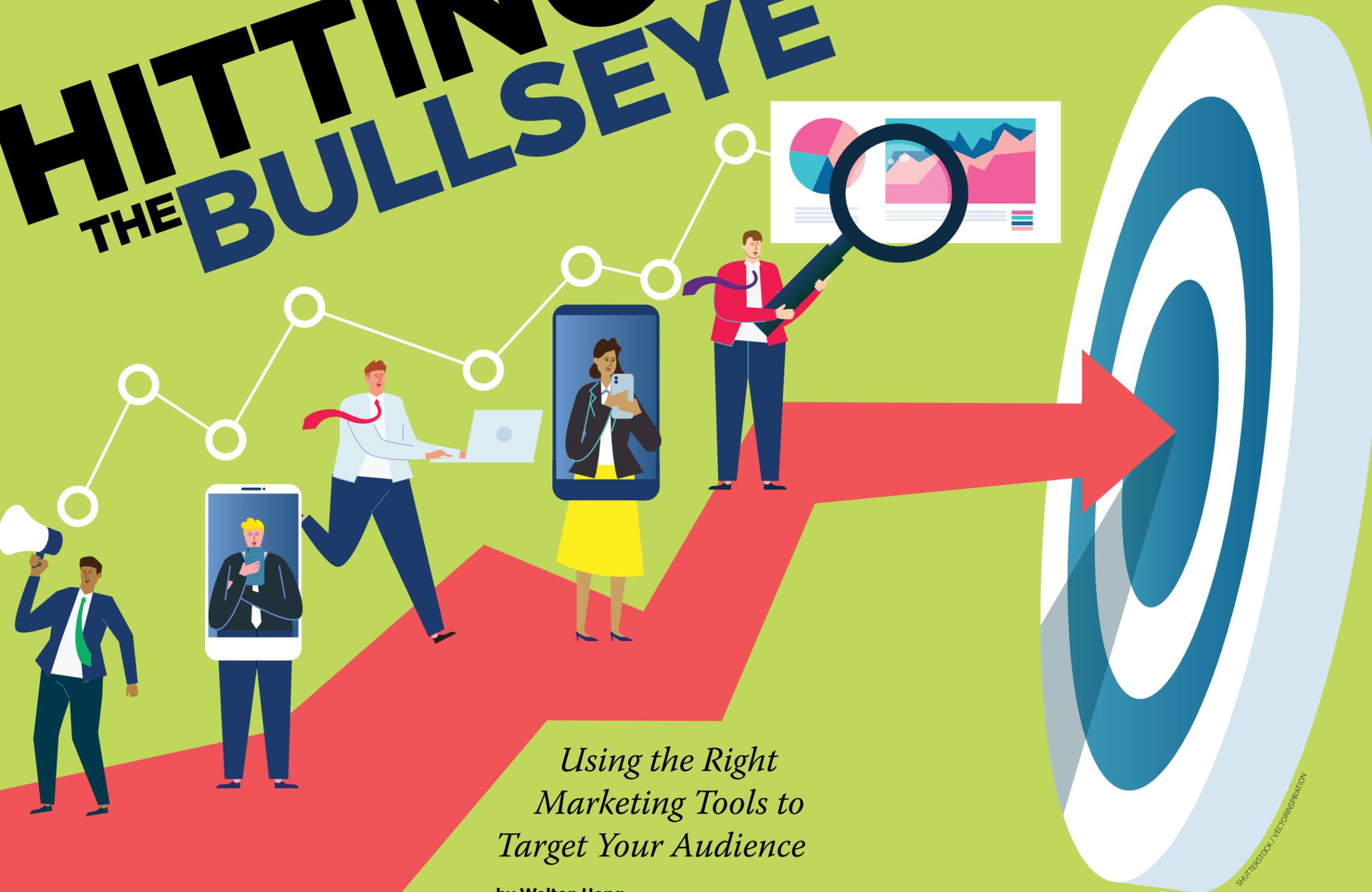


HITTING THE BULLSEYE



Using the Right Marketing Tools to Target Your Audience

by Welton Hong

“You’ve seen retargeting in action every time you have visited a website, or viewed certain products or services online, and then noticed ads for these products, services, or website brands when visiting other sites. At times, it may feel like the brand is following you, and this isn’t too far from what is happening.”

—The App Institute

IMAGINE THIS: You are browsing a favorite social media platform while waiting for a coworker to wrap up so you can get a bite to eat together. An advertisement for a local restaurant pops up.

Which of the following would most likely prompt you to choose that restaurant?

- a. A random ad for a type of food you don’t normally eat.
- b. An ad for a new restaurant that serves a cuisine you cook and eat on a regular basis.
- c. An ad for a new restaurant that you “liked” on Facebook, visited to view its menu, and chatted about it on social media with friends.

In most cases, scenario C is likely to convert you from visitor to customer because it’s the most targeted to the viewer. B is a close second. But A has the least chance because it’s not even relevant to the behavior and interest of the person viewing it.

