

# THE DIRECTOR

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# PLUG IN TO SOCIAL MEDIA



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# NO SUCH THING



**Perfect marketing doesn't exist, but to bolster your efforts going forward, here are *9 COMMON MARKETING MISTAKES* you may be making.**

**BY WELTON HONG**

**“One of the basic rules of the universe is that nothing is perfect. Perfection simply doesn't exist... Without imperfection, neither you nor I would exist.”**

– STEPHEN HAWKING

The same is true of funeral home and cemetery marketing. We all know that perfect marketing – of any kind – doesn't exist. Even powerhouse brands such as Pepsi swing and miss occasionally.

Consider the ad from a few years ago featuring Kendall Jenner defusing a protest situation by sharing a Pepsi with a police officer. The ad generated plenty of press, but it wasn't good press. The YouTube version was quickly downvoted by millions, and social media posts lambasted the “tone deaf” nature of the ad.

And that was far from Pepsi's only mistake in marketing. Another example occurred when the brand launched a marketing campaign in China. It meant to lead with the slogan, “Pepsi brings you back to life,” but an unfortunate translation issue meant Pepsi ended up advertising that its soda “brings your ancestors back from the grave.”

Marketing mistakes happen. To succeed going forward, learn from them and improve your efforts. To that end, here are nine common marketing mistakes you may be making.

## **MISTAKE #1 NOT INCLUDING A CTA**

A call to action is the ignition key of marketing. Without it, the engine isn't going to start.

I see many funeral service providers leaving the call to action off their content and advertisements. In part, it's because they think of CTAs as specific sales tools and don't want to overdo it with their audience. While that's a fair concern, it doesn't mean

you should omit CTAs entirely. Treat them as instructions to the audience on next steps.

For example, a cemetery owner could link to an article that covers VA burial benefits or a blog post on the interment of cremated remains. Other CTA options might be inviting users to sign up for email newsletters, sharing content with others or downloading a resource, such as a guide to headstones and grave markers.

Potential clients are on journeys toward buying decisions, whether it's for prearranging or determining a final resting place. Support those journeys and encourage people to stick with your firm by creating breadcrumb trails of CTAs they can follow no matter where they start.

## **MISTAKE #2 IGNORING PAID SOCIAL**

Many small businesses look at social media as a place to cultivate community and build relationships with existing and future clientele. And they're right;

that is one of the main purposes of having a cemetery or funeral home social media profile.

But again, that doesn't mean you should ignore paid social media advertising, such as sponsored posts. Organic reach on social media is woefully low, and in some cases, paying for exposure is the only way to reach larger potential audiences.

When done right, this type of advertising doesn't alienate users and can be relatively effective. According to Statista, the average clickthrough rate for social media ads in Q2 of 2020 was 1.3%. It also notes that the average clickthrough rate for search advertising in the same period was 1.7%.

### **MISTAKE #3 NOT INVESTING IN PAID SEARCH**

If you're not investing in paid search, you're missing out on a lot

of clicks. I'm talking about search engine marketing, aka SEM. It's entirely different than search engine optimization (SEO). The latter refers to boosting your site's rank in organic search results. You can't pay to land anywhere in those organic listings, but you can pay for search ads to help ensure that you show up for relevant keywords via ads. That's SEM.

About 60% of people don't see a difference between organic search results and ads, and most will click on the first relevant thing they see, whether it's an ad or not.

At-need families turn to search engines to discover available options, and paid search helps ensure that your firm is one of the top choices they see.

### **MISTAKE #4 ALL YOUR EGGS IN ADVERTISING**

The flip side is that you can't rely solely on paid advertising to generate traffic to a funeral home website or sell burial plots for a cemetery. For one thing, it's cost prohibitive. And even if your ad campaigns are great, if your on-site content isn't up to par, you're not going to drive more calls. You'll simply be throwing ad money away driving traffic without any real business results.

When someone is deciding on death-care services, that's a big purchase – both monetarily and emotionally. Most people will look to your website or social media content to see whether your business is professional and caring.

### **MISTAKE #5 ONLY MARKETING ONLINE**

Just as you can't rely solely on organic social media or paid ads to drive business results, you might not want to devote 100% of your marketing budget to digital channels.

Local offline advertising helps raise awareness of your funeral service firm in the community, and it can work in conjunction with digital efforts to cement your authority and persuade people to find out more about your services. Some offline marketing and advertising options include:

- Billboards
- Direct mail
- Radio advertisements
- Television advertisements
- Local event sponsorships
- Advertisements and sponsorships of community organizations, such as schools, sports teams or libraries.

### **MISTAKE #6 NOT DOING YOUR RESEARCH**

Skip the homework and you usually don't do well on the test, right? This truth also applies to funeral service marketing.

It's tempting, especially for firms just getting into the digital marketing game, to start producing content and running ad campaigns as quickly as possible just to see whether the needle moves. And while you often can move the needle a bit with sheer luck, that luck is fickle and tends to run out quickly.

It's better to spend time and resources researching and defining your target audience, learning more about how they behave online and discovering which keywords are performing right now before you throw marketing spend at campaigns.

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### **MISTAKE #7 TARGETING TOO BROADLY**

The research also has to be good so you can target content appropriately. If you can't answer these questions about your target audience, you might not know enough to create effective marketing content and campaigns:

- Where does your audience live? Businesses that operate multiple funeral homes might need to segment audiences by geolocation.
- Which demographics are covered by the audience? Traditionally, middle-age and older women account for the bulk of deathcare decisionmakers. But death doesn't worry about demographics, so people from all demographics could seek at-need services.

Plus, millennials and other younger people are taking increasing interest in their own legacies, with greater percentages looking into preplanning. Research lets you identify various segments of the market that you can target with different approaches.

- What are their belief systems, and do they align with yours? A Catholic cemetery obviously markets to Catholics, and that makes a big difference in the marketing message.

- What is their income? At the risk of stating the obvious, families with lower incomes are likelier to search for budget options, while those with more disposable income are more likely to invest in extras.

### **MISTAKE #8 FORGETTING ABOUT ANALYTICS**

The increasing number of people choosing cremation is just one example of how the market and consumers change over time. And not all the changes are as

big or visible. Keeping an eye on your marketing analytics helps you spot smaller trends so you can adjust your approach to meet these new demands.

### **MISTAKE #9 NOT MAKING IT EASY ON THE PROSPECT**

You should view all your marketing efforts via the consumer's lens. Touchpoints that are as frictionless as possible are more likely to persuade someone to move forward. Here are just a few ways you can make it easy for potential clientele:

- Explain technical concepts, such as preplanning options or interment rights, in a friendly and simple way.

- Ensure that your website is mobile friendly.

- Create menus and other site architecture that are easy to use. People must be able to find what they need on your site with minimal clicking.

- Use your Google My Business and social profiles to ensure that your business' name, address, phone number and other helpful information are easily available and consistent throughout.

Ultimately, none of us is getting out of this life without making some mistakes, and some of yours might be in marketing. Make sure you learn from them so you can move on to create better campaigns, content and advertising. ☰

*Welton Hong is founder of Ring Ring Marketing and author of Making Your Phone Ring With Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes.*



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