



Powerhouse Marketing with Welton

By Welton Hong

Don't Forget the Basic Equation

This isn't the first time I've mentioned this point, and it certainly won't be the last time. But given the ongoing challenges and uncertainty in the deathcare profession right now, I think it's best to provide a reminder of what works for marketing your funeral home.

The equation is incredibly simple: *Google = at-needs. Social media = preneeds.*

I'll grant that while the equation itself is simple, execution is a little more complex. With that said, it's imperative to remember this golden rule and to reflect on it whenever you're unsure about your approach.

To attract clientele with immediate or imminent needs—either someone has just died, or death is impending—by far the best use of your marketing dollars is to invest in *search engine marketing* (SEM). And the best way to do that is to leverage Google Ads.

Conversely, to attract individuals and families who are preplanning, you're best off focusing on *social media*.

To be clear, I'm not saying SEM is the *only* way to attract at-need clientele. And I'm not saying social media is the *only* channel that generates preplanning business.

Honestly, I'm a strong proponent of omnichannel marketing, which is to say your funeral home should be utilizing a variety of marketing channels, letting you reach different audiences and providing more options for individuals and families in your area.

Although my firm specializes in digital marketing, I don't object to funeral home clients employing offline marketing. In fact, I recommend it! My philosophy is simple: If you're at least breaking even on any marketing channel—be it online marketing, print advertising, direct mails, community outreach, etc.—it's

worth using.

However, as it relates specifically to digital marketing, certain techniques simply work much better for particular results than others.

I liken it to using the right tool for the job: You could use a vegetable peeler to remove a Phillips-head screw, but a Phillips-head screwdriver works much better. You also could use a brick to hammer a nail, but... you get the idea.

Regarding SEM and social media, it's true that social media can have a small, mostly indirect effect on attracting at-need consumers. And SEM can have a similar effect on preneed consumers. However, by far the biggest bang for the buck occurs when you employ SEM for at-needs and social media for preneeds.

If a family has suffered a recent death or expects loss to be imminent, they're considered "problem-aware" consumers. They need a resting place for their loved one, and they need to arrange it immediately.

Social media won't move the needle with this audience. They'll go to Google and search, for example, for "local funeral homes" or "funeral homes near me." The best way to get the attention of these problem-aware consumers is to employ SEM, highlighting your firm in Google search results.

Of course, it's also beneficial to ensure your funeral home website also has excellent search engine optimization (SEO). This is what most benefits your organic (unpaid) rankings on search results pages.

Again, SEM works by targeting users with *intent*. Social media doesn't do that. In general, most people hate being "sold to" on social media. You certainly can promote your business through social media, but the idea there isn't to harness intent. With social media, your number-one goal

is to create *awareness*.

That's why social media is the best tool for engaging potential funeral home clientele who are not currently "problem aware." Instead of harnessing intent, you're looking to create it. What you post on social media acts as a steady reminder to local individuals and families that they should plan for their final rest and consider the options you provide.

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