A targeted advertising and marketing approach delivers more return on your investment than general efforts. That’s as true in deathcare marketing as it is anywhere else.

Targeting Your Marketing

More than 75 percent of marketers do not target consumers by using behavioral data and other metrics. This places a majority of businesses at a disadvantage. If you’re not using targeting for your funeral home or cemetery marketing, you’re giving the competition the upper hand.

Targeted marketing and advertising campaigns have several benefits for deathcare firms, including:

- Letting you connect with at-need families at the right time
- Helping you target and *retarget* people who are most likely to be interested in pre-need or cemetery planning

- Providing opportunities for niche-based messaging, such as reaching out to veterans, those interested in green burials, or families seeking specialty services—such as spreading cremated remains at sea.

This is how retargeting works, courtesy of the App Institute (<https://appinstitute.com/retargeting-guide/>):

The most common form of retargeting uses a retargeting pixel: a snippet of code that brands add to their websites or apps. When you visit a website with a retargeting pixel in place, it adds a cookie to your browser which begins anonymously tracking you. It is able to detect what pages you visit on the brand's website, what products you view, and how much time you spend on each page. Once you navigate to another website, the cookie is able to continue tracking you and your browsing behavior, and this information is shared

– anonymously – with advertising networks the brand uses. These networks can then ensure the brand's ads are shown to you when you visit qualifying websites, keeping the brand and/or products you have viewed top-of-mind.

See Figure 1 for an even more comprehensible explanation of retargeting's purpose and anticipated results.

Below are five ways you can target deathcare marketing and advertising to reap these benefits.

Users who click on a PPC ad are 50 percent more likely to act than someone who clicked on an organic search result.

1. Target with social media advertising.

Marketers are expected to have spent about \$102 billion on social media ads by the end of 2020; and for good reason. Social apps are where the digital crowds flock daily, with users opening apps such as Instagram or Snapchat up to dozens of times each day.

With business organic reach (viewership of your “free” posts on these platforms) continuously decreasing, paid ads often provide the only means by which businesses can connect with audiences on social media.

Luckily, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram make it easy to target your ads to specific groups and users. Facebook provides a wizard to help you set up ad campaigns, and targeting options can include:

- **Core audiences**, which lets you select demographics, locations, and interests relevant to your ad content. Facebook shows the ad to people who seem to match those parameters.
- **Custom audiences**, which lets you retarget people who have already engaged with your deathcare firm. That includes someone who visited your site in the past or people who have liked or shared your posts, for example.
- **Lookalike audiences**, which looks at the followers of your top competitors and shows your ads to people who seem to match those same demographics or interests.

2. Target with audience sectors PPC ad campaigns.

Paid ads, especially in search, can be powerful. Users who click on a PPC ad are 50 percent more likely to act than someone who clicked on an organic search result. The ads can also increase awareness for your firm as

much as 80 percent, leading to more conversions down the road. Maximize those benefits by ensuring your PPC ads are appropriately targeted by following some of these tips:

- **Use geotargeting and exclusions.** Add locations that you serve to the list and exclude other areas so you're not wasting money on ads that appear to users in another state. You can also try different ad formats in different areas that you serve to find what works for various neighborhoods.
- **Target by keyword.** Someone looking to “make burial arrangements” may be in the at-need or pre-need stage (or generally looking for cemetery options), but someone searching “plan my own funeral” is almost certainly in one of the latter camps. But you can get even more specific with keywords such as “green burial options” or “veterans funeral benefits.”
- **Retarget your ads.** This helps your ads show up for people who have previously searched for funeral home services or have visited your website in the past. Retargeting (a.k.a. remarketing) remains an underused option for cemeteries, funeral homes, and general cremation service providers.

3. Use tools such as Google In-Market Audiences.

One of the best ways to target relevant audiences is to ride the wave of third-party data. Google says its Display Ad Network covers roughly 90 percent of the internet; that's a lot of data. You can use tools such as *Google In-Market Audiences* to target consumers who are actively looking for products related to your firm.

Google uses information, such as what consumers have clicked on, the content of pages they visit, and other behavioral metrics to create categories of audiences as a jumping-off point for advertisers.

It doesn't have a deathcare category—at least not yet—but firms with relevant products and services might be able to use other categories as a starting point. For example, the financial services category likely includes consumers interested in estate and retirement planning. That audience has a strong crossover with the audience interested in pre-planning final arrangements.

This isn't an option that works for all deathcare firms, but the goal is to think outside the box and learn about tools available to you. Ask yourself, your staff, or marketing partners whether you can put these new tools to good use to better connect them with potential clientele online.

4. Create unique landing pages and link paths on your website.

Ads are only the beginning. But if you do not back them up with great website content, you're probably going to spend ad budget just to support a high bounce rate, which is how often someone clicks on the ad, arrives at your site, and leaves without ever navigating away from the first page.

