

Three Key Elements for Funeral Marketing Success

By Welton Hong



Coca-Cola spends a lot on advertising, and those dollars have an impact. You'd be hard pressed to find a person of any age in America who didn't recognize the brand's signature red can or scripted logo, and millions of people associate those visuals with refreshment.

In 2018 alone, the beverage brand dropped about \$5.8 **billion** on advertising, and that doesn't even include its marketing budget. With that much green backing the product, you'd expect a huge return.

Funeral homes don't have billions to drop on advertising and branding, but that doesn't mean you can't get a great return on marketing.

You don't need billions of dollars. You **do** need the following:

1. Plan

Did you ever watch *The A-Team* in the 1980s?

If you missed it, here's the short version: A combat unit of four is wanted for crimes they didn't commit. While being chased by the military, they lend their talents to people who need help with various problems.

The leader of this group is Hannibal Smith. He's the man with the plan, and fans know his catchphrase:

"I love it when a plan comes together."

The point is this: The A-team has brawn, beauty, and plenty of skills. But without a **plan**, they'd be snapped up by the military police well before their efforts to help others inevitably fell flat.

Be like the A-Team when it comes to marketing. Put a plan together to guide your marketing efforts and spending.

Some important aspects of a marketing plan:

- **Goals.** Make them SMART: **specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.**

"We want to increase preplanning contracts this year" isn't a SMART goal. "We want 10% more people to purchase preplanning services in 2021 than did in 2020" **is** a SMART goal.

Start with business goals and create marketing goals that support them. If you want 10% more conversions, for example, you might need to drive 200% more traffic. To create these goals correctly, you need data about how your marketing is currently performing.

- **Budget.** Know how much you can spend on marketing. Then decide how best to use those resources to meet your goals. Having a defined budget also lets you correctly address the "attainable" factor for SMART goals.

If you know your current acquisition cost is \$500 per conversion, getting 30 new preplanning signups a month with a marketing budget of \$5,000 a month may not be reasonable. You need to lower your signup goal, decrease your acquisition cost, or both—this knowledge helps inform your goals and plans.

- **People.** Your marketing plan should include people to handle relevant tasks. That doesn't necessarily mean in-house employees. You may plan to outsource all or part of your marketing efforts this year.

- **Channels.** Understand which channels you're going to concentrate on this year. Most small businesses can't cover all channels, so pick a few that resonate well with your audience. Some examples of channels include your website, social media platforms, YouTube and other videos sites, SEO, and PPC advertising.

2. A Value Proposition

This is what makes you different—it's why someone would choose your funeral home, crematory, or deathcare service over others. Some common value propositions include:

- **Price.** If you offer budget services that aren't otherwise available in the area, you may be able to win clientele based on price.
- **Quality.** Deathcare firms with excellent reputations and online reviews may be able to position themselves as providing high-quality services families can trust.
- **Luxury.** The opposite of price, this value prop usually involves offering a level of product or service that goes above and beyond the norm.
- **Service.** Some businesses offer value via the level of service they provide. For example, you might offer classes to help people understand preplanning and reps to walk families through the entire process.

A value proposition lets you create marketing and ad copy that helps consumers understand why you might be the right death care partner for them or their families.

3. Knowledge of Your Audience

If you've never defined a target audience or marketing personas, take time to do so this year. Then reevaluate those definitions each year and update, as necessary.

A marketing persona is a fictional person that represents the "ideal consumer" for your business. Most businesses have a few target marketing personas because they provide different levels or types of service.

Here's a quick example of a few marketing personas a small-town funeral home that has a partnership with a local crematory might have:

- **Evelyn Evaluator:** Female age 45 to 65 in charge of making major decisions for older loved ones or the family in general. Is interested in honoring loved ones in the best way possible while also keeping the budget realistic for funeral services or other options.
- **Pete or Patricia Planner.** A person approaching or of retirement age that's interested in planning their own final arrangements. Goals might include removing some burden from their family, ensuring their wishes are known and followed, and saving money in the long-term.
- **Budget Bradley or Betty.** Someone who is planning ahead and wants the least expensive arrangements possible. May also refer to next of kin in an at-need situation with a tight budget. May be interested in the cost-saving benefits of cremation but not know a lot about those options.

The blog and social media posts that would engage Pete Planner might be different from those that would capture Evelyn Evaluator's interest, which means you may need to create marketing campaigns that target them separately.

Take some time to develop deeper marketing personas, and you can more easily target marketing so it performs better.



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Welton is a leading expert in helping funeral homes convert leads from online directly to the phone line. He's the author of the book *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*. Learn more at FuneralHomeProfits.com.