

Keeping a **Step Ahead**

How YouTube
ads can generate
more preneed.

By **Welton Hong**



Funeral homes must do all they can to stay a pace ahead, and in case there's anyone who hasn't noticed, online video is more prevalent than ever.

YouTube, for example, is the world's *second-largest search engine*, second only to parent company Google, with a market share larger than Bing, Yahoo! and Ask combined.

Consider that:

- ▶ 68% of YouTube viewers have used the platform make a purchase decision.
- ▶ 91% of the U.S. online population is reached by YouTube.

What's happening is that people are turning to the platform to *solve a problem*, much as they do with any other search engine. You've probably done the same yourself: How do I safely check this propane tank for leaks and then hook it up to my grill? How do I fix the area of my ceiling that was damaged by a leak? How do I create an amazing mirror glaze for my cake?

The easiest way to learn is visually, and most people today would rather *watch and learn* than *read about* a solution to their problems.

I know you're thinking that creating video is outside your wheelhouse, but I assure you, it's not as complicated as it might sound. Lots of YouTube content is shot on smartphones these days, and it's never been easier to create video content. Plus, YouTube's ad network is a simple and cost-effective way for you to take advantage of its success.

YouTube for Preneed

Now, despite YouTube's popularity, I'm not saying you should run out and start your own channel first thing. Although deathcare content is popular on YouTube – Caitlin Doughty, for example, has more than 1.3 million subscribers – you must think very carefully about the time and resources required to run your own channel.

As I always say, social media is best utilized for generating preneed, and the same is true regarding YouTube content. Traditional search engine optimization and search engine marketing are still your best options for generating at-need calls.

On the other hand, I do think creating and running YouTube ads on other popular channels can offer you significant ROI for preplanning sales. Because preneed sales has a more complicated (and longer) purchasing cycle, branding plays a significant role in a consumer's buying decision. You'll have a tough time finding a better way to high-

light your brand than video, as it's the best way for someone to see you as a person and community member, not just a faceless business.

A More Complicated Buying Journey

The buying journey is more complex than ever before. These days, it's not uncommon for someone to have at least four or five separate "touches" (contact with your advertising) before making a purchase decision. This is especially the case regarding preneed.

For example, it usually starts with someone performing a search on their phone or seeing an ad on social media, which will lead to visiting your funeral home's website, but they'll likely leave your site before moving forward.

Later, while they're on their computer, they'll receive a retargeting ad, which will lead to another website (or landing page) visit. In most cases, only after several touches will they even consider downloading your guide or filling out a form for more information.

That's when the real work begins with nurturing the lead – following up with a targeted game plan that may require a phone call, an email and so on.

But just to get to the nurturing part, you first must engage with potential buyers in a more personable way so you stand out from your competition. YouTube ads are great for achieving that goal.

YouTube Ad Types

There are many types of ad formats on YouTube, each designed for specific results depending on where a potential buyer has traveled down the sales funnel. For our purposes, here are two worth considering:

- ▶ **Bumper Ads:** Short (usually six seconds), non-skippable ads. These are great for brand awareness and often used for retargeting. They also come with a lower CPM (cost per thousand impressions) relative to other YouTube ads.
- ▶ **TrueView Ads:** These ads are skippable and would run during a stream of popular YouTube content of your choice. A viewer can skip after five seconds. You only pay if the viewer watches at least 30 seconds, watches the end of the video or clicks on the ad. In many ways, it acts just like a PPC ad (pay-per-click).

YouTube Ads: TV Advertising on Steroids

Consider how viewing habits have changed over the past decade:

- ▶ Mobile is growing: 60% of watch time happens on mobile devices.
- ▶ More people are watching YouTube on televisions; it's now *the fastest-growing way* people engage with the platform.
- ▶ Viewers pay *three times more attention* to ads that are relevant to them versus ads aimed at a generic audience (such as you would find on broadcast advertising).

While cable and satellite viewership continues to decrease, YouTube viewership keeps going up.

Also, you can target based on location, age group, affinity, interest and even what Google calls "deeper demographics," such as marital status, ed-

What also separates YouTube from regular TV advertising is that it lets you *engage* with potential clients.

ucation, home ownership and household income.

What also separates YouTube from regular TV advertising is that it lets you engage with potential clients by allowing them to click through to a landing page for further action. You can't do that on cable.

YouTube ads are effective in the same way pay-per-click advertising is effective – they let you cut to front of the line on search engine results pages (in this case, YouTube content) by placing your ad in front of potential buyers actively searching for the solution you provide.

How YouTube Advertising Can Work

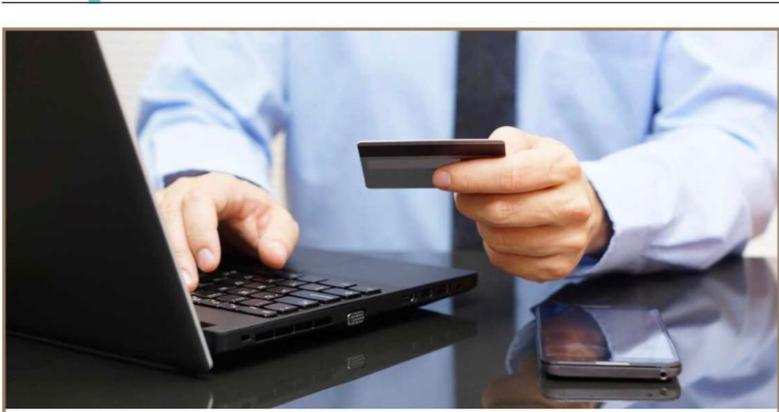
There are many ways to use YouTube ads to fit in with your existing preneed marketing strategies. If you offer a preneed planning guide for download or a virtual webinar, you could run your ad on popular channels that provide content around family and estate planning, wills and trusts, or caregiving.

Your ad could follow standard video sales letter format, with a strong call to action to download the guide or sign up for the webinar. Again, you'll only be charged if someone watches at least 30 seconds or clicks on the link in your ad.

You could also create a six-second bumper ad for retargeting, which would be shown to those who visited your website or landing page but didn't convert the first time.

YouTube ads combine the interactivity of traditional pay-per-click and social media ads with the ability to build brand awareness just like TV broadcast ads, making video a proven and effective way to stay one step ahead of the competition. ☰

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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