

# FUNERAL

## BUSINESS ADVISOR MAGAZINE™

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 PRECOA | COVER STORY  
PAGE 50

# OVERCOME PRENEED'S BIGGEST PITFALL

How high-quality follow-ups are the first step to 2X your preneed

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**TODD CARLSON**  
EVP/Chief Sales Officer  
Funeral Directors Life



**APRIL 24, 2020 | 10:00 AM CENTRAL**

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**JOSH MCQUEEN**  
Vice President of Product  
Passare



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**JEFF STEWART**  
EVP/Chief Marketing Officer  
Funeral Directors Life



**MAY 8, 2020 | 10:00 AM CENTRAL**

## How to Market Your Funeral Home on Facebook, Google, and Beyond

It's a brave new world for funeral homes with digital marketing opportunities around every corner. During this presentation, you will learn how to harness the marketing tools available today to grow your business and reach more families than ever before through Facebook, Google, and SEO.

**MITCHELL MCLEAN**  
Director of Digital Marketing  
Funeral Directors Life



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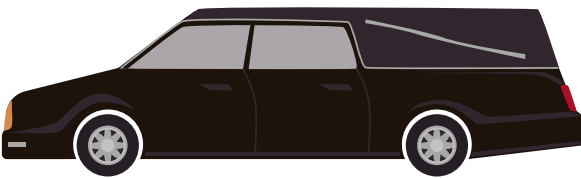


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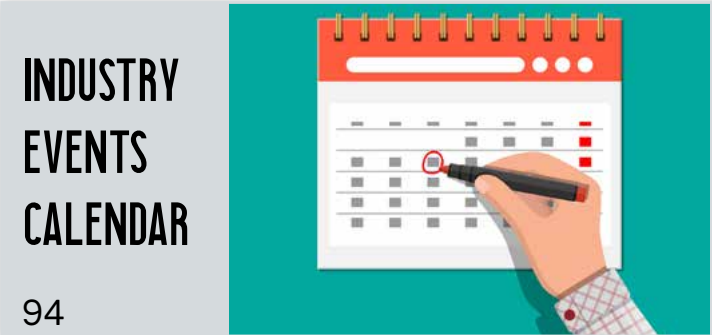


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Melissa Polis is a seasoned GIA certified professional with over a decade of experience. As an account manager in the crematory division at Garfield Refining Company, Melissa has worked closely with a multitude of funeral homes and crematories to help them achieve a simple and streamlined process for post-cremation recycling. Her expertise has also given her industry-leading knowledge on how to help crematories maximize the recoverable value of post-cremation metals.



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Mandy Benoualid is the CEO of Keeper, today's leading digital memorialization platform. Since 2013, Mandy has been dedicated to helping cemeterians and funeral directors create new and meaningful experiences for their families, using cutting edge technology that drives results. Keeper notably works with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration on the Veterans Legacy Memorial project, memorializing Millions of American Veterans. She can be reached by phone at 844-970-7900, or via email at [mandy@mykeeper.com](mailto:mandy@mykeeper.com).



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# INDUSTRY ALERTS



## PIERCE MORTUARY COLLEGES LAUNCH INITIATIVES FOR VETERANS AND ANNOUNCE SPECIAL GUEST AND ICCFA SHOW



**Broadview, IL** — Recognizing military service members and veterans, and their need to achieve rewarding post-military careers, Pierce Mortuary Colleges (PMC) has launched an initiative focused on assisting with VA benefits, tuition assistance and guidance through PMC programs.

To help launch this outreach, former Marine Corps Infantry Officer and true American hero Eric McElvenny will be greeting visitors at the Pierce Mortuary Colleges booth #3090 at the upcoming International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas. Eric's service and story is remarkable and inspiring. Eric deployed three times as a Marine and on his final tour, an incredible experience in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, was wounded after stepping on an IED. He suffered the amputation of his right leg below the knee, a life-changing opportunity that began his next journey: to finish an Ironman Triathlon. Now an inspirational speaker, Eric knows first-hand the importance of veterans adjusting back into civilian life and embarking on a successful career track. Be sure to stop by the Pierce Colleges booth to meet Eric and learn more about the PMC programs.

