

Marketing

By Welton Hong

The Basics

of Increasing At-Need Case Counts with Pay-Per-Click Advertising

Having helped local businesses with their online marketing efforts for many years, I've come to realize one of my most important roles is helping the business owner become comfortable with this bold new world of advertising in the digital age.

Transitioning from traditional advertising methods such as directories, newspaper ads, and local radio and television ads can be a bit intimidating. And I've found that especially true for those who work in the death-care industry.

It's understandable to be concerned about whether all this new-fangled marketing can convey the same sense of thoughtfulness that's essential to promoting funeral and cremation services.

Here's the truth: When implemented properly, a digital marketing campaign can be just as professional and reverent as a traditional advertisement. It's all about how the message is crafted. It isn't a matter of analog versus digital or print versus online. No matter the medium, the key is to

communicate care and decorum through every step of the process.

To that end, I'd like to talk a bit about a particularly effective type of online marketing known as pay-per-click advertising. This is one of my favorite tools for local businesses for many reasons, but it can be especially beneficial in the death-care industry.

We now live in a time where most people who have an immediate need for a service search online for a solution. That's due to the massive propagation of smartphones and tablets that ensure consumers 24/7 internet access no matter where they are.

They might not have print materials handy all the time, but they always have their phones. When there's an unexpected death in the

family with no preneed plan in place, they can immediately search online for a respected funeral home in their time of need.

I'll explain how PPC advertising can be an extremely effective tool for increasing at-need case counts in a bit, but first, here's a brief overview of how PPC ads work:

The Basics of Pay-Per-Click Ads

You're likely already familiar with the concept of "organic" search. This refers to the list of commercial providers that organically appears when people search for a subject through a search engine such as Google. The page that appears is known as a search engine results page, also known as a "SERP."

A consumer will typically include a geographic location when searching,

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such as “Topeka funeral homes.” However, a location isn’t always necessary. If the consumer is simply searching for “funeral homes” on Google, the search engine already knows the location and factors that into the search results.

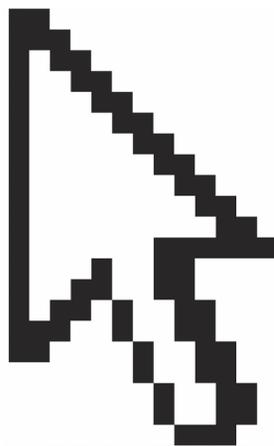
Organic search is certainly important, and you can improve your placement on the SERP by improving your website’s search engine optimization. However, improving your search engine optimization doesn’t immediately improve your rank — it takes time to kick in.

Pay-per-click ads, on the other hand, go “live” almost immediately. They also get preferred placement on SERPs, putting your funeral home front and center to potential clients.

The truly remarkable benefit to PPC advertising is that you only pay when someone clicks the ad to visit your website. If someone doesn’t click, the ad costs you nothing. Instead of paying for the ad itself, you’re paying for the visit.

This ensures a much better return on investment than traditional print advertising such as newspaper and radio ads. It also lets you track how effective your ad is, because the process includes simple, clear tracking abilities to show exactly which ads brought people to your website and what steps they took from that point.

If an ad is working well, you’ll know from the analytics. If the analytics show an ad is not very effective, you can revise it “on the fly,” with the new language live on the internet almost immediately. That way, you’re not wasting time with an ad that doesn’t get the job done.



In this way, PPC advertising doesn’t just promote your business — it’s a tool that lets you fine-tune your marketing approach, letting you determine the most effective language to target at-need clients in your area. And in the meantime, you’re not wasting money on ineffective advertising. You only pay if the ad is working.

Premium Placement for Highly Targeted Audiences

Statistics from 2016 show that with the rise of mobile search — people researching service providers on smartphones and tablets — more than 50 percent of funeral home leads now come from the top three listings on Google and Bing.

Those are all paid placement locations, not organic search listings. To be competitive in your local market, it’s critical that your business be in those premium listings.

This type of advertising is especially beneficial for at-need clients. Family members dealing with an unexpected death have an immediate need for an established

provider. They obviously won’t be spending days or weeks exploring a variety of possibilities.

PPC advertising puts your funeral home front and center immediately, providing families peace of mind when they need it. It’s a remarkably effective driver of at-need business.

With that said, let me step back for a moment to acknowledge that “old school” advertising remains a significant aspect of promoting a funeral home. This is a far more traditional industry than most, and it’s true that some methods that worked well in the 1990s and 2000s still have some relevance today.

However, the shift from offline marketing to online is already well underway, and that will only continue from this point forward. We live in an era where everyone from school-age children to grandparents have become accustomed to searching for services and products online. This is definitely the future, but it’s also rapidly becoming the present.

We now live in a digital age. A generation that grew up with personal computers in their homes are now parents. Their kids will have grown up never knowing a time without computers in their homes, in their cars, in their hands. That is why no business — including a funeral home — can afford to ignore this quantum shift in consumer behavior.

How to Get Started

The best way to get started with PPC advertising is to work with a highly qualified expert in online marketing. It’s important to work with someone who knows how to create highly targeted campaigns but also understands that promoting death-care services requires the utmost in thoughtfulness and civility.

That balance is crucial to ensuring a PPC marketing plan that’s both effective and ensures excellent customer satisfaction and word of mouth. I’ve been extremely pleased to see how beneficial it’s been for my funeral home clients, and I know the same can be true for your funeral home as well. •