



To Get Ahead, You Need to Cheat

by Welton Hong

If you ever watched movies or television series from the 1980s or 1990s involving a high school or college setting, you’ve likely seen someone create a cheat sheet. From answers written on the bottom of a shoe to notes scribbled on the palm of a hand, these cheats rarely work, and the culprits often learn a valuable lesson about the importance of honesty and doing the right thing.

Don’t worry. This article isn’t about that kind of cheating. Obviously, one of the most important things you can do with your deathcare marketing efforts is build trust with local families. You wouldn’t do anything that might be considered dishonest, and I’d never suggest you do.

Instead, this article is about laying the groundwork to make it as easy as possible for search engine bots and artificial intelligence or AI to understand what your deathcare website’s pages are about, making Google more likely to rank them higher in search results for the right keywords. These kinds of “cheats” actually make your pages *more* transparent!

Keywords as a “Cheat” for Search Engines

Keywords are technically a “cheat” for search engines. Consider the example of a page about budget-conscious funeral options. Two phrases that come up when doing keyword research for this topic are “affordable funeral arrangements” and “cheap funeral arrangements.”

You could technically write an entire page or blog post on budget-conscious funeral options without using these keyword phrases even once. The content might even be exceptional and inform the reader, and a

human reader would have no problem understanding that the content was about affordable or cheap funeral arrangements.

But while machine language processing (the technology that lets search engines understand what webpages are about) has come a long way, search engines still need some help connecting the dots. By incorporating those key phrases, you confirm for the search engines that your content is indeed about those topics and might be a good match for those queries.



Keywords Are Your Cheat Sheet for Search Engines

What Other “Cheat Sheet” Items Should You Employ?

The right keywords are a critical place to start when it comes to optimizing your content to appear as high as possible in search engine results, but it's not enough to add the best keywords to your pages. That's true even if you're adding keywords to high-quality, well-written pages that demonstrate authority on your topic.

While quality is incredibly important to content marketing success, chances are another deathcare firm is also investing in high-quality content and has the knowledge and experience to back it up. Go the extra mile by using some of the tips below to ensure search engines know what your pages are about so they can rank higher.

Add keywords in the right places.

Years ago, the SEO game was all about keyword density: You needed to get a key phrase on your page a certain number of times to stay competitive in search results. Today, it's far more about placing keywords in the *right places*.

Search engines recognize the following locations as “important” for demonstrating what a page is about:

- **The URL:** Including a version of the keyword in

the URL for the page helps search engines (and humans) easily see what the page might be about.

- **H1 Titles:** The H1 header for your page should include a keyword whenever possible to maximize relevance to queries.
- **Subheadings:** Incorporating the primary keyword or similar phrases into a few H2 or H3 subheadings enforces what your page is about.

Meta titles (or page titles) can be any length, but Google only displays about 50 to 60 characters, so it's best to keep it short.

It's also a good idea to get the keyword into the first paragraph or two if possible and at least once in the body copy. However, you should never “force” keywords into your copy at the expense of quality or readability. If the human reader might stumble when reading or consider the content too repetitive or odd when you add keywords into these places, leave them out.

You have other “cheats” at your disposal to inform search engines.

Write great meta descriptions and titles.

The meta description and title help search engines know what you think your content is about. They’re usually displayed with the clickable link for your page in the search results, so they can help human searchers know whether your page might be the best match for their query.

Meta titles (or page titles) can be any length, but Google only displays about 50 to 60 characters, so it’s best to keep it short. Additionally, keeping it short helps ensure the search engine can easily parse the content and discern what you mean.



Even starting with keywords and meta descriptions can make a big difference in SEO performance, especially when you pair it with high-quality content your audience wants to see.

The same is true for the meta description. Google will display up to about 160 characters. You can typically fit one or two decent sentences in that count, which is plenty of space to summarize what a page is about and invite the reader to view it.

When possible, include the primary keyword or a version of it as soon as possible in both the meta title and description. It’s worth spending a bit of time on these short blurbs—if you don’t write one, Google will pick a sentence from your content it believes demonstrates what your page is about and include that instead. (It’s always better you make that choice than leaving it to chance.)

Use internal anchor text wisely.

Internal anchor links—links within your content to other pages on your site—help visitors follow a path to conversion. They also help search engines understand what your pages are about and how they relate to one another.

Make the most of internal links and anchor text by linking to the most relevant information and using clear anchor text. One way to do this is to consider what might be a good keyword for the page you’re linking to and use that as the anchor text.

For example, a funeral home site might have a blog post on the benefits of preplanning. Which two of the following links would be most relevant to include on this page?

- A link to a preplanning service landing page
- A link to a blog post about the costs of preplanning
- A link to a post on how to write a eulogy for a loved one

The first two are most relevant. While preplanning their arrangements, some people might be interested in writing their own eulogy, but the target audience for the eulogy blog post is more likely family members who have experienced a loss. It might be better to link to that blog post from pages about at-need services.

A possible keyword for the blog post on the costs of preplanning might be “costs of preplanning a funeral,” and that makes a great anchor text when linking to that article. You don’t need special tools to figure out some of this—as you can see, common sense goes a long way!

Use structured data.

The ultimate “cheat sheet” for search engine bots, *structured data*, refers to markup language (or code) that tells the search engine bot exactly what a piece of content is.

Effectively, markup says stuff like, “Here is a sub-heading, which means this is what the following paragraph is about,” or “Here is a question, and here is the answer that goes with it.”

You can use structured data to indicate phone numbers, addresses, business names, authors, and many other important content elements.

Some of these SEO “cheat sheets” are easier to incorporate into your deathcare marketing than others. For example, if you’re not sure how to manage structured data, you might want to work with a marketing or web design agency.

Even starting with keywords and meta descriptions can make a big difference in SEO performance, especially when you pair it with high-quality content your audience wants to see. **■**

Welton Hong is the founder of Ring Ring Marketing and the author of *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*.