



A Digital Boost



Six content marketing case studies from which funeral firms can learn to improve their own digital marketing performance.

BY WELTON HONG



What can funeral service firms learn from organizations like Cleveland Clinic or Mercedes-Benz? Deathcare may be worlds away from luxury-car sales, but it turns out there's some crossover in potential marketing goals between traditional funeral homes and the German automaker and other companies. Check out these content marketing case studies and consider what you can learn from them about improving your firm's digital marketing performance.

high readership to the Cleveland Clinic blog.

FUNERAL FIRM TAKEAWAYS

Emotions are extremely powerful in driving consumer purchases. Advertisements that contain purely emotional content perform two times better than ads that put rational content first. And when people have an emotional relationship with your business, they are more likely to recommend it to others.

Deathcare is inherently emotional, which makes it critical to include this factor in your marketing. Some tips:

- Share testimonials from families you've served.
- Acknowledge grief in helpful and tactful ways in content marketing.
- Share, as appropriate, your own emotional journeys with grief.

worked. Within two weeks, a million people had played and more than 10,000 had shopped on the brand's site.

FUNERAL FIRM TAKEAWAYS

The takeaway is *not* that death-care firms should create silly mobile games involving caskets and urns. Unless you have a super-quirky audience, a mobile "Protect Grandma's Ashes" game is unlikely to go well for your brand.

But you *should* be looking for ways to make your content interactive. When people feel like they're part of the process, they're more engaged with the information being shared. Consider creating quizzes, designing content that can be clicked through or asking people to participate in polls or comments on social media.

1 CLEVELAND CLINIC

Cleveland Clinic stumbled onto a powerful content marketing strategy – tapping into human emotion. It originally created a video designed for in-house training purposes whose goal was to ensure that all team members worked daily to support the organization's "Patients First" value.

The video featured small stories – depictions of families and loved ones in health-care situations – and posed the question, "If you could stand in someone else's shoes, would you treat them differently?"

It was an overwhelming success in-house, so the Cleveland Clinic marketing team released it publicly, to equal success. The video racked up millions of views and drove

2 COLGATE-PALMOLIVE

Colgate-Palmolive is a household name, and chances are you have one or more of its products in your home right now. But it still has to work to compete online. In one recent campaign, the company used gamified content to drive interaction and awareness of its gift set products around Christmas.

The campaign allowed people to present a Colgate-Palmolive proof of purchase to play a game online. The game integrated selfie videos and had the player trying to pop bubbles with their nose. The concept was silly, but it

3 JETBLUE

JetBlue is winning content marketing by designing campaigns around very real issues passengers often deal with. For example, it created a marketing campaign around a rewards program involving babies crying on airplanes. It's a known problem many people have dealt with and one that doesn't have a real solution; after all, you can't predict or control whether infants will cry when they're in an uncomfortable situation.

To demonstrate the airline's understanding of the issue, JetBlue launched a program that gave its passengers rewards points any time they were on a plane where a baby cried. It then built a market-

ing campaign around that concept. Other topics addressed with content by JetBlue included passengers bringing strong-smelling food on flights and how to get out of the window seat to stretch your legs or visit the restroom when other passengers are sleeping.

FUNERAL FIRM TAKEAWAYS

JetBlue started with a simple concept: The content it created needed to address very specific customer challenges and concerns. Funeral homes and other deathcare companies should do the same thing.

Your deathcare blog content should address the right keywords, yes, but it should also integrate questions your customer base is asking *you*. Talk to account/sales reps, funeral directors and customer service staff to find out what families

are asking most often and create compelling content about those topics.

4 AARP

AARP provides a great example of data-backed content marketing. The organization constantly polls its target audience, asking for feedback on its website, via social media and in direct mailings. AARP uses that information to decide which topics to include in its blogs, newsletters and other resources.

And with more than half of members reading more than 75% of the publications they receive from AARP, this attention to detail is paying off.

FUNERAL FIRM TAKEAWAYS

This takeaway ties into the one for the JetBlue case study. Use any means you can to find out what your audience wants and needs. Some ways funeral firms can get feedback:

- Publish polls or questionnaires on websites.
- Ask specific questions during webinars and lunch and learns.
- Have open discussions with families you serve about what they want to know and what might help them most through the process.

- Post polls and questions on social media.
- Send direct mailers that include a response card.

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5 DIVE RITE

Dive Rite makes and sells technical scuba diving gear. The brand has been a leader and innovator in the space since 1984, but it lost market share at the beginning of the 21st century as copycat competitors found ways to market their own products online.

The company discovered that divers were not aware of the quality difference between Dive Rite products and knock-off brands, so it embarked on a content marketing journey to change this.

The journey began with a content audit to understand what content the company already had – and what was and wasn't working. Dive Rite worked with content marketing experts to create a content

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The campaign drove an impressive 87 million Instagram impressions and garnered two million likes. And Mercedes got 150 photographs it could use for future campaigns.

FUNERAL FIRM TAKEAWAYS

The challenge of engaging younger demographics is one to which many deathcare firms can relate. For firms that want to build awareness in the next generation of family decision makers or engage with younger audiences about preplanning options, taking a page out of Mercedes-Benz's book is a good move.

Social media should never be

the only place you build content and engagement, as you don't own those platforms. But Instagram and other platforms *are* where many younger individuals hang out online. Showing up there is a good way to begin the conversation with them.

To decide where to concentrate your efforts, consider the demographics of the audience you want to target. Then research the current user demographics of various social platforms to find one that matches your needs. For example, Instagram users are primarily men and women age 18 to 44. On Twitter, more than 38% of users are 25 to 34, and on Facebook, most users fall between the ages of 18 and 54.

Case studies are more than sales tools for marketing agencies. Whether you're reading about the successes of other deathcare firms or just general marketing strategies in a variety of industries, you can find helpful takeaways for marketing your own business.

Start with some of the case studies mentioned here, but don't be afraid to do your own reading and research as you work to improve content marketing efforts for your funeral home. ☰

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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strategy that included paid search engine marketing and the hiring of subject matter experts who could write about diving in a way that best served clients.

The strategy paid off with a 65% increase in website traffic, increased referral rates and more awareness of the brand as a leader in the space.

FUNERAL FIRM TAKEAWAYS

Dive Rite is a great example of the power of some of the most basic content marketing tools. This case study also illustrates the point that these foundational tools can be overlooked without the right guidance.

Funeral firms that aren't get-

ting the website traffic or conversions they want should look at some of these elements to ensure that their content marketing strategy is comprehensive and well-targeted. Some good steps to start:

- Undertake a content audit.
- Launch paid search engine marketing (search ads).
- Plan at least three months of content in advance.
- Set up an editorial calendar that lets you publish interrelated content to your website, Google My Business profile and social media pages for multichannel marketing.

6 MERCEDES-BENZ

Mercedes-Benz has plenty of brand awareness. What it did not have was good engagement or strong sales with younger demographics.

To improve awareness and engagement with younger drivers, the car company turned to a platform on which it knew those consumers were present: Instagram. It launched a user-generated content campaign by providing five photographers with the option to win a Mercedes. Each was given the chance to photograph the Mercedes CLA; whoever got the most likes got to keep the car.