"This outreach to eligible military service members is an initiative that each of our three Pierce Colleges is enthusiastically embarking upon," said Jill Karn, Chief Operating Officer of Pierce Mortuary Colleges. "The GI Bill offers a number of military educational benefits, plus each service has its own tuition assistance and other means to help service members. Our College Admission Advisors can help navigate these and help active-duty or veterans embark on a successful career track."

## PIERCE COLLEGES

The *Wilbert* Group



For more information on Pierce Mortuary Colleges programs and how to maximize VA benefits within the colleges' curricula, visit [www.pierce.edu](http://www.pierce.edu).



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## SRS ANNOUNCES EXCLUSIVE SPRING TRAINING EVENT IN LAS VEGAS



**SRS COMPUTING**

**Wexford, PA** – SRS Computing announced today their 2020 Spring training event in Las Vegas, NV. This two-day event is being held on May 14-

15, 2020 at The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas, NV and will feature hands-on software training, peer roundtable learning opportunities and other unique experiences. Space is limited to 150 seats.

"We held a similar event last year and the feedback was incredible. This year, we wanted to build not only an event but an experience where attendees could get hands-on training to be able to use more of their software. They will hear how other SRS customers in the room are successfully using the tools," says Kim Simons, Vice-President of SRS Computing.

New to this year's event are peer roundtables to allow all attendees to hear how others are using the SRS software features and seeing incredible successes. Attendees will also be able to test-drive new and existing software features with an SRS team member right there with them.

"The SRS software is capable of so much and many users only use a percentage of it. This event is designed to change that. They already have an incredibly robust program; they just need to know how to use it. With this two-day event, they will walk away with creative strategies to use the tools available to be more efficient and more profitable in their business. That's the goal." Says Simons. "The event costs a fraction of what it would cost for an SRS team member to fly to their location for training like this. We're bringing a community of SRS customers together to get that training from us but also learn from each other. It's going to be great."

The industry leader for funeral home, cemetery, and crematory management software since 1999. Simplicity meets cutting-edge technology, unparalleled support, and the most robust Funeral Software Management and Website products developed for this industry. Together, SRS Websites and Procession deliver a simple yet comprehensive software solution. For information on SRS Computing, please visit [srscomputing.com](http://srscomputing.com). To keep the event hands-on with attendees and interactive, space will be limited to 150 seats and will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration is now open with early-bird pricing on until April 1, 2020. Learn more about the 2020 SRS Spring Training event or register at [www.srscomputing.com/vegas](http://www.srscomputing.com/vegas).

## TRIBUCAST™ RECEIVES KEEPING IT PERSONAL AWARD FROM ICCFA

Recognized in Most Innovative Personalized Product Category



**Sterling, VA** – TribuCast™, a private and personalized remote attendance system for funerals, based in Wilton, Connecticut, has won Honorable Mention in the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association's 2019 Keeping It Personal (KIP) Awards, recognizing the best in personalization in the cemetery, funeral service and cremation profession.

Created by the ICCFA Personalization Committee, the KIP program honors recipients in four categories. TribuCast™, received Honorable Mention in the Most Innovative Personalized Product category.

The ICCFA's 2019 KIP Awards contest attracted 47 entries from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Guatemala, and the United States. Communications and marketing professionals from outside the cemetery and funeral service profession performed the judging.

The TribuCast™ Remote Attendance System™ creates a private online environment that closely matches the in-person experience of attending a funeral. Using TribuCast™ helps all loved ones grieve more effectively by including those who can't be there in person and by creating a highly personalized enduring tribute to the life that was lost. Through its easy-to-use live stream technology and interactive touchpoints, TribuCast™ helps share family history and fond memories and put the life that was lost into greater context for both in-person and remote attendees. There are six interactive touchpoints that surround the livestream of the funeral providing photos, videos, and more to create a life-affirming narrative about the deceased that adds to and amplifies the message of the funeral service to the loved ones watching from afar.

All KIP Awards recipients will be featured in future issues of the ICCFA Magazine, and on display at the ICCFA 2020 Annual Convention & Exposition, March 30 – April 2 at the Henry B. González Convention Center in San Antonio, Texas.

**About TribuCast™:** TribuCast™, a division of LIVECLOUDTV™, delivers an easy-to-use, patent-pending, state-of-the-art remote attendance solution to bring the full impact of a funeral home's bereavement services to those who can't be there in person. TribuCast is accessed through a personal website where a funeral or memorial service can be viewed in real time, or at a later date, along with highly personalized content that puts the life that was lost into greater context. TribuCast helps reduce a family's heartache and stress by enabling family and friends to honor, celebrate and grieve for their loved one, regardless of their location or life circumstances. For more information, please visit [www.tribucast.com](http://www.tribucast.com) or connect with TribuCast on Facebook and Twitter.

