



Ad Campaign Launch Tips

Would your staff show up on the day of a funeral having done nothing in advance?

The answer, obviously, is no. (Or at least I certainly *hope* that's the answer!)

Of course, funerals, burials and memorial services all take planning, and even when you move quickly to accommodate a family's needs, hours of work have occurred before the first loved one shows up to pay their respects.

While some practices might be necessarily different in certain areas right now due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the basics remain the same.

As visitations and services take place, your staff is in the background, working to ensure families have what they need, and that technical aspects of the funeral or burial occur appropriately.

Many times, friends and family who arrive at the funeral home are unaware of all this work. Even next-of-kin, who meet with you and work to make decisions about the funeral, don't really understand all the technical work in

the background unless they also happen to be funeral professionals.

This same mystery can surround online advertisements. They show up on search, sites and social media – often exactly when you're considering a relevant purchase. It might seem like digital magic or spy technology, but it's actually the result of marketers showing up early and putting in behind-the-scenes work to ensure ad campaigns are successful.

And you can do the same with your funeral home pay-per-click ad campaigns.

Step One: Brainstorming, Defining and Researching

When working with clientele, you start with data, right? You need to know about the decedent and what the family wants regarding services.

PPC campaigns require information as well. You must know about your target audience, including:

1. Who are they?
2. What are their needs regarding death-care services?
3. How might they search for these services?

You answer the first two questions by creating *marketing personas*. These are brief character sketches that represent various sections of your audience. For example, if you offer preplanning, budget funeral options, and complete packages with numerous options, you might have three marketing personas:

- **Preplanning Paul or Paulette:** This persona might be middle-aged or older on average, have some assets or family to protect, and exhibit a desire to keep some burden of final arrangements off his or her family. Challenges might include financial concerns, worry that family won't understand their choices or a desire to find the perfect preplanning partner.

• **Money-Conscious Mike or Miriam:** This persona could be any age but has limited income or resources and is facing an at-need situation within the geographic area you serve. He or she has a desire to do the best possible in their loved one's memory, but the main challenge is paying for the funeral.

• **Luxury Linda or Lionel:** This persona might be interested in pre-planning or be in an at-need situation. He or she has plenty of income or resources; if cost is a concern, it's not about affordability. Full-service packages and other luxury items may be an option, but common challenges might include concerns about quality and service, desire to keep up appearances, or fears or uncertainties about how to honor a loved one.

These are short marketing persona concepts, and yours are likely to be longer and more detailed. The more you know about this "target persona" that represents a subsection of your audience, the better you can target ads.

The third question gets answered with keyword research. Use analytical tools such as SEMrush, Ubersuggest, Ahrefs and Google Analytics to find out how people are searching for your services online right now. Don't forget to add in branded keywords, which are those specific to your firm.

For example, "funeral home services" is a non-branded keyword while "Davidson Funeral Home" is a branded keyword.

Branded keywords tend to have higher conversion rates. The average conversion rate for non-branded keywords is about 5.2% on desktop and 4.8% on mobile. Branded keywords support average conversion rates of around 10% and 11%, respectively.

So why not just go with all branded keywords? Because they don't have high search volume. Most people won't search specifically for your death-care firm when they start looking for information, so you need both types of keywords for ideal targeting.

Step Two: Organize Information into Campaigns

Group related keywords together by searcher intent. For example, "green burial," "eco-friendly funeral"

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and "green cemetery" are all keywords people would use when looking for a specific product. You probably wouldn't advertise standard burial services using those keywords, because that's not what those users are looking for.

Likewise, "planning your own funeral," "prepaying for cremation" and "preplanning final arrangements" might go together.

Think about how each group of keywords relates to each of your marketing personas. Both of these example groups might relate to Preplanning Pete, for example. There are certainly some people who are looking to preplan an eco-friendly burial.

For every keyword group/marketing persona pair, you have a potential PPC ad campaign. You might run an ad campaign aimed at money-conscious consumers looking to preplan or one targeting luxury spenders who want to preplan cremation and memorial services.

What you target – and how specific you get – depends on your audience and business needs. More specific ads tend to have higher conversion rates for those that click, but they also get fewer clicks because

they're only relevant to small subsections of your audience. You may need to test various approaches to find a balance that works for you.

Step Three: Decide on a Budget

As a funeral home or death-care professional, you know how important budget is. Clientele who don't have one can easily overextend when spending on final arrangements for a loved one if they're doing so during a time of emotion or grief.

You're not likely to be that emotional about your PPC campaigns. But launching them without a budget reduces the control you have over the entire process and can make it easier to make poor ad-spending decisions. Plus, you can often set budgets within your campaigns and let automated ad-bidding solutions handle the more complex math for you on a daily basis.

Across all industries, the average amount paid by small and midsize businesses for PPC ads monthly is as much as \$9,000 to \$10,000. Funeral homes may be able to spend less, in part because you have a product that's unique and necessary and likely have limited competition within your geographical service area.

The total cost of a campaign depends on the average cost-per-click and what your goals are for traffic and conversions. If you know your landing pages convert 5% of the time and you want to get roughly 50 people to buy preplanning services, you'll need 1,000 clicks.

If your average cost per click is \$2, you may need to spend around \$2,000 on PPC ads to get to your goal.

Step Four: Create Appropriate Landing Pages and Site Structure

Before launching your ads, ensure traffic coming from them has somewhere to land.

If you have relevant, high-quality, high-performing landing pages, you can direct the traffic there. Otherwise, write new landing pages relevant to the products or services in your ad campaigns. Link from those landing pages to relevant pages on your site, and include an easy-to-understand call to action

letting visitors know how they can contact you, make a purchase, or find out more.

Step Five: Write Ad Copy and Launch the Campaign

PPC ads, especially in search, are short. Make every word count, and include a call to action. Some best practices include:

- Make the ad about your specific target audience, demonstrating or hinting at how you can solve relevant challenges.
- Mention products, services or features that set you apart from others or provide solutions for the clientele.
- Tell the viewer what to do: view now, learn more, request information, etc.
- Include keywords in the first or second headline, and try to include phrases people actually use when searching.
- Proof every ad more than once. In such short copy, a single typo can completely change the message.

Step Six: Launch Your Ads, Watch and Test

Once ad campaigns are live, the work isn't done. Just as your staff watches from behind the scenes during visitations or funeral services, working to make necessary changes to ensure the comfort of loved ones, you should be watching your ad campaigns.

Look for ads and combinations that are working, and ramp those up. If certain combinations aren't performing, make small tweaks to find what does work.

Test various ad combinations, including different content, keywords, and targeting combos, against each other to find what works better. Then test against new parameters to find what works best.

Successful PPC ad campaigns are about continuous improvement that works to target your audience with the most relevant, persuasive content at the right moment. It's a moving target that never stops, but you can get better at hitting it each time you run an ad campaign. •

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