

Your Funeral Home Is a Business; Market It That Way

By Welton Hong

If you own a funeral home, you own a business.

Okay, I know what you might be thinking: Thanks, genius. What's the next great revelation? The earth is round? Water is wet? *Game of Thrones* really shouldn't have rushed that final season?

Fair enough. But here's my point: You know your funeral home is a business, but far too many owners don't really treat it like a business, at least not entirely.

Sure, they balance their books and pay their taxes. They handle all the general day-to-day processes. But when it comes to seriously marketing their funeral homes, it's like they've never even heard of the term.

And that's a problem at a time when many independent funeral homes are facing more challenges than they have in years. Today, having a clear, detailed marketing plan is essential.

It can be easy to fall into online marketing without first creating a strategic plan. You might launch a small website because you know an online presence is now mandatory. A staffer might have talked you into a social media presence, and a couple of short videos could turn into an unplanned YouTube channel.

But growing into online marketing without a plan is bad for business.

Research indicates that planning makes a huge difference in marketing success. Companies with a strategic marketing plan see 24 to 30 percent more sales on average than those that



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Understand Your Target Audience and Aim for It

Knowing who your audience is lets you target advertising for more effective marketing spend. For funeral homes, however, the question of target audience can seem both obvious and elusive.

Obviously, a main audience for funeral home marketing is families in need. And because death doesn't discriminate by any demographic or other factor, that could be anyone.

When marketing at-need services, funeral homes should consider how these families look for services, rather than who these families are. That means taking time to study keyword data on a regular basis so you can tweak your paid ads and on-site content to match current trends.

For funeral homes that provide preplanning, target audience marketing may be more critical. Not everyone preplans, so take time to understand who your clientele is. You may find that your average preplanning clients are within a certain age range or income bracket, and that makes it easier to target marketing to similar individuals.

The Importance of ROI for Funeral Home Marketing

Once you define your brand and target audience, you're ready to launch online marketing campaigns. But sending messages out without a way to measure their success is a mistake.

No matter where your families gather.

Every life has moments to treasure and remember. And, no matter where families gather to celebrate and remember their loved one's life, personalized stationery and keepsakes should be there too.



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don't have one. Some other benefits of a marketing plan include:

- Clear objectives that streamline your efforts to make the most of your time and budget
- Appropriate division of marketing roles, so your staff or vendors aren't overworking each other
- More professional (and brand-appropriate) messaging that positions your funeral home as a leader in the niche and local community

Your funeral home is a business. Here's how to market it that way:

Know Your Brand and Use It as a Foundation

Currently, authenticity is a critical component of successful marketing. Younger audiences look specifically for companies that are transparent and honest, and search engine algorithms award trustworthy websites with higher rankings in SERPs.

One way to breed authenticity in marketing is to remain true to your brand with every post, landing page, or social status you publish.

But to do that, you have to know what your brand is.

You don't have to invest in marketing courses to take this step. Funeral home owners and operators should simply spend some time answering questions such as "What is the purpose of your business?" and "What values does your funeral home stand for?"

If you're stuck, try an "Is/Is Not" matrix brainstorm alone or with your staff.

Take out a piece of paper or a whiteboard. Write "Is" on one side and "Is Not" on another. Begin brainstorming words, phrases, and concepts that your funeral home is and is not. Don't censor or limit answers; simply let the ideas flow. At the end of the brainstorm, you'll have a good overall picture of where your funeral home brand stands.

Funeral homes should collect data on the performance of marketing efforts so they can tweak campaigns in the future and put marketing spend where it generates the best return on investment.

Luckily, online marketing tools make it easier than ever to measure success. Many come with built-in analytical tools that help you understand where your clicks are coming from, how people navigate on (or away) from your site, and which ads are cost-effective when it comes to ROI.

To understand the data housed within these tools, you need to know some basic marketing and advertising key performance indicators (KPIs):

- **Click-through rate (CTR).** This measures what percent of people who see your ad or link click on it. A high CTR means your link or ad is presented in a way (and at a time and place) that performs well. A low CTR indicates changes in messaging, placement, or targeting may be required.
- **Cost per thousand impressions (CPM).** This is what you pay for ads when you pay on a per impression basis. Impressions occur when the ad shows up for someone, but that doesn't mean they click on it.
- **Cost per click (CPC).** This is what you pay each time someone clicks on your ad. It's relevant to PPC (pay-per-click) campaigns.
- **Cost per lead.** This is what you pay for every lead you capture. For example, if you use advertising to drive traffic to a landing page and then ask people to sign up for your funeral home newsletter, each person who signs up is a lead. If you paid \$2 CPC and 100 people clicked the ad, the total cost is \$200. If 10 people signed up for the newsletter, your cost per lead is \$20.

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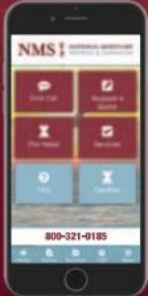
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NMS Welcomes Two New Members to its Team

CLEVELAND, OH— National Mortuary Shipping and Cremation, the funeral directors trusted source for out-of-town deaths, is growing again and is proud to welcome **Hannelore Carpenter** and **Robert Payer** to its team. Hannelore brings 23 years of experience in domestic and international human remains shipping and will be helping funeral directors with all their out-of-town needs. Robert has experience as a small business owner and brings 34 years of customer service experience and will be helping funeral directors with their out-of-town shipping needs as well as cremations at our Cleveland based crematory. NMS is excited to welcome them to their team.



Hannelore Carpenter and Robert Payer

For more information or to receive your free family brochures please call NMS at 800-321-0185 or email your request to info@natlmortuaryshipping.com.

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- **Cost per conversion or acquisition.** This is the average cost of making the sale. It takes some of the other metrics into account. For example, if you run an ad campaign for preplanning services and pay \$1 CPC, you'll pay \$100 for 100 people to click the ad. If only one person out of those 100 buys preplanning services, your cost per acquisition is \$100. Managing funeral home marketing takes knowledge, time, and effort. If this information is starting to sound daunting, remember: Outsourcing tasks to expert partners can be a strong business decision.

You probably wouldn't handle legal matters on your own, and you might work with a CPA on your taxes. Similarly, you can work with expert funeral home marketing companies to ensure your messaging is handled with business precision that drives better results.

Welton Hong is the founder of **Ring Ring Marketing**® and a leading expert in creating case generation from online to the phone line. He is the author of *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*. For more information, visit www.FuneralHomeProfis.com.