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## LIFE CELEBRATION, INC. FEATURED IN UPDATED 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF BEST-SELLING BUSINESS BOOK *THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY*

**North Wales, PA** — Life Celebration, Inc. was honored this past fall to be approached by co-authors of *The Experience Economy*, Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore, and the publishers at Harvard Business Review Press, to take advantage of a special offering to select businesses that have embraced the frameworks and methodologies of the best-selling business book. Along with having custom book jackets printed with their logo on the front and a custom forward written by Jim Gilmore, Life Celebration, Inc. is recognized in the credits of the book as one of “selected companies who have helped transform their thinking into action.”

Life Celebration, Inc. first discovered the book *The Experience Economy* a year after its original release. Since then, owners of Life Celebration, Inc. Gerry Givnish and Jim Cummings have embraced all of the teachings in the book and infused them into the funeral profession. Jim Gilmore spoke about the work that Life Celebration, Inc. owners have done to transform the funeral experience for consumers saying: “Cummings and Givnish became true students of *The Experience Economy*, internalizing the book’s principles and frameworks and using them to guide the creation of a whole new method for assisting families in moments of loss. They used their own funeral homes as pilot locations for prototyping new ways of engaging families—from that very



first call through the production and delivery of custom-made visual props for staging Life Celebration events. They then codified these practices as formal training for other funeral directors. To cap it all off, three members of the Life Celebration headquarters staff went through Pine and Gilmore’s *Experience Economy Expert Certification* course to gain an even deeper understanding of experience excellence.”

In the updated book, co-authors Pine and Gilmore make an even stronger case for experiences as the critical link between a company and its potential audience, broadening its application to the demands of today’s increasingly distractible, time-starved world. Experiences and transformations are the basis for future business growth and prosperity, and *The Experience Economy* offers the script from which managers can continue to generate value in ways that are aligned with a strong customer-centric strategy.

For more information on becoming the exclusive Life Celebration Community Member in your market, call us at 888-887-3782, visit us online at [www.lifecelebrationinc.com](http://www.lifecelebrationinc.com).

## BOGATI URNS INTRODUCES NEW PACKAGE OFFER FEATURING BIRTHSTONE CREMATION PENDANT COLLECTION

**Sarasota, FL** — After experiencing significant interest in a line of birthstone cremation pendants upon launch in 2019, Bogati Urns is excited to announce the addition of a new package offer featuring these traditional pieces.

The new Bogati birthstone jewelry package includes 12 stainless steel pendants with a simulated birthstone for each month, a chain and microfiber jewelry pouch for each pendant, and a white linen, glass-front presentation case.

“These birthstone pendants offer a traditional yet highly personalized way to remember someone. So they were very popular when we released them last year,” said Bogati Urns owner, Andrea Bogard LeBlanc. “Given their popularity I thought creating a bundle would be helpful for our customers from both a pricing and display perspective.”

Customers can save by purchasing the items bundled together in the package. Plus, Bogard LeBlanc always advises customers to purchase at least two of an item — one to show and one to go. Once the extra of any design has been purchased, the display can then be used to generate an order. With Bogati’s quick turnaround times, customers can receive new pendant orders within just a few days.



In addition, the new display case — only available through this package — was specifically designed to both highlight and secure these unique pendants. The glass top allows families to browse the collection with the lid clasped closed, and at 9.5 inches x 6.75 inches x 2 inches in size, it easily fits in a desk drawer for safe storage when not on display.

“Security and display are ongoing requests from our customers, so we make every effort to meet their needs,” Bogard LeBlanc said. “In fact, we’re always open to customer suggestions so we can help them grow and succeed. That will definitely continue in 2020 and beyond.”

To view all Bogati Urn Company’s jewelry packages, visit: <https://bogatiurns.com/product-category/memorial-jewelry-packages/>.

## PASSARE® ANNOUNCES NEW PUBLIC API FOR WEB PROVIDERS

**Abilene, TX** — Passare, Inc. is pleased to announce our groundbreaking public API (Application Programming Interface) that can now allow any website provider to integrate with Passare.

