

## **SAIF Online Pricing Toolkit: *seven steps to digital success for independent funeral directors***

### **Introduction and background**

In recent years, more and more consumers have come to expect to be able to research products and services online before making a purchasing decision. There is an undeniable growing public demand to be able to shop in this way for funerals too. SAIF recognises this and, in order to support its members to make the most of the modern digital landscape, has developed this simple toolkit which covers all the essential points for succeeding with online sales and marketing. It's important to emphasise that the revisions to SAIF's Code of Practice in October 2020 in relation to online pricing are a minimum standard. We encourage members to keep this front-of-mind when preparing online pricing information and think about how you might go above and beyond in developing a proposition which truly sets your business apart.

### **Why online pricing is an opportunity and what SAIF expects of its members**

Online pricing has the potential to help independent funeral directors better compete against the large chains and demonstrate how they add value and quality to life's most difficult purchasing decision. For a start, independently-run firms have agility on their side and can quickly tailor pricing propositions and care packages to suit changing local needs. Large chains, however, are subordinate to a remote head office governance structure and shareholder interests. This is one of the reasons SAIF believes mandatory online pricing is to be welcomed. It also ensures transparency for consumers across the market and acts as a bulwark against those businesses which choose to attract clients by pursuing a sales-driven 'prices from' marketing strategy.

Ultimately, SAIF members should not view online pricing as a race to the bottom on cost but an opportunity to better explain what a funeral director does for his or her money to a public which perhaps views the profession with a degree of mystique.

### **7 steps to maximise market position through effective online pricing**

To help SAIF members create a best-in-class online pricing strategy that will enhance your market position, we have developed the following seven steps, which we encourage you to study and use to inform your approach:

#### **1. Showcase funeral elements and demonstrate how you go further than the competition**

The first consideration when developing online pricing information is the customer. Think about what is going to attract families to use your services rather than those of other firms. Whilst the SAIF Code of Practice sets a minimum standard, we encourage funeral directors to develop an appealing proposition around care, quality and funeral elements. Online pricing should be as much a guide to the kind of customer journey your clients can expect as it is about the price they can expect to pay for a funeral. It's highly advisable and beneficial to present information in a way that demonstrates the benefits of each funeral element to the bereaved. For example, in a line about transport, instead of merely saying 'provision of a hearse - £300', could read: A spotless and modern Jaguar hearse to convey your loved one with style and dignity on their final journey - £300.

#### **2. Where online pricing should sit on your website**

Online pricing needs to be easy to find and prospective clients should not be left with the impression that you are trying to hide costs. Link from the homepage with a tab in your website's main menu navigation to a specific costs section. If a member of the public is unable to find your prices, it is likely they will give up searching and will choose a firm whose costs are clear and accessible, with only one or two clicks of a mouse or taps of a finger.

### **3. Make online pricing simple and user-friendly**

It's highly likely that many people visiting your website will be in a distressed state of mind. It's important then to think about how information is presented. For example, lots of text and numbers might be too much for some people to take in. The result is that they will choose a firm which displays pricing information simply and in a user-friendly way. When preparing this information, why not test it out on someone not connected to the funeral profession to see if they find it accessible or challenging? Their feedback could be invaluable. And it could be that you merely need to expand the spacing between lines to allow people to digest the content more easily. Or you might need to reduce the amount of information to make it easier to understand. Throughout the process, though, it's critical to avoid letting your pricing information become a list of services and costs. And think about eliminating or explaining professional terminology such as disbursements and hygienic treatment.

### **4. How to talk about online pricing on social media**

Social media continues to offer a platform for independent funeral directors to connect with their communities, particularly Facebook. It's worth sharing information about your pricing on social media and this indeed meets the SAIF Code of Practice digital platform criteria for online pricing if you are without a website. You should be able to add this information in the About section on Facebook. Members with websites and Facebook pages may want to add their pricing information to both platforms.

In terms of posts about online pricing on Facebook and other social media platforms, you may wish to consider some pricing-related themes as you plan a range of content over a period of time. These might include value, a commitment to transparency, services offered, new services added, and annual price changes to name but a few. As with any information shared online, think about the audience receiving the message and what they might want to hear as much as what you want to say.

### **5. The importance of accompanying online pricing with calls to action**

As with many pages on your website, your price section should be accompanied by calls to action and links to other parts of your site. Simply including an 'enquire now' button or 'read this guide' link to further information about funerals will help to keep prospective clients engaged and interested in your business proposition. It's likely that without such calls to action, people won't stick around on your website long before they go back to Google to look at other funeral directors in your neighbourhood.

### **6. Risks associated with going online**

The modern internet can be an unforgiving place. Everyone now has a voice to complain about things they don't like. Therefore it's important to think carefully about the language you use and avoid presenting information in a way that might be perceived to be untransparent or uncaring. The service offered has to be matched with the service delivered - because the internet provides a paper trail. It's also essential to learn how to use Google Analytics to help measure where

26th January 2021

online visitors are coming from and how long they are staying on your site. And ask for feedback from your clients and crucially where they heard about your business and what attracted them to you. This kind of data is invaluable in helping to shape your service enrichment roadmap.

#### **7. Develop digital skills**

Finally, none of us can escape the internet and its role as a modern business tool. It's here to stay and investing in developing skills inhouse or bringing in external expertise will pay dividends over time. SAIF's 'Digital Marketing Toolkit for Independent Funeral Directors' offers a range of insights and will help you to get started on or enhance your journey. By developing digital skills and understanding the importance of having a contemporary, user-centric website and digital presence, your business will be able to connect with today's savvy consumers who expect nothing less.

#### **A changing funeral landscape**

Digital tools are rapidly changing every aspect of our personal and business lives. The impact is being felt through the rise of online comparison sites, Google and digital payments to name but a few. It's also behind the clamour for greater transparency around pricing from all firms across almost every sector. This is likely to intensify and SAIF encourages members to view online pricing as a single milestone in an ever-changing world. It is a wave we have to ride and there are likely to be many more disruptions in the years ahead. Alongside this, there is a forthcoming regulatory requirement to provide digital price clarity from the Competition and Markets Authority. This toolkit will help SAIF members to demonstrate a commitment to transparency whilst showcasing how your businesses genuinely add immeasurable value for bereaved families.