



ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service

Tips for Writing Persuasive, Focused Ad Copy

By
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In *any* business it's important to build strong customer relationships, but I believe this is *especially* true in funeral service; where client emotions and pre-conceptions are truly running the client contact experience.

Whether it is an at-need contact, direct mail or print advertising, the essential elements are the same:

1. Provide useful information
2. Create trust
3. Build confidence in the provider/client relationship
4. Create "top-of-the-mind" customer awareness

If you are going to *successfully* promote your business by writing your own copy, there are six things you *must* do to create a more powerful, compelling marketing message.

1. Research your target market thoroughly. Basically it goes like this: segment your market down, using the categories below. Prepare a fact sheet for your target market by writing down all the facts and demographic information you know about them.

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Family status
- Socioeconomic status
- Profession/occupation
- Hobbies

- Media they consume (including Web sites, newspapers, magazines, television shows)

If you have a photo of a client matching this fact sheet, or can locate a suitable graphic from a clip art file or magazine, then post it at your workstation. Write to this one person, as if you were sitting together, having a casual conversation. One client I have envisions himself sitting at a local bar, having a drink with that “special someone” he’s identified as his “target market” and this vision of a convincing conversation with the person is enough to pull the words out of him and onto the paper. It works well for him; you can easily find your own “mental scenario” to drive the words.

2. Watch your competitors. Study how they handle marketing and customer service. Study their Web sites; collect their direct marketing campaigns. Learn to think like they do. Soon the differences between your funeral home and theirs begin to reveal themselves. Those differences help to define your Unique Selling Position – which is an essential element to your copy. Ask yourself this question: “Exactly what makes our funeral home different – and inherently better – than the competition?”

3. Anticipate a family member’s objections by writing out the “Frequently-asked-Questions” ahead of time. Put yourself in your their shoes and think like she does. What questions come up for her that would stop her from buying? Expect those to come up and address them in your copy.

4. Identify the *Features* and *Benefits* of your services. We already know people buy more on emotion than logic. So have a list of what your services do (the features) and how each feature makes your customer *feel* better (the benefits). The more you can stimulate an emotional response in them, the deeper the connection goes.

5. Collect compelling stories from your client families. Nothing pulls us in psychologically more than a good story. Humans are storytelling beings; it's in our genes. The gift of language strongly compels us to transmit socio-cultural information through stories. So, get the reader entranced by your copy with a hard-hitting short story. Then (and this is the crucial step), connect it back to what you're selling.

6. Increase your credibility with testimonials from satisfied families. Testimonials are designed to increase credibility, and to put a face on people who have had success with your services. Let them speak for you! Solid testimonials build trust, and that’s the first step in creating strong relationships.

Strong testimonials always include the name and location of the speaker – so be sure to *get written permission from a client* before using their words. Quite often, if you use a “back-end” questionnaire or survey, a space can be provided for spontaneous remarks. A “permission to use” statement would be included, ensuring their authorization to use their remarks.

Writing compelling advertising or informational copy is so much easier when you take these six steps in a creative process. Make it a team effort; share with you colleagues, and let them critique and co-create. It will be more fun, *and* more effective.