“We are excited to announce that our Public API for website providers is now available,” said Josh McQueen, Vice President of Product at Passare. “This project has been a priority for us because we are always looking for ways to help our clients be more efficient with their daily operations.” An API is like a key that unlocks the information within Passare and allows it to be sent to another website. With Passare’s API, funeral directors can enter funeral information from service details to obituaries (and more) and then transfer the information to their website with the click of a button.

“The API is going to save a lot of time for our customers,” said McQueen. “We already integrate with several select website providers, but our public API really opens up the opportunity to integrate with ANY website provider, including custom funeral home websites.”

The public API provides a secure connection to Passare for website providers who have been granted Passare’s API key. Data can be transferred on a case-by-case basis,



which means the funeral home can decide which cases are transferred over.

“As always, our goal in creating this API was to create a best-in-class solution,” McQueen continued. “We started getting more requests from providers to integrate with our software than we could handle, so rather than program one integration at a time, we started working on a solution that would benefit everyone. Next up, our plan is to expand our API capabilities to other types of funeral home software applications.”

Contact your Passare support team at 800-692-5111 or email [support@passare.com](mailto:support@passare.com) to learn how to grant your website provider access to Passare’s API. To learn more about Passare’s API, go to <http://bit.ly/PassareWebAPI>. For more information about Passare’s cloud-based collaboration software with built-in business management tools, go to [www.passare.com](http://www.passare.com).

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# MALINOW & SILVERMAN



Malinow and Silverman Mortuary, located in Los Angeles, California is highly experienced in Jewish funeral service. The firm is well-versed in all customs and practices and can accommodate any family, from the most traditional to the most secular.

The Southern California mortuary has a long history that spans back nearly 100 years. In 1927, Nathan Malinow and Nathan Simons founded Malinow and Simons Mortuary to serve the burial needs of the growing Jewish community in Southern California. Then, in the early 1940's Nathan Malinow began transitioning the business to his son, Alvin. At that time, he also asked his son-in-law, Morton Silverman to join the business as well. In 1946, Alvin and Morton became partners, and the business was renamed Malinow and Silverman.

In 1984, Alvin and Morton made the decision to sell the business to a growing death care corporation known as Service Corporation International (SCI). Although Morton stayed on as an employee, the sale essentially ended what

had been nearly 60 years of being a family owned business. Under the ownership of SCI the business changed locations multiple times. In 2004, SCI sold Malinow and Silverman to long time manager Randy Ziegler, thus returning the mortuary to being family owned and operated. In 2016, Randy began to look at pursuing other interests and sold the business to Eric and Susan Rothman, the present owners.

"I got into the funeral business completely by accident," begins Eric Rothman, Owner and Funeral Director with Malinow and Silverman Mortuary. "In my early twenties, I moved to Southern California from the east coast after finishing up college where I studied television production. When I first got to California, I took the first job I could find to establish myself while I figured out what I was going to do with my life. It was a job as a first call driver for a mortuary. I had no idea what the position really entailed when I took it, but 30 years later I haven't left the industry," Eric recalls.

Over the years Eric worked for two of Southern California's





largest Jewish firms. Throughout his 20 years of service, he gained knowledge and experience by working in senior management before he made the decision to purchase Malinow and Silverman. Eric had been wanting to go out on his own for some time and this was his perfect opportunity.

"The Los Angeles Jewish funeral business is really unique. There are three large combos that dominate the industry here because over the years they absorbed many of the smaller independent operations. There are a few cemeteries that have Jewish sections and there are a few small funeral homes, but the industry is mostly run by these three combos which have the majority of market share. The only independently owned one, that is not dedicated to the Orthodox Jewish community, is Malinow and Silverman," explains Eric.

When Eric and his wife Susan bought the business in 2016, they knew they had some work to do. The current location was very outdated and the business itself was in desperate need of some reshaping and reinventing.

"Competing with the big combos was becoming impossible when we first bought the business, so we sat down to evaluate the business model. We noted one main issue many families were having right away. Due to the overwhelming size of Los Angeles, many families had space in a cemetery, but didn't have arrangements made and had to schlep to the mortuaries which was a hassle in an already difficult time. So, we decided we would come to them and market ourselves as a boutique mortuary," Eric describes. "Nobody wants to go into a funeral home or mortuary, it's hard and it's so unfamiliar, so we eliminated that aspect of our business," Eric says honestly.

