

FAO whomever is willing to take on board the opinions of those who have actually worked in the Funeral industry.

The very crux of our industry is compassion, care and respect to our clients and their deceased relatives whilst trying to run an efficient and successful business. Perhaps some FDs need some sharpening up with how honest and fair they are with their prices etc. and I fully agree with this as no one should be taken advantage of, especially when they've just lost somebody. However, I like to think that my family have, over the years, worked incredibly hard to maintain a good reputation for being honest and transparent whilst providing a compassionate and efficient service to the local community. We have been established since 1875 and have, so far, still managed to maintain our independence. We've followed rules and regulations laid down by various official bodies whilst still upholding our personal and friendly approach without having to seem corporate, mercenary or transactional about the job that we do.

A Funeral is a lot of money and it makes sense to allow people the opportunity to shop around before committing themselves to such a large expense but this isn't just a transaction like buying a car or an expensive holiday; this is about choosing who to entrust your deceased relative/friend etc. into the care of. It's sometimes incredibly personal and sensitive, particularly if the bereaved person has no experience of grief. This isn't just a job where you do your day's work, go home, forget about it and then get paid. In this industry you have the power to leave a huge mark, good or bad, on people at possibly the worst time in their life. It's imperative that you build a rapport and a sense of trust with clients and this rapport or bond can be built from the first contact they have with you. A price list on a website means people who think all they need to know is how much something costs may be swayed by figures instead of finding out about the people they're entrusting their loved one to. You might think you're allowing healthy competition in the industry but what you run the risk of doing is upsetting a lot of people who opt for the cheapest option and then get disappointed by the service they receive, thus bringing the industry into further disrepute.

There is far more to a Funeral than the dent it makes in your pocket and sometimes the service we provide deserves more than the cheapest going rate. If I employed idiots who don't care about how good a job they do and don't care about the impact they have on people, perhaps I could afford to charge less and get cavalier staff. Perhaps I could charge less if I didn't care about the quality and condition of our vehicles, the appearance and standards of our premises and equipment. If I didn't care about all these things, I could charge less but would I be here, the fourth generation in my family, to be caring for my local community? No, because we wouldn't have such a good reputation and therefore wouldn't have lasted so long.

The price list you have conjured up seems to have been designed by somebody with very little experience in the industry or knowledge of the implications some sections would have on the basic running of a funeral. For example, by giving the price of pallbearers, you're making it sound as though Pallbearers are optional. If we have a family who would like their relatives/friends to carry the coffin instead of our staff, that's fine. However, if one or more of those people do not feel up to it on the

day/don't show up/try and fail, we HAVE to have enough staff to carry the funeral out correctly. We cannot afford to show up with just our Funeral conductor in case the family bearers can't carry the coffin and then the congregation think we are inadequate because we haven't got the man power to carry the funeral out properly, thus damaging our reputation. I can guarantee that showing pallbearers as an optional extra will cause no end of awkward and possibly heated conversations between funeral arranger and family member which is exactly what we try to avoid.

We like to make things as easy for our clients as possible. Your price list suggests that there will be an additional price list for each FD firm for possible additional items so surely this will confuse people even more. They'll need to examine your suggested list as well as our list of things like grave markers, cremated remains containers, Orders of Service, Newspaper Notices, administration of charitable donations. Do you have any idea how confusing this will be on top of the bereavement, the necessary paperwork for registration and whatever others stressors the client will be going through? Our current price lists are far more comprehensive than the potential of having the standardised one AND the additional items list. This will defeat the object of a standardised price list.

The section regarding coffins is pretty ludicrous. This should be a "Prices from" area as there is a vast array of coffin designs not to mention the practicalities. People are not the same size, people do not die from the same things, people do not all have a funeral within the same time period from death. Sometimes the most basic coffin might have to be modified to become suitable to that person i.e. reinforced/made to a much bigger size/lined even more thoroughly. You can't just give one price for something like a coffin when there are so many different options.

The section about vehicles suggests that people can't be picked up from their home or another address so it sounds as though people have to go directly to the funeral venue. This needs rewording to indicate all options possible.

Regarding the section about unattended funerals, the burial/interment fee is different depending on which gravedigger you use, which cemetery you use. Your price list is too prescriptive here and needs rewording.

Regarding the footnote 1, Internment is an incorrect spelling, it means something entirely different to the burial of a body.

Regarding Fees you must pay, this part is very confusing. You cannot buy a plot in a churchyard. It is never owned by anybody but the church so this is very misleading. You can only buy a plot in a cemetery.

I appreciate that this standardised price list is an attempt to make price comparisons easier for people when they already have plenty to think about but I really do not believe it needs to go into such detailed breakdowns otherwise families will be having to compare so many components. Whatever happened to talking to people and finding out more information or are you wanting the Funeral Industry to become like shopping for insurance on comparethemarket.com? As a small business owner, I frequently have to try and be many roles within this business and I'm sure I'm not an expert on Time and Motions. The bigger firms i.e., Dignity, Co Op etc. will have financial experts who have meticulously worked out how much each component costs. Am I to employ somebody to break down everything to the detail you suggest? Straight away the smaller firms are at a disadvantage with this. Perhaps your plan is to eradicate all the independents and let Dignity/Co Op take over everything. That

will guarantee people have nowhere near as much choice with who they can use for their funeral.

The logic, I believe, that underpins all of this is totally consumer based, with no regard for this very caring and compassionate profession whose workforce has been affected so dramatically over the last year or so. To drag us all over the coals and perhaps imply that we are all crooks, taking advantage of bereaved people, is hurtful to those of us who are honest and hard working. It also suggests that you really do not understand how hard we work and that you don't value what we do. Quite frankly it's an insult!

Yours sincerely

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