Best Practices to **Increase** Website Conversions

As funeral homes are moving forward in becoming more comfortable with the concept of online marketing, a big part of the learning curve is understanding the terminology.

The term "conversions," also often phrased as "getting a visitor (online) to convert," is commonly understood in internet commerce and among brick-and-mortar businesses that get a lot of leads online.

However, I realize it might be a bit confusing if you're relatively new to marketing your business online, which is true of many people I meet in the death-care industry. So let's start by defining the concept.

In a general sense, you create a conversion when someone visiting your website takes an action that moves that person forward to becoming a paying client. But the actual determination of what constitutes a "conversion" can vary.

A retail business might specifically define a conversion as an actual purchase. A service business might define it as setting an appointment, with the hopes of closing on a contract. Depending on the particular website, a successful conversion (to that business) might be as simple as the visitor filling out a form to receive more information or calling you to discuss services.

In other words, a conversion doesn't necessarily have to mean you've completed the entire process of contracting, for example, with a family or individual for preneed services. It can be as basic as engaging a visitor to your website to the degree that he or she becomes an actionable lead, someone with whom you can continue with the process of finalizing a case count.

A website doesn't merely exist to provide you with an online presence. It's not simply there to show people where you're located and how to reach you. It exists as a *marketing tool for your business*. Its purpose is to *convert visitors*.

Every aspect of your website should be designed with the goal of ultimately turning visitors into paying clientele ("converting" them) – and that's as true of a funeral home website as one for any other type of business.

If you get plenty of visitors to your website, but you're not getting many conversions, there are some simple steps you can take. At the end of the day, the number of clicks to your website is meaningless. All that matters is the number of leads the website generates.

Implementing the following suggestions can increase your case-count leads without your having to spend any more money on advertising.

Include Prominent Calls to Action

Any website promoting a business needs to have a clear call to action, also known as a CTA. This simply means an action the visitor can easily, immediately take to move forward in the process.

A basic example would be "Contact Us Now at 888-777-5555." (A clickable email address is also strongly recommended.) Many funeral homes also have a clickable button for "Send Flowers Now," which provides an immediate way for friends and family to access floral services.

Have a Unique Selling Proposition

I realize, of course, that advertising death-care services is quite different than advertising used furniture or auto repair. A more thoughtful, refined approach is requisite with this industry.

With that said, to convert online visitors, it's obviously beneficial to give them a clear reason why they should turn to your funeral home for their preneed or at-need services.

When you consider your local competition, what makes you special? What can you offer that the others do not? Is it better general pricing, more locations, special pricing for veterans, or something else?

Whatever you would pick as the main two or three reasons a visitor should choose you over other options, be sure it's clearly defined on your website. You want every visitor to immediately understand why you are the best choice. And it's honestly not very hard to do this in a way that remains reverent and respectful of the visitor.

Answer and Raise Questions

If I can be frank for a moment, too many businesses I see online – including quite a few funeral homes – use far too much of their valuable website space on generic information. A high-converting website also answers and raises questions for its visitors. Also, this helps your site's *search engine optimization*, which is to say that you'll rank higher in online searches.

The more informative content on your site, the better it will convert visitors, and the better you'll rank among your local competition. Consider the main questions people have when preplanning for a funeral, and create articles that answer those questions. Do the same for visitors who have suffered an unexpected loss and are considering at-need services.

Strong, smart content is a cornerstone for all high-converting websites, regardless of the industry, and death care is no different. The more good content you have, the better. By utilizing all your insight and experience, you let visitors know they're in good hands with your funeral home.

Create a Business Profile Video

Some people are persuaded by text; others prefer visual information. You should provide content for every kind of customer. Video also helps visitors see the real people behind your funeral home, view your facilities and trust in your services.

I have personally witnessed a massive improvement in website conversions simply by adding at least one professionally shot video (and it's fine to have more) to the site. A funeral home can't survive, much less thrive, if it doesn't immediately establish trust with potential clientele. A well-shot video brings that to life.

Include Testimonials

There's nothing like the words of real people to inspire visitors to contract with you. You can have a testimonials form on your website where families can send them in, although we suggest you review them before they "go live." (So they can be edited for spelling and clarity as needed.)

Have a Clear, Attractive Design

Aesthetics really do matter. Visitors who pull up an unattractive, hard-to-navigate site will very likely click out and look somewhere else. That's true for any business, but it's especially true in this industry. You should put as much care into the look and feel of your website as you would for any of your services.

While you want the site to look good, be careful to ensure it's also intuitive and easy to navigate. If visitors have to search high and low to find the answers they're looking for, well, most simply won't bother. A high-converting funeral home site balances aesthetics and ease of use, creating an experience that's warm but also clear and direct.

Keep an Eye on Google Analytics

If you're not familiar with Google Analytics, it's definitely time to change that. To know how well your site is converting, you need to know what your visitors are actually doing when they are on your site. Google Analytics helps you understand this by examining visitor statistics like time spent on page, bounce rate, exit rate, conversion rate and so on.

If certain pages on your website have a high exit rate and/or low time on page, that probably means the content on those pages is not what the visitors are looking for. Consider adding more content to those pages or refining the information to make it clearer or more helpful.

By employing these techniques, you can better serve your local market and ensure that your funeral home isn't just getting clicks – it's converting those clicks into case counts. •