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Local SEO: The What, Why, and How for Funeral Homes

By Welton Hong

About 90 percent of internet-using adults in the United States turn to search engines to start their buying journey. Whether they want a pizza, a pair of shoes, or prepaid cremation services, most people start by asking Google or another search engine for more information on the topic.

That's even truer when it comes to local goods and services. More than 95 percent of consumers say their top re-



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source for information about local businesses is the internet.

If you're not online or are hard to find online, that makes it more difficult for consumers to find out about your funeral home or cemetery—making it less likely they learn about your products when they're ready to enter a buying journey or experiencing an at-need situation.

Local SEO refers to the efforts you take to position your site and business to be found online by these users. It includes both onsite and offsite SEO tactics, and it has a high conversion rate. On average, up to 80 percent of people who visit a site based on a local search end up making a purchase eventually.

Those conversion rates are across all industries, so they take into account mobile users checking out online menus when they're craving a pizza or hamburger. Obviously, those searches will convert at a higher rate. But funeral homes with strong local SEO can still expect conversion rates that are higher than those connected with general SEO—in part because you're targeting the audience who can actually use your services.

One of the first steps to targeting local searchers is using the right keywords. You'll need to conduct some keyword research using tools such as Google's Keyword Planner, SEMrush, Marketing Muse, or Ubersuggest—or pay someone to do keyword research for you. Look for locally relevant keywords such as "funeral homes in Miami" or "Florida funeral homes." Choose a relevant phrase with local intent as your primary keyword.

Next, consider semantic keywords. These are phrases people would naturally use when discussing the topic you're covering. For example, if you're writing content about a cemetery in Miami, relevant phrases might include burial, gravesite, headstone, Miami, and south Florida. But people talking about that cemetery would also likely include the name of the streets it's on or the neighborhood it's in, and those are good phrases to include in your copy too.

The right keywords and semantic phrases help clue the search engines in that you're talking about topics relevant to local searchers, and that can help you appear higher in SERPs.

But you also want to provide quality, relevant copy that engages and informs those searchers. That's what keeps them on your page longer, helps ensure they come back later for more information, or compels them to click through on your links to learn more or make an appointment.

A good tip for providing this type of high-quality content is speaking to the specific needs, concerns, and interests of local consumers. Write about the cultural funeral traditions of the area, address location concerns, or talk about weather patterns unique to the region. For example, in Miami, people might be interested to know how funeral homes or crematories keep the remains of loved ones safe if a hurricane threatens to derail services.

Once you handle on-page SEO, turn to off-page SEO efforts. Google reviews are an often overlooked SEO tool. The search engine says that the number of reviews can impact where your pages fall in SERPs. And if you have a decent star rating and a high number of reviews, someone is likely to click your link even if it falls second or third—especially if the higher-ranking pages have fewer reviews or lower star ratings.

Let client families know that Google reviews are important to your business. If families express gratitude or sat-

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isfaction with your services, mention that you can always use more Google reviews. Put tactful requests for reviews on your website and in email communications.

Next, claim your online citations and ensure your NAP data is consistent across all of them. NAP stands for business name, address, and phone number. When this information is presented the same way

across the web, it helps provide authority that you are who you say you are. It also helps ensure Google is certain you're a relevant local business, which can boost your performance in SERPs.

Start with your own pages and ensure NAP data is formatted the same way on all of them. Then check your social media profiles, including Facebook and Google My

Business, to ensure the same. Claim your listing on review sites so you can edit NAP data, and look at listings on local chamber of commerce or industry pages. If your NAP data isn't correct, contact the organization and ask for it to be edited.

By taking these steps, you can boost your local SEO performance, helping the right people find your funeral home when they're

ready to begin preneed planning or have an immediate need for deathcare services.

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.FuneralHomeProfits.com.

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