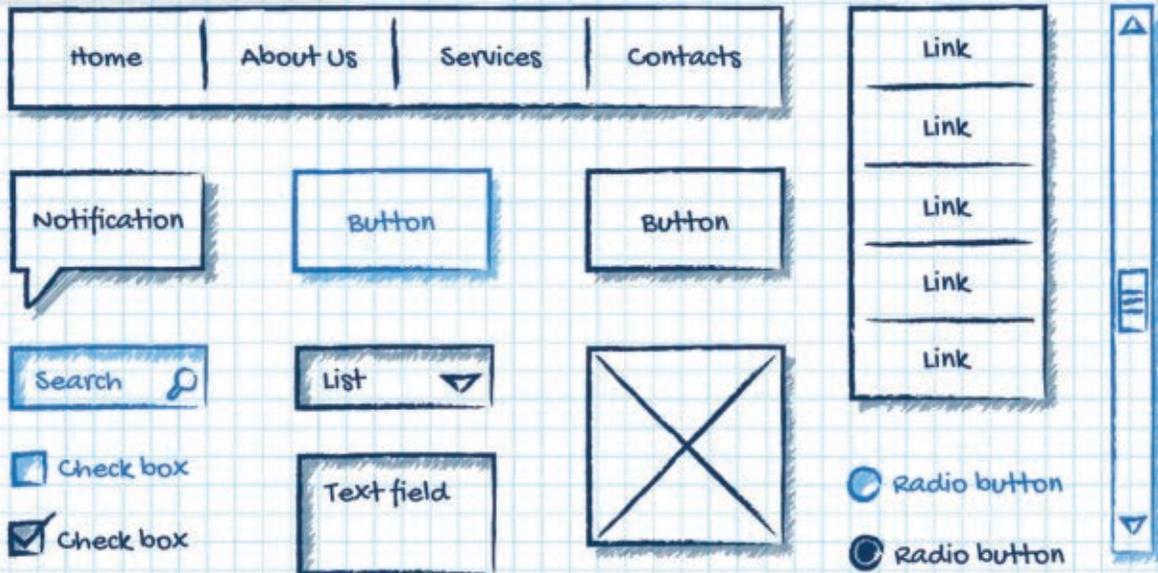


# Marketing

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## What Are Wireframes, and Do Funeral Homes Need Them?

Have you ever put together a piece of furniture? Even if you bought a prepackaged piece from somewhere like Ikea, you probably opened the package to find individual boards, cam locks and screws. You know that without a blueprint – instructions or a manual – you can make a mess of the assembly.

Indulge me in a metaphor potentially closer to home for many funeral home professionals: When you provide funeral services, do you ever start without a plan and agreement between you and the client? Of course not. The plan lets you know what the family's wishes are, what the budget is and what everyone has agreed upon.

The plan is so important that there's an entire death-care industry around preplanning, which might be a large revenue line for your firm.

Understanding what you do about the importance of a plan to death-care services, you will likely see the intrinsic value of wireframes for digital marketing.

I should note that this article will get a bit technical, but I think it's valuable to understand "how the sausage is made" a little better at a time when digital marketing is so imperative for funeral homes. I'll try to keep it as simple as possible.

### What Is a Wireframe?

It's a basic plan for a webpage or mobile app layout. It's quite literally a map of what you want the page to look like. Wireframes can be drawn by hand, printed on paper or created and viewed digitally.

The elements included in a wireframe depend on what's being depicted. Here are some factors commonly

addressed by wireframes for landing pages:

- Where visual elements might go and how big they should be. Note that the wireframe doesn't actually include the graphic elements – only placeholders for them. Some important considerations include where the calls to action, buy buttons or value propositions should sit in relation to other content and the fold. (The fold is where the page stops on a screen and you have to scroll down to see more.)

- Where and how much white space should occupy the page. Wireframes are a great way to ensure you're creating visually pleasing pages that are scannable and aren't cluttered.

- The flow of information on the page. Wireframes let you play with the flow of text, images and other elements and understand how readers might interact with them. When you have a good idea of how people behave on your pages – such as whether they scan down the left side or only view the top portion – you can build powerful wireframes that ensure the most important elements are where people are likely to see them.

