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# Achieving Top Organic Local Search Rankings

*By Welton Hong*

Internet marketing has evolved a lot in recent years. Businesses are employing a spectrum of tools and techniques that didn't even exist a few years ago.

It's a true sea change, because for decades before the current digital age, advertising a local business such as a funeral home didn't change much from decade to decade—at least since radio and television became ubiquitous.

At any time, a brand-new innovation might change the game completely. However, after all this time, one aspect of successful online marketing hasn't changed: to be successful in 2018 and beyond, your funeral home must rank highly in organic searches in your local area.

By organic results, I'm referring to what everyone naturally thinks of as "search results": the basic unpaid results that occur when someone does a search such as "Glendale cremation" or

"Fort Wayne funerals." That's different from paid results, i.e. pay-per-click (PPC) ads that also show up on search engine results pages (SERPs).

A SERP will display both organic and paid search results. The latter, of course, are advertisements. You pay the search engine a certain amount to display your ad prominently. With PPC ads, you only pay the search engine when someone actually clicks on it to reach your website.

Local search simply means the process by which someone searches for a particular type of business in a specific geographic area. However, the search engine almost



**Welton Hong**

always returns a list of local businesses even if the searcher omits the location, because today's technology makes it easy for the engine to know exactly where you are.

When I talk about ranking well in organic listings, I specifically mean being in the top half of the first page of search results when someone searches for funeral homes in your area. In 2018, most people don't even scroll down to the bottom half. And if you're on the second page, you're essentially invisible.

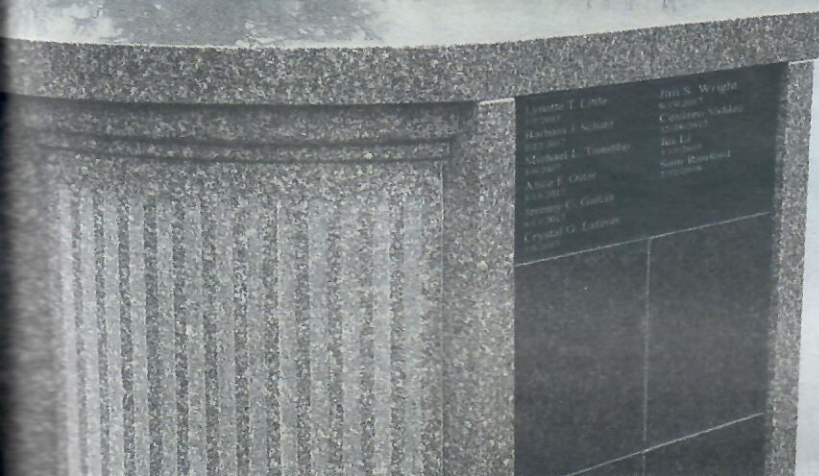
More than nine out of ten searchers never make it past the first page on a Google SERP. In fact, more than 50 percent of searchers choose among the first three providers on the first page.

In other words, you really must be on the first page—and on the top half of it.

For organic search results, the order in which you're listed depends on your business's search engine optimization (SEO), which is largely—but not entirely—based on the SEO of your website.

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While the rise of paid ads has lessened the importance of organic results a bit, they're still critical to your funeral home's success, especially for at-need clientele. Some searchers still prefer to go straight to the organic search results instead of checking out paid funeral home advertising.

In addition to ensuring you have excellent SEO, make sure to build trust with Google. The internet's most-used search engine is constantly refining its algorithm to ensure the top results for any search are the most relevant to searchers.

To build trust with Google, your website must have strong, relevant content; include lots of very strong about us information; link to relevant services and information, have back links from those as well

**CONTINUED ON PAGE A16**

## Indiana Funeral Director's Play Hits the

**NEW HAVEN, IN**— Funeral director and playwright **David Rousculp** is seeing a dream come true: his award-winning script, *My Dead Clown*, goes into full production this July. Rousculp is the general manager at **Harper's Community Funeral Home**, New Haven, IN and is a 1984 graduate of *Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science*.

After winning last year's North West Indiana Script Competition, a group of people approached David about getting the story on stage, and finding the funding to do it. "I was surprised how quickly donations



David Rousculp

came in, not only from the local Fort Wayne people but some of my funeral suppliers as well," said Rousculp.

Bill, a distraught and grieving funeral director, accidentally pours holy water into the embalming machine and brings a ridiculous clown back to life. Death attempts to fix the situation but gives up because the clown is so irritating. The Devil finds out about the illegal resurrection and wants to know how Bill did it. *My Dead Clown* is full of laughs but is also story of love, hope and faith.



The show's goal is to convince people that death is not the end. The play is titled "Let's Face It" and is recorded at Swain Funeral Home. It is a powerful voice

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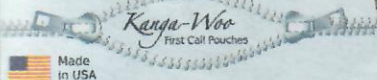
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(which means they also link to your site); and include strongly relevant images and video.

Citations are also quite important. These are mentions of your funeral home's name and address on other webpages—even when there is no link to your website. An example might be an online directory where your business is listed, but there's no actual link to it.

Citations can also be found on local chamber of commerce pages, or on a local business association page that includes your business information. Obituaries and death notices can count as citations.

Additionally, it's very important to ensure that your business's name, main address and main phone number are correct

and consistent on your website, in marketing materials and on-line citations.

If a search engine "sees" a variety of different addresses or phone numbers, it could get confused over whether they're different businesses, and you might not get full credit for all of your citations. Everything in your marketing efforts must be

consistent to get the best possible ranking in organic searches.

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**Welton Hong** is the founder of **Ring Ring Marketing®** and leading expert in creating case generation from online to the phone line. He is the author of *Mastering Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*. For more information, visit [www.FuneralHomeProfits.com](http://www.FuneralHomeProfits.com).



## Embalming Tips & Tools

By Matt Black

### Generalized Embalming of the Hands (Part 3)

In long-term refrigeration it is not unusual for these cooling devices to freeze the body. This is an unfavorable con-

dition. Rigor mortis has three stages. The first stage is when you have rigor mortis instantly. The second stage is when you slow the progress of rigor mortis. The third stage is when you remember is that decomposition is complete. Rigor mortis is the stiffening of the body. Refrigeration slows the process of rigor mortis. Refrigeration slows the putrefaction of cells that is the decomposition of the body. Look at it in a positive way. Rigor mortis is less likely to occur in a positive way. Rigor mortis is less likely to occur in a positive way.

Rigor mortis has three stages.