

Marketing

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To Drive Case Counts Online,

Content Is KING

So, you've realized the future success of your funeral home requires at least some investment in online marketing. (At least I hope you have, because in 2018, that's absolutely the case.)

You see how the digital age has transformed the way people decide on all sorts of service providers, and that now clearly includes even traditional industries such as death care. You know you need to reach today's audience where it is: on the internet.

So you invest in an attractive website. You make sure it has all the basic information on who you are, where you're located, the various services you offer. You've pretty much covered all the important stuff, right?

Not quite. A well-designed, professional-looking website is great – don't get me wrong – but all you've done is pour the foundation. Now you need to build a great marketing tool on top of it. And that's what every business website ultimately is, even for a funeral home: a marketing tool.

If your site isn't doing everything it can to market your business, much of your effort is going to waste. An overly basic, content-deficient site doesn't help your ranking in local online searches. It

doesn't communicate trustworthiness and credibility to visitors. It doesn't differentiate you from your local competition. It just ... exists.

The simple truth is that there's little point to having a website if you don't put it to work for you. Don't think of it as simply an online alternative to your physical location. It's not simply your "internet home," containing a little basic description and your contact information. This is a place where you can seal the deal with both pre-need and at-need clientele and

really drive case counts – if you ensure it’s filled with relevant content.

Content Is King

It’s worth repeating: Content is king. That’s a phrase you’ll often hear in relation to online businesses, but it’s just as true for local brick-and-mortar businesses, including funeral homes. My hope is that all funeral home owners and directors will take this to heart, because it’s vitally important to successfully promoting your services online.

Actually, let me take it a step further: When it comes to using your website as a promotional tool, content isn’t just the king. It’s the king, the queen, the dukes and duchesses – the whole court, honestly.

Effectively marketing your business online comes down to one thing and one thing only: high-quality content. It’s how you get your website ranked higher than your competitors, and that’s how you convert visitors into clientele.

Here’s why: The major search engines, particularly Google (the dominant leader in online search), are primarily focused on creating the best possible experience for users. That’s why these platforms place a massive emphasis on ranking sites that clearly benefit their visitors the most. And the main way they make that determination is by reviewing the quantity and quality of content on a particular site.

While text is the first priority in this regard, elements such as photos, graphics and even videos are also important. Using all these aspects in a complementary fashion lets you tell your story and market your business in the most effective way.

The key is to blend all of these elements and incorporate keywords

into all of it in a usable way. The quality of the text – including headlines, descriptions, FAQs and even photo captions – is the most critical factor in differentiating your site from those that shovel a bunch of poorly incorporated keywords into virtually unreadable copy.

In fact, Google’s Panda and Penguin updates (changes to the Google algorithm to make search better for users) altered the company’s algorithms to seek out low-quality content intended to fool the rankings with dubious copy that provides human visitors little-to-no benefit.

With every update, these algorithms put increasing emphasis on the relevancy of the written content of your site and how effective it is in promoting a beneficial customer service. Google’s spiders are that good now; they can “read” the content and know just how good it is (or isn’t). (Spiders are bits of code that “crawl” the internet and report back to Google on what they discover. It’s an odd term, I know.)

You’re Writing for Humans and Search Engines

Creating content that satisfies both human visitors and search engine spiders is a tricky balance. Be sure to keep both elements in mind.

Good written content doesn’t just satisfy the Google spiders, and it wouldn’t be appropriate for a funeral home website anyway. You don’t want to have a bunch of text that’s just arbitrarily packed with keywords intended to punch up your local search rankings. You’re in the business of communicating reverence and trustworthiness with potential clientele. All the copy on your site must factor in these considerations.

Detail Matters

If you do choose to write your website copy in-house, make sure it’s highly informative, clear and grammatical.

Yes, search engines have developed to the point they can even mark you off for misspellings and grammatical mistakes. But just as critically, such errors will undermine your credibility with human visitors. Just as you must be detail-oriented in the death-care services you provide, your website must showcase that same attention to detail.

Think Outside the Box

When creating content for your website, don’t just include the obvious elements. Consider writing articles that will educate and inform people considering your services. What do they need to know? What are all the considerations for pre-planning a funeral? What do families need to do first after suffering an unexpected loss? What information can you provide to walk them through this process?

The more high-quality content you have, the better. With that said, make sure the content is original. If Google or other search engines determine the copy has been swiped wholesale from another site – or even if it’s just been tweaked a bit here or there – that will severely hurt your SEO. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but take universal concepts and standards and put them in your own words.

Also, don’t forget that search engines (and your human visitors) aren’t just looking for text content. Images play a huge role in bolstering your website content. Videos do as well. Websites that rank highly include all of these aspects, and images and video are also powerful tools for converting site visitors into clientele. •