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The Undeniable Power of Online Obituaries

Maximize profitability by leveraging your website's #1 traffic driver: online obituaries.

By Michele Fagan, Owner of Leap Tie an advertising agency for the death care profession



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Obituaries are the biggest traffic driver for funeral home and cremation websites. And yet, many business owners still do not realize the incredible value of this content—nor do they understand how to truly harness the power of online obituaries to maximize profitability for their firm. This article debuts proprietary research from Leap Tie, an Atlanta-based death care advertising agency which has been exclusively serving funeral homes, crematories and cemeteries nationwide for 20 years. To supplement this surprising new data, read on to discover the benefits of posting online obituaries, common barriers to implementing the process and six proven strategies to help you gain higher online volume, increase family satisfaction and drive more revenue.

3 Benefits of Posting Obituary Content

**overall
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by 408%**

**70% of all
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**86.67% of
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Facebook**

1. Improve Site Traffic

Upon review of over 3.1 million sessions on funeral home and cremation websites, Leap Tie data reveals:

- **93% of sessions include viewing an obituary on the website**
- **78% of site visitors enter funeral/cremation sites via an obituary posting**
- **94% of total pageviews are obituary pages**

Without an online obituary post for families, a dramatic reduction in all site traffic is inevitable.

Consider this example:

A major funeral home provider in a metropolitan area was displaying obituary information online, but the content was hosted through a third-party provider. This lack of activity connected to the primary domain suppressed their search engine rankings dramatically. In the eyes of Google, they were irrelevant to that obituary listing and all of the traffic driven by it—even though they were the provider of the actual services to the family.

Once obituary information was migrated to the funeral home provider's domain, overall users increased by 408.44 percent in a 10-month YOY comparison. In the last period, there was a 15.37 percent increase in pages viewed per session and 17.70 percent increase in time per session.

2. Generate Revenue

When a website is built properly, it creates a platform for families to learn more about you, your staff and the services you provide. A well-integrated digital strategy helps you convert this smart, informative content into a steady revenue stream.

In the example previously described, the total leads generated for the planning department prior to the obituary traffic being properly managed went from fewer than five a year to

averaging one inbound lead a day. This also included an over 20 percent increase in non-obituary traffic to the website, driving communication and connectivity for the entire brand and its service offerings.

Flower sales, which are often handed off to vendors or completely overlooked as a revenue source, are one of the instant beneficiaries of hosting a robust obituary online. According to Leap Tie's nationwide review of funeral home and crematory sites, 70 percent of all flower sales are directly generated from the obituary listings themselves. This means a loss of significant revenue if an obituary is not listed online with every family served.

For instance, the same study revealed that a single website generated 151 transactions in a 60-day period. Out of these transactions, 104 were placed from an obituary. Without an online obituary none of these sales would have taken place.

3. Maintain Relevance

Loss is difficult to process, which is why many people avoid reminders of death or their eventual loss of a loved one. This inherent communication barrier is unique to the profession—people are more likely to dodge death care providers than other merchants, making it much harder to stay top of mind with modern families.

Posting an online obituary provides a conduit of communication for loved ones seeking information or looking to support a family during a death. After reading or leaving condolences, viewers often share these posts to their network via social media. Leap Tie research shows an average of 86.67% of all shares are done via a mobile device on Facebook. Without an obituary, users will create their own content and the funeral home or crematory provider will have missed an easy opportunity to extend their brand and perceived value to families in their community.

Eliminating **2** Common Barriers to Posting an Obituary

Despite the established benefits of posting obituaries, many funeral homes and crematories still fail to add this content to their websites. This is not because owners don't believe obituary information is important. On the contrary, both owners and staff understand the value of obituary information and go to great lengths to ensure accuracy. However, two tendencies stop owners and staff from posting obituaries online:

1. "We don't have the time."

Many staff state this is the main reason online obituaries may get overlooked or truncated. With the pressing demands of getting obituaries to a newspaper, accommodating last-minute requests and juggling the hectic day-to-day schedule, the final step of posting the content online often gets overlooked and set aside.

