

Are your affairs in order?

An interview with Ian Dibb, CEO Once I've Gone

Once I've Gone is tackling taboo and making things infinitely easier for those suffering the death of a loved one. We spoke to Ian Dibb about the business of death and innovation that makes people's lives better.

Ian Dibb, founder and CEO of Once I've Gone, tragically lost his mum and his sister in quick succession. The fact that he hadn't had conversations about death – about what would happen after they died – with either of them made things significantly harder.

“She wouldn't talk to us about death or dying or any of that sort of stuff, which made the process of dealing with her death incredibly painful. An absolute nightmare,” he says of his mum.

“That's why we started Once I've Gone”, he continues, “because, as individuals, the one thing that you are guaranteed from the moment you're born, is that you will die. It's a given. You can't avoid it – no matter how well off you are. And avoiding it only makes life more difficult for those you love.”

Once I've Gone is a tool that helps people get their personal, legal and financial affairs in order while they're still alive – to minimise stress for those they leave behind. It ensures there's no frantic rummaging trying to find the deceased's most recent will or insurance documents, and that family and friends know exactly what kind of send-off they would have wanted.

“You’re taking away those really difficult decisions from family members at a time when they shouldn’t be making them – because they’re in no fit state.”

I had a chat with Ian about Once I’ve Gone, the business of death, and whether this kind of innovation really can help people deal with the big questions.

Do you think that the way the ‘death industry’ works at the moment is old-fashioned?

So, nowadays you have #DeathTech, which I think is great because of the tech element, but it’s also a bit impersonal. And I don’t like Once I’ve Gone to be labelled Death Tech, because we are all about making a difference – we’re an organisation where all of the team have lost people, we’re not just a cybersecurity firm. We use technology to make a difference.

But it is nice to see that people are now starting to talk about end of life more, and whether that’s using an online digital platform or whether that’s become financial advisors, estate planners, solicitors understanding that people want to leave a digital legacy, it’s great to see people adapting and changing. It’s not stuffy; it’s no longer seen as taboo, which it was for many years. I think the more organisations that step into this sector the better.

We try to bring all these organisations together into one place – to get people to start planning for end of life. But also, Once I’ve Gone should be a whole of life platform. So if you signed up today – you’ve got a digital backup protected against flood, fire and theft, which is always available to you.

So does it not matter how old you are? Is this for everyone?

Yes, absolutely. We live in a paperless society, and if something’s on your email address, it’s out of access for those you love. So this should be something we all use. We want everything to be stored in Once I’ve Gone to make life easier for you on a day to day basis, but at the same time, should

anything happen to you, instead of your family members trying to locate everything, it's all in Once I've Gone.

I've been looking into funeral poverty, where 1 in 6 people in the UK wouldn't be able to afford the cost of a funeral. Do you think your platform could help out with that?

One of the key things with dying is that the family members aren't aware of what the individual would have wanted, so they end up splurging thousands of pounds on funerals that they might not have wanted. So, for my dad, who's still with us, I've told him I'm just chucking him in the back of a car and taking him to the recycling centre! And that's what he would want.

Yes, funeral poverty is a big issue – but at the same time a funeral doesn't have to cost a lot of money. It could be that you have a simple service at home for that individual, and then you have a small cremation where the family gets to say goodbye.

In most cases, Mum and Dad would have wanted to be remembered by those they love, to be given a send-off that celebrates their life, and not to cost the family a small fortune. And by using the platform, they can decide what they want – this song, this hymn, this reading, this location.

I know that, should something happen to me, my funeral's going to be an absolute blast – because my life's been incredible, and I want my send-off to be incredible.

Has Once I've Gone changed the way you talk about death with your family, and the way you think about your own death?

Massively. I'm not afraid of death – don't get me wrong. As a kid I always worried about Mum not being there, but as an adult I've never had a fear of death because I enjoy life so much. I think that if you understand that we are all mortal, you enjoy life far more than those individuals that choose to ignore it.

On Sunday, we took my daughter to the beach in Newquay. We ran up and down the sand dunes, and I shot a couple of videos, and I've already uploaded them into Once I've Gone, so that those moments I've captured will be kept forever and given to my daughter at the time she needs it the most. So I don't fear my own death; I just want to make sure that if something does happen to me, I've made life easier for those I love – and for my daughter to understand how loved she is.

Have you come up against some people who just don't want to talk about it? What are the challenges you've faced innovating in an industry that is still fairly taboo?

With COVID, it's become clear that – because we hear about death statistics, not about how many people have been saved every day – we live in a society where fear is suggested to us on a daily basis.

But the organisations we work with in the end of life sector automatically know the importance of planning for a good death. So yes, there are people out there that simply don't want to talk about death, but I think they're in the minority these days. It's something we all need to address.

What next for Once I've Gone?

One of the key things is letting people know we're out there! In May, we

launched our partnership platform, where organisations can use Once I've Gone with their own clients. We're always looking to work with exciting firms who understand the need for a digital legacy, but don't have the technology to do it themselves. We're looking to form lifelong strategic relationships with wealth managers, estate planners, financial advisors – and also with charities in the end of life sector.

Our platform is massively complementary to the likes of [Farewill](#) and other organisations. It works well with a solicitor who wants to help their client. We're very much a non-competitive platform, looking to work with organisations who really value their clients; and for us, seeing how technology is changing has been an incredible journey. You can see that people are using Once I've Gone more and more, because it's simple.

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Article by IAN DIBB