



Don't Take a NAP on Local Search Rankings

An accurate and consistently styled NAP will help generate prime Google search page positioning.

BY WELTON HONG

I probably don't have to tell you how important it is to dominate search ranking results for funeral homes in your area. But, just in case, I can sum it up with a quick joke that's particularly relevant to deathcare. It's not *my* joke, and it's unclear where it originated, but it's been kicking around for a while. Thankfully, I know most funeral professionals have a good sense of humor, so I'm confident everyone reading this will appreciate it in the manner in which it's intended.

Q: Where's the best place to hide a dead body?

A: Page two of Google.

If you liked that one, I'm happy to have shared it. If you didn't,

well, I'll just remind everyone that I didn't write the joke (and sneak out of here quietly).

It's probably funniest to online marketing gurus such as yours truly, but the reason it resonates, like most good jokes, is that it's grounded in a painful truth: If your deathcare website is not on the *first* page of a Google search engine results page (SERP), you're essentially invisible.

If you're on page two? Enjoy your lonely, painfully isolated existence. No one goes there. It's like being in the middle of the ocean or in the wilds of Siberia. Or at a Los Angeles Chargers home game. *You're completely alone.*

This is when I make my usual

clarification, just to be safe: I'm referring specifically to the SERP for businesses in *your industry*, in *your area*. That's where you need to appear on page one.

In other words, if you have a standard funeral home in Lubbock, Texas, you most certainly need to be on page one of search results for "Lubbock funeral homes" and other closely related searches, such as "Lubbock burial," "Lubbock cremation," "Lubbock veteran's funeral," etc.

If you're in Lubbock and your specialty is pet cremation or some other variation on traditional funeral service, that's fine – just make sure you're ranking high for those Lubbock-themed long-tail

keywords (keywords or phrases that are more specific and usually longer than more commonly searched-for keywords).

However, let's say you're in a very competitive area and didn't quite make the first page on Google, which is to say you fell short of the top 10 organic (free) search results. But you're right on the edge at number 11! That's not so bad, right? At least it's the *top* of page two!

Well, I have some bad news: Searchers click on a result from the first results page a whopping 92% of the time. But hey, at least you're in pole position for capturing some of the remaining... let's do the math... 8%.

Frankly, even falling on the first page is pretty much just a participation trophy if your site doesn't have a place on the podium – that is, if you're not in the top handful of sites.

According to 2019 numbers, if you have the #1 spot in Google search results (again, for your specialty and location), searchers will click through to your site a massive 30% of the time if they're searching from a desktop computer. On a mobile device, they'll click through more than 23% of the time.

Number one is the only position where there's a notable difference between desktop and mobile searchers. For the rest, the click-through rates are virtually identical regardless of the device the searcher uses.

If you're in the second spot, you get about a 15% click-through rate, which is quite solid. Third averages about 10% of clicks (hey, at least it's still in the double digits). Once you're down to #4, you're looking at a 6% click-through rate. At #5, it's 4%.

And if you fall in the bottom half of the top 10 – “below the fold,” as we like to say – you're really in trouble. Spot #6 earns only

3% of clicks, and it obviously just gets worse from there.

So, we can see the massive difference between those top several positions on page one of a Google SERP. The website in the #2 spot earns, on average, *five times* as many clicks as the one in the #6 spot, which is why moving up just a few spots in Google search rankings can make such a massive difference for your website. It's also why dropping a few spots can be devastating.

No matter what you may have heard about organic rankings losing their influence, they remain incredibly powerful, especially with more and more people accessing the internet through mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, smart speakers and even smartwatches. In fact, since Google eliminated ads on the right sidebar of results pages, click-through rates on organic results have actually increased.

While it's certainly true that pay-per-click (PPC) ads on results pages have cut into the power of organic rankings, we still haven't seen an especially substantial change.

PPC ads definitely work, and clients see lot of success with them in their campaigns, but they're best employed hand in hand with a strong search engine optimization strategy to increase organic rankings.

The choice isn't whether to focus on SEO or PPC; the most successful approach utilizes the synergy of both. PPC delivers fast results while your SEO improves over time, eventually providing you a one-two punch of paid and organic promotion at the top of Google search pages.

And yes, there *are* search engines other than Google, but as I often note, 90% of online searches occur on Google, and that's where your primary focus must

be. Once everything looks good on Google, feel free to show Bing and Yahoo some love. At the very least, you'll get some good deals over there!

But now I should get back to something I teased all the way back in the headline.

It's NAP Time, Everyone

Some readers probably already know what that means (as it relates to local search marketing), but if you don't, it's imperative that we make it clear right now.

NAP is an acronym for *name, address, phone number*. It's that simple. But despite its simplicity, lots of local businesses find ways to screw it up. Let's make sure that doesn't happen to you.

We can start off with a quick quote from Google itself: “Local results favor the most relevant results for each search, and businesses with complete and accurate information are easier to match with the right searches.”

While it might not sound like Google is saying a whole lot here, it really is quietly providing you with powerful information on how you can rank better in local search results:

1. Google ranks the most *relevant* results best.
2. A big part of what Google considers relevant is your contact information: *who* you are (name), *where* you are (address) and *how* to reach you (phone number).

It's these aspects that make you unique. In fact, even if all three together don't make you unique, at least the address and phone number should.

For example, if your name is Smith and you have a funeral home in a big city, you might have a competitor with a very similar name. But your unique address

and phone number will differentiate you.

This is why it's critically important to make sure your name, address and phone number are accurate and consistent in a few different places.

The primary place is your Google My Business account. Take a look right now to ensure that everything is accurate. It's that important.

Did everything look good? Did you have to fix something, and now it all looks good? Or do you have a lingering question?

Let me see if I can guess what

that question might be: If your deathcare business has several locations, that means it has several addresses and several phone numbers. Here's the thing: For your website (and your business in general) to get the most SEO juice from Google, you want to lock in on just one NAP: one name, one address, one phone number. The more places that NAP combination appears on the internet (in what we call citations), the more authority your business has with Google.

Different addresses can split up and dilute your SEO. So can dif-

ferent phone numbers. Different names are especially devastating.

Thus, you want to strongly promote your business with just one name, address and phone number, even if your firm has multiple locations.

Certainly you should have those other addresses and phone numbers on your website, but whenever you're going to be listed in a directory, just use the address and phone number for your main (or first, if they're all equal) location.

Similarly, once you're sure that you're employing just one NAP, it's just as important to ensure that the NAP is *styled* the same way everywhere it appears.

Here's what that means: Don't use your standard five-digit ZIP code in some places and the nine-digit ZIP+4 in others. Pick one and stick with it. Don't abbreviate your street name (e.g., Blvd.) in some places and spell it out in others. If your business has a suite or unit number, don't call it "Suite" or "Unit" in some places and just use the # sign in others.

Your NAP must be consistent. Determine exactly what style you're going to use and then use only that NAP for Google My Business, as well as in directories, advertisements, social media and any other place in which you list your contact information.

In the digital age, a big part of your branding isn't simply your name. It's your name, address and phone number. The more consistent you are with your NAP, the better you'll rank in search results and the more business your deathcare business will generate. It's as simple as that. ☰

Welton Hong is founder of Ring Ring Marketing (funeralhomeprofits.com) and author of Making Your Phone Ring With Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes.



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