2. "Families say no when we ask them about posting the obituary."

Funeral profession staff, by their nature, are non-confrontational and work to accommodate all families. There are many items that are decided in the pursuit of a successful service—but publishing the obituary, like opening the door and turning the lights on, is not something that needs to be requested or presented for permission. The collection and recording of a death is the same as a death certificate which is completed and catalogued.

both owners and staff understand the value of obituary

6 Ways to Increase Online Obituary Postings

It takes thought and discipline to ensure obituaries are posted in the day-to-day whirlwind of the operation—but the rewards are far worth the effort. And, following the steps outlined below, will ensure you get the most return from every single post.

1. Track Data

The easiest way to gauge the impact of online obituaries is to count how many were published on your website and then compare them to the number of services completed for the same period. Leap Tie clients have access to this data via the online obituary program, but having a staff member manually keep tabs works as well. Review this number each month with staff and keep a running total for the year. Discuss the discrepancies, what happened and what can be done differently. Ask staff to share what works for each of them and draw on successful tactics.

2. Review Top and Bottom Services

Each month, determine the most well-attended service. Then, get together with your staff and go online to compare the activity on that obituary. Leap Tie clients can see the number of guestbook entries by service, but a visual count while you review the decedent works also. Look carefully at the comments—consider the quantity and quality of these. Do the same for the least-attended service, what do you see? Reviewing the top and bottom services uncovers new understandings to raise online visits, and can also reveal new insights in actual service attendance.

3. Monitor Flower Sales

If you don't already, review the number of orders for flowers each month and the type of arrangements purchased. Discussions around these items will help staff understand the impact of an obituary and correlate it to the experience for the family at the service time.

4. Elevate Communication with Families

During the planning phase, review when and how your staff presents online obituaries and where barriers occur. Avoiding the high cost of newspaper obituary printing and having a loved one's life story available for generations to come are certainly compelling benefits—but if they are not communicated, families may not even realize they have this option.

Creating a list of benefits from the obituary programs you offer not only gives families the information they need, it also adds value into the services you already provide. For example, Leap Tie clients are armed with a full-color presentation that includes a breakdown of the program, the items families can benefit from, explanations of the images, details about video tributes and more.

5. Share the Obituary

The simplest way to increase interest in any online obituary is by sharing it. In the initial hours of the creation of a service, communication is ongoing; your staff collects several phone numbers and/or email addresses. Use these same touch-points to send a link via email, text the obituary and provide materials showing where the obituary is located.

Leap Tie websites come equipped to support staff in all of these communication steps. Find ways to tap into methods with your staff and check to be sure it is completed at any point in the process. A fail-safe question is to ask the family, "Did you view the obituary on our website to be sure everything we listed is correct?"



6. Post Compelling Content

As you increase the awareness among staff regarding the importance of the obituary, you will quickly find just how many posts are severely lacking in presentation. For families, the free addition of full-color photos is one of the biggest advantages of online obituaries. With that in mind, is it acceptable to you that the person in your care had no photograph listed? Were there more images at the service that could have been easily added to the online obituary?

The easiest way to add images or video tributes is through Tukios, an automated tribute video software application. Leap Tie provides an automated link with Tukios, but the link can also be manually added.

Summary: Providing Care that Counts

The website visits and potential revenue driven by online obituaries is undeniable—but the prosperity of your business all boils down to the care you provide for families. By making small changes to the presentation of the obituary or removing barriers to placement, you and your staff can provide informative, engaging content for families and deliver the best-possible experience.



I challenge you to ask your staff each month, "Is the level of care provided for each decedent the same online as in our care center?" If not, why should a family care about your services when they aren't in the building? Follow these steps above to increase online visitors, drive revenue and, most importantly, extend family satisfaction into the future.

Take our interactive quiz to see how your firm performs

Visit LeapTie.com/Power

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Leap Tie co-founders Sean and Michele Fagan have more than 40 years of combined business, marketing, and sales experience – and they've spent the past two decades focused exclusively on the death care profession.

Take the Leap and we Tie it all together