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MOBILE MARKETING: THE KEY TO RAPIDLY INCREASING AT-NEED CALLS

by Welton Hong

For some local businesses owners, the very idea of online marketing is scary — even now, as we turn the corner in 2018. Sure, they know you can't do business in the twenty-first century without an email address and a website. But some still consider that as much as they're willing to do to promote themselves on the internet. They're just not comfortable with much beyond that.

I've found that to be particularly true in certain specific industries, and death care is one of them. Some funeral home owners have been excited to promote themselves online, and I greatly hope you're among them.

However, many others still struggle with the transition from older marketing methods, such as print advertising and Yellow Pages listings, to online tools such as search engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising, social media and remarketing. All of those are important elements of a successful online marketing campaign, but right now let's explore another tool. Mobile marketing has proven to be exceptionally beneficial in driving case counts, particularly among at-need clients.

If you're unfamiliar with mobile marketing, that's fine. It's still not widely understood by many traditional brick-and-mortar local businesses. However, that's part of what makes it so useful: Most of your local competitors probably are not employing mobile marketing yet, so you can get a head start on them.

The term "mobile marketing" covers any type of campaign that's specifically intended to reach mobile users. That mostly refers to people using smartphones, but it also can include tablets, and lately, even smartwatches. The users have a portable device that's connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to the internet. The nature of at-need death care services lends itself to mobile marketing. If you're at a hospital and a loved one has passed, it's natural to go to your smartphone or tablet to determine a course of action. Your desktop or laptop computer simply are not available.

Mobile marketing also specifically allows for geotargeting. You create a campaign that reaches out selectively to people within a given geographic area. At-need clientele virtually always seek out a funeral home that's nearby, so you can target such individuals based on their proximity to you.

Another technique is geofencing, which lets you build a "virtual fence" around a particular location to send advertising messages specifically within that area. A hospital would be a perfect location to utilize this tool for at-need cases. These methods take advantage of the fact that mobile devices now upload highly specific location data in real time. You can essentially "track" anyone who is using a cell phone that has its location service turned on (very few people turn it off).

You can also create advertisements on search engines such as Google to target very specific locations. When someone in the target area searches for "funeral services," "funeral homes," "cremation," or related terms, your ad is positioned to immediately catch the searcher's eye.

No one wants to go through a complex process to reach any business, and this is especially true for a grieving family member immediately following a death. Mobile marketing click-to-call ads let them call your business with a single touch on their phones.

That one touch converts a potential client from online to a live phone conversation, letting you provide answers and explain how you can help this person in a time of need.

Beyond that, always make sure your business' website is mobile-friendly. Far too many commercial websites today still display poorly on mobile devices. If the old-school "desktop" version of your site is all they get when they pull it up on a smartphone, the vast majority of visitors will exit immediately.

A website that's optimized for mobile devices is clear and easy to navigate on small screens. It will take advantage of mobile technology, such as the click-to-call function I mentioned previously. Additionally, Google "punishes" the rankings of websites that are not optimized for mobile viewing, and that's been true for some time.

There are ways to remedy this issue, such as having a website with responsive design, or even creating a separate site specifically for mobile devices. If you work with a highly qualified online marketing expert to develop a thoughtful, professional mobile marketing campaign, you will see excellent results. **FBA**



Welton Hong is the founder of Ring Ring Marketing, which specializes in helping funeral homes convert leads from online directly to the phone line. The firm has helped many funeral homes, cemeteries and combination operations bolster their online marketing. Welton also is a speaker at funeral home conferences and the author of Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes. Contact him at welton@ringringmarketing.com or (888) 383-2848.