## Who Creates Wireframes?

Anyone can create a basic wireframe. You can actually sketch one out using just a pen and paper. However, these concepts are more commonly created by marketing experts, visual designers or UX designers.

For best results, you want wireframes created by people who:

- Understand how your target audience is likely to interact with the page.
- Have a good understanding of visual design and how the wireframe supports the finished product.
- Are experienced enough with online marketing to know what elements are critical for page success and how much space to allocate for each.

## Benefits of Wireframes for Funeral Home Marketing

Wireframing is not a required step when building websites or other digital marketing elements. In fact, if you're using prepackaged design templates in your content management system, you can quickly build pages without stopping first to make these plans.

But putting in a little work ahead of time does have some benefits, such as:

- Coming to agreement about how the page will look. Wireframes provide a basic page concept before the first text is written or images are designed. This helps all stakeholders come to an agreement on how the page should function and look before you put further work into it. And since wireframes are fast and cheap, you can cycle through multiple options while making decisions without driving up marketing costs.
- Using existing data to frame out powerful pages. If you have existing information about what works and

how people interact with your pages, you can use it to develop reusable wireframes to support future success. For example, you might have discovered that a summary of preplanning information followed by a button to download more information drives a high click-through rate, and that if you follow that button with more information and an appointment link, you also get decent click-through. You could use that information to create a wireframe that puts the same premise to work on multiple landing and blog pages.

- Providing better information to copywriters and graphic designers. A wireframe is helpful to in-house and freelance content creators. You can tell a copywriter you need each section to be a certain number of words or characters, but when you provide the wireframe map, they're able to see how each copy section works with the others. This understanding of the big picture helps writers and graphic designers create content that works seamlessly with other elements on the page – even if the same person isn't creating all parts.

- Ensuring pages remain focused on the user. It's easy to get lost in the elements of design when you're creating pages for your funeral home website. You might think it would be neat to add a carousel of casket images, links to videos from the funeral director or explanations of the history of various death-care trends. And while all those things could be valuable additions to your site, are they going to help the user on a particular page? A wireframe helps you get an idea of how people might use the page and what would be valuable for the user, so you're never including too little or too much.

## Types of Wireframes

Wireframes are broken into low-, mid- and high-fidelity. The type you work with depends on your own preferences, why you're using wireframes to begin with, and what your marketing budget and timeframe is.

- **Low-fidelity wireframes.** These are literal sketches. They can be created with pen and paper or with digital tools, but they don't concern themselves with actual measurements,

straight lines, or realistic depictions. Things you might see in a low fidelity wireframe include haphazard boxes with "picture here" or squiggles to represent where text might sit. Low-fidelity wireframes are great for ensuring everyone is talking about the same concept or beginning conversations about site or page design.

- **Mid-fidelity wireframes.** Often digital, these wireframes are a closer depiction of the finished product. They usually take specific measurements into account, though they won't have images and real text. You might see Lorem Ipsum – nonsense Latin placeholder text – where text should be and colored shapes where images and other visuals will eventually reside. Mid-fidelity wireframes are the most common tools used when presenting page concepts for signoff before the content creation work begins.

- **High-fidelity wireframes.** These are not as common when working on landing pages or other marketing elements. They're more appropriate for product and app design, where the page has a lot of specific functionality that needs to be fleshed out in detail. High fidelity wireframes do often include text and image elements, which means some design and content work is already in process.

## Does Your Funeral Home Need Wireframes?

You don't *have* to use wireframes for funeral home marketing, so if this topic is getting a little too technical for your comfort, don't worry. However, consider this: If you've ever grabbed a napkin to sketch out what you want the preplanning landing page to look like or had your web developer show you a basic concept of the image gallery and ask for your input, you're already using wireframes.

So, don't be afraid to sketch up your ideas or ask your online marketing teams to present concepts via wireframes before moving forward. You take time to ask grieving families what they most want to include in services for departed loved ones – provide the same courtesy to your funeral home marketing efforts, and you might find they're more effective. •