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LIVE OAK BANK®



GROW AT-NEED CALLS ASAP WITH PAY-PER-CLICK ADVERTISING

by Welton Hong

Do you need to grow at-need calls for your funeral home quickly? If so, there's one online marketing technique I recommend beyond all others. It has an incredible success rate, it's cost-efficient, and it delivers results at lightning speed — often within only a few days.

This miracle worker is called pay-per-click advertising, also known as PPC. I love it for lots of reasons, but chief among them is the fact that it can get you prime placement in local search results almost as soon as you employ it — and you only pay for ads when someone clicks on them.

If you've done plenty of print advertising (as have most funeral homes), you know how frustrating it is to submit a print ad, wait for it to finally publish, and then sit back and wait to see whether it produces any calls.

If the language in the ad turns out to be less than effective, too bad — you're stuck with it until you can get a new ad published. If there's a typo in your phone number or elsewhere in the copy, same deal: There's no way to fix it on the fly.

And while print ads might still have some benefit for attracting pre-need services, they accomplish little for at-need calls. When a loved one dies, family members don't start flipping through magazines or community publications. They need immediate help, so they're either going by a word-of-mouth recommendation or turning to the internet.

All of that is solved with PPC, which lets your funeral home be seen immediately by anyone searching for death care services in your local

area. You get premium real estate on the search engine results page (SERP), one of the top drivers for attracting at-need clientele.

Another great aspect of PPC is that you can change your ad anytime you like. If you tweak your call to action slightly to get more clicks, that change goes "live" almost immediately. If there's a typo or other concern, you don't have to wait months to fix it. You can often have a fixed version up the same day.

The term PPC covers several types of advertising, such as sponsored listings, paid search, partner ads, or sponsored links — with one thing in common: In each type, you pay for the ad only when a user clicks it and is forwarded to your website.

Typically, you'll find PPC ads placed prominently on the top of the SERP. While Google remains the industry leader in search, Bing and Yahoo also continue to get strong usage, and all three sites' SERPs are primary destinations for PPC ads.

Another great thing about PPC ads is that they don't appear until someone completes a search. Because they're dynamic, the ads that do appear following the search will be relevant to whatever the user is searching for. By definition, these ads are targeting an interested party.

In other words, whenever someone sees your PPC ad, that person is already looking for the death care services you provide — full funeral service, cremation, etc. — in your specific geographic area. You're not wasting money on visibility for someone who isn't looking for what you do. And because

you don't pay until that person clicks on your ad, you're not being charged for visibility itself. That's what makes PPC wonderfully cost-efficient.

PPC also makes it easy to get accurate statistics on whether your ad is effective, unlike traditional advertising. Simple, real-time analytics show you which keywords people used to find your page, so you can tweak your keywords depending on which worked well (or poorly). You'll know how many people departed your page immediately after reaching it — and how many stuck around.

Additionally, PPC helps bridge the time gap between SEO improvements to your website and

when they're recognized by Google.

Improving your organic SEO (the right way) goes a long way toward elevating your search rankings for people searching for death care services in your area. However, Google only checks out your site occasionally, so it won't know immediately that you should be ranked high on the first page of results.

By comparison, PPC ads post almost immediately, letting you get your name right out front while you're waiting on Google to review your site and increase your organic ranking. So, when you need to grow at-need calls right away, PPC starts working for you immediately. **FBA**



Welton Hong is the founder and marketing director of Ring Ring Marketing, which specializes in helping funeral homes convert leads from online directly to the phone line. The firm has helped many funeral homes, cemeteries and combination operations bolster their online marketing. Welton also is a speaker at funeral home conferences and the author of Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes. Contact him at welton@ringringmarketing.com or 888/383-2848.

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