A good bounce rate tends to be anything less than 30 percent, though lower is better. Average rates can range from 40 to 60 percent, but if you're hedging into 70 percent or more, something's

wrong with your targeting. Maybe your ad isn't properly targeted, or your landing page isn't following through on the promise of the ad targeting, or people simply don't know what to do once they arrive at your website.

Drive down bounce rate and increase conversion rates with content that is aligned with your ad campaigns. For example, if you create an ad campaign for veteran outreach and target people who are (or have family members who are) eligible for veterans' benefits, you should avoid linking to a generic pre-planning landing page.

Instead, create a landing page specifically for veterans and their family members. Include content about veterans' memorial and burial benefits; explain who is eligible and how to apply for benefits. Add a call-to-action (CTA) button above the fold that lets the visitors know your firm is experienced in veteran burial and/or cremation and how they can contact you for more information.

When possible, include links that lead to blog posts on the topic, such as posts that cover how much veterans' benefits are or what an honor guard is.

The goal is to provide targeted content that keeps people on the site or coming back for more while also demonstrating your expertise relevant to specific needs they have.

5. Develop premium content that speaks to divergent needs.

You can develop premium content that targets unique needs for various audience segments. Premium content is marketing collateral you can trade for a small action, such as a signup. For example, you might offer a free ebook or checklist download if people sign up to receive your monthly email newsletter or a package about cemetery options or pre-planning in the mail.

The purpose of premium content is to gather these contact points so you can continue engaging with the potential clientele in the future and as they work their way through the buying journey (in the case of pre-need services).

And again, strong targeting helps increase the benefits you get from this type of marketing tactic. A general ebook on how to pre-plan can be a good offering in many cases. But if someone

is specifically interested in green burial or spreading a loved one's ashes, premium content about these topics is more likely to get them to sign up for the download.

Know Your Audience

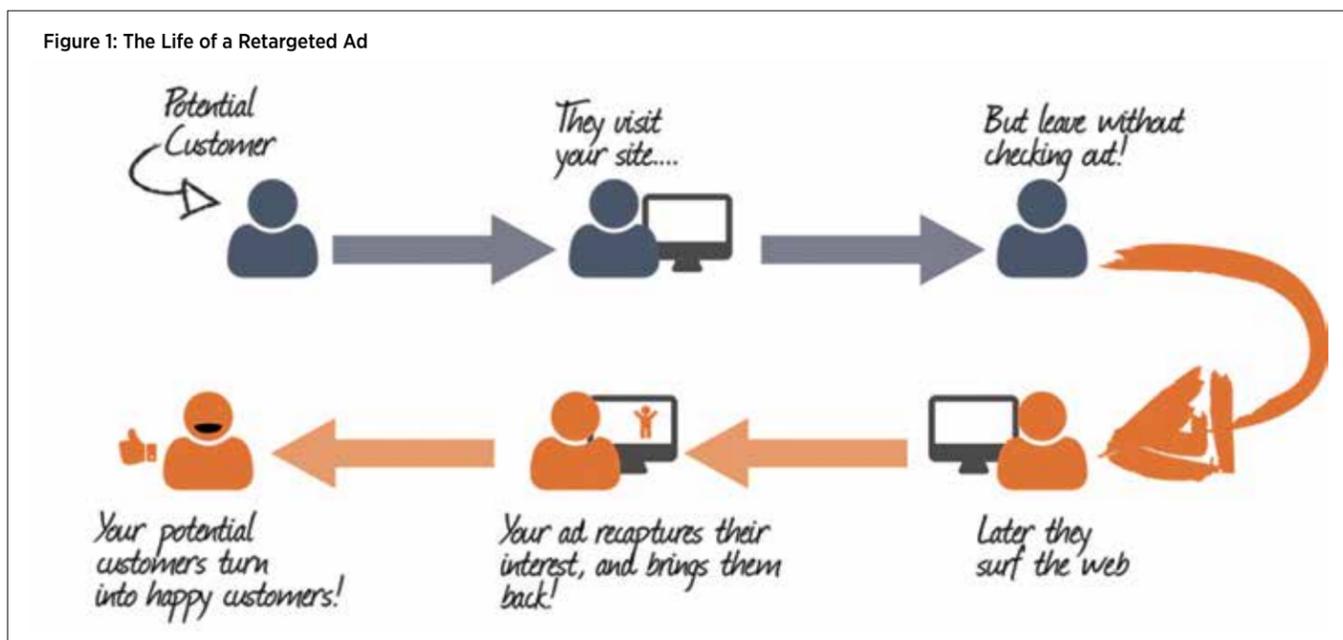
One of the first rules of marketing success is that you must know your audience. Understanding what potential clientele need and want lets you target marketing messages and deathcare products to them.

These tips are just some of the ways you can put this rule into action, and you should always be on the lookout for other ways to target marketing to the right people to increase positive results. ▣

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

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Figure 1: The Life of a Retargeted Ad



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