

TAKING THE RELAY APPROACH TO FUNERAL HOME MARKETING

BY WELTON HONG



It's time to start thinking of your funeral home marketing efforts as a relay race instead of just one person's endurance run.

There are 1,609 meters in a mile, making a mile-long run roughly equivalent to a 4x400 meter relay in total length. The difference is that someone who runs a mile race runs all of it; in the 4x400, four runners each complete a quarter of the total race.

The current world-record holder for the mile run, as of this writing, is Hicham El Guerrouj. He completed it in 3:43:13.

We can all agree that's fast, but the 4x400 meter relay runners can cover almost the same distance with close to a second to spare. The current world-record holders here are a team of U.S. runners that completed the race in 2:54:29.

You don't have to be a runner or sports aficionado to understand why the relay runners come in with a faster time. Even with the extra time it takes to align and hand off a baton, a fresh runner sprinting 400 meters is generally faster than an equivalent runner hitting the middle or later part of a mile-long run. It comes down to having fresh resources on the track.

That same concept works in funeral home marketing—or any type of online marketing. Fresh resources make a huge difference. Here are some tips for passing the baton to others without giving up complete control of the marketing race.

Work with a Team

If you're trying to handle all your marketing efforts solo, you're going to run out of resources well before you cross any type of finish line.

Did you know one blog post or article can take between eight and 10 hours on average to ideate, research, write, edit, and publish? A few pieces of content a week, and you're out of time without even covering other important marketing tasks such as online ads.

Chances are, if you're reading this, you're not a marketing professional to begin with. Your personal expertise might lie in funeral home administration, customer service, or other aspects of deathcare.

That doesn't mean you can't manage some marketing tasks. It doesn't even mean you won't be good at it—some people naturally have the organizational, creative, and analytical skills required to excel at certain marketing efforts.

However, you're probably not going to have web design and development skills or the knowledge to run a winning PPC ad campaign without taking a lot of time to teach yourself. In most cases, you're better off teaming up with people who already have these skills.

Even if you're a marketing professional working for a deathcare firm, your creative well can run dry if that's all you're relying on. To toss it back to my original metaphor—you might eventually cross the proverbial finish line, but the overall race performance will be stronger if you surround

yourself with other people and resources who can also contribute.

Outsource All or Some of the Efforts

Smaller deathcare firms may not have the ability to create an entire in-house marketing team, and that's okay. You can easily outsource all or some of your marketing efforts without losing control over the process.

Some options to consider include:

- Using a SaaS (Software as a Service) solution to create your website or semi-automate certain marketing efforts, including social media, chats, or PPC advertising. While you can't rely solely on a computer to do things for you, a bit of out-of-the-box technical help can reduce the time and effort it takes you to handle marketing tasks.
- Hire freelancers to develop websites, design graphics, or write content. Do the work to get the best people you can for your budget, and make sure you have a way to oversee the process and stay connected with everyone involved.
- Hire an agency to take on as much of your marketing as necessary. Agencies typically use a mix of their own in-house resources and freelancers to get the job done, but someone with the agency worries about putting all those pieces together so you don't have to.

Put User-Generated Content to Work

Along with any of the above methods, you can use content generated by previous clientele or people interested in your services to expand your messaging potential without doing the "running" yourself.

Start with your reviews on Google and other sites. The fact that those reviews exist increases exposure for your business online. So, create a process for your staff to ask for reviews when they serve clientele. Include the request for a review on your website and emails you send families, and ask verbally for a review if someone tells you they're happy with your services or thanks you for what you've done.

Browse existing reviews for quotes you can use in your marketing efforts. Pull quotes to create graphics for social media or add them to landing pages to support the claims you're making about specific services.

Next, look at how you can use social media and the efforts of followers to increase your marketing reach. Here are some tips for doing so:

- Post interesting, helpful, and relevant content and ask people to share it. That last part is critical. Sharing on social is about relationship, and close to 85 percent of people say they share to help spread the word about a business or cause they personally support. Asking people to share and giving them a reason to do so is a relationship step, and that increases the likelihood they'll act.
- Ask questions. People enjoy knowing their opinion matters. If you ask with sincerity, you're more likely to get engagement and comments on your social profiles. That helps you show up more for other users without having to post fresh content yourself every single day.
- Hold contests. Funeral homes might wonder what they can give away to get people interested. While you could offer the chance to win free preplanning services, another option that might resonate better with local audiences is a giveaway featuring tickets to a nearby event. Consider partnering with a local organization and make sharing your content on social a way to enter the giveaway.

Online marketing is a marathon that goes on for as long as your deathcare firm is in business. Luckily, you don't have to run it all on your own. Invest in technology, people, processes, and services that help you create an online marketing relay team to stay ahead of the competition and avoid burning out your resources. **FBA**

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