With so many funeral homes today doing everything they can to make their space "feel like home" for their families, Malinow and Silverman decided to think outside of the box and meet with families in their homes to discuss arrangements in a place that doesn't just feel like home, but is home. This aspect of the business is what really sets the LA mortuary apart from others and makes families feel the most comfortable.

With all arrangements being made at the homes of families and services being performed at chapels on the cemetery grounds, Eric quickly realized they had no need for the large property where the business was located.

"We decided to downsize a bit and moved the business to a storefront with much less space. It has everything we need: a prep room, storage, and back office. The public does not come into our physical location, we go to them - the smaller space just made more sense," states Eric.

The business model of Malinow and Silverman doesn't exist anywhere else in the Jewish community of Southern California, so that aspect paired with their nearly 100-year history in the area makes for a very strong presence. Families are drawn to the mortuary's unique approach to making arrangements and are impressed by their ability to remain a frontrunner in funeral service decade after decade.

"Our families absolutely love our approach. Every once in a while, we have someone who isn't comfortable with having a

stranger in their home, so we meet at a local coffee shop or restaurant. We have others who just prefer to do everything over the phone, and we offer that option as well. Whatever our families need, we make happen. They are already going through a difficult time and we want to tailor the process to their needs to make their lives easier," adds Eric.

Eric's experience in the LA Jewish community spans nearly 30 years, alongside his wife Susan who has been in the business for 15 years, they are an unstoppable pair. Susan worked for many years in cemetery and funeral sales for one of the big players in the area. Together, Eric and Susan offer their community unique and quality service backed by years of experience.

"This is very much a family business. She handles more on the preneed side and I handle the at-need side of things, we have a little overlap sometimes and we make a great team," says Eric.

Another reason Malinow and Silverman has been so successful over the years is the team of dedicated staff members that are knowledgeable and passionate beyond measure. With everything in the business being cloud based, Eric spends many days working from home because he trusts his team to handle everything on site.

Thinking back to when he first purchased the business, Eric recalls his decision to reach out for help from American Funeral Consultants as being a pivotal aspect to the deal.

"I knew I needed somebody to help me in the process in addition to my lawyer and accountant. I looked at some of the bigger companies, but they were just too big for me and more than I needed. Per a recommendation from someone, I got in contact with a guy in the Midwest who ended up taking my retainer and then never returned my calls or answered my emails, it was a huge disappointment," Eric recounts. "So, when I had no idea what to do, I came across an ad for American Funeral Consultants in a trade magazine and decided to give them a call. They were so fabulous, and I would recommend them to anyone. They are attentive and nothing ever slipped through the cracks. They organize and present everything so beautifully and advised me in a way that gave me great confidence. They really turned it around for me and helped me get to where I needed to be," states Eric.

Looking forward to the future, Eric is excited to continue to grow the business and serve his community. It's clear that Malinow and Silverman Mortuary has it figured out. Lead by Eric and Susan and backed by an amazingly passionate team, this local business will surely continue to grow its 100-year-old roots deeper into the community. Through their hard work and ability to change with the times, they have proven that a small, family-owned and operated business can do a lot more than just compete with the bigger firms, they can come out on top and flourish.

"I am so excited for us to officially hit 100 years of service in 2027. It's been an honor to be a part of something that's been around in Southern California for decades and I am excited to continue the legacy," Eric says proudly. **FBA**

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## INFINITE INNOVATIONS

### Who is Infinite Innovations, Inc and what product and services do you provide?

Infinite Innovations supplies the Coachbuilders who manufacture limousines and funeral cars with specialty parts duplicating factory design but making them longer. Infinite was founded in 1987 by Bud Thomas. From humble beginnings in a barn with a dirt floor; the company grew into a 10,000 sq. ft facility by 1991 when Cadillac came to Infinite asking for help to facilitate not just the specialty parts, but all the parts required for the launch of the Fleetwood for the Coachbuilders. Since then Infinite supplies the Coachbuilders with a big percentage of the parts for GM and Ford. Today Infinite is in a 54,500 sq. ft facility supplying coachbuilders who manufacture limousines and funeral cars with specialty parts. Infinite supplies every Coachbuilder in the industry with products, from rubber seals to side glass to all types of moldings and trim. In our attempt to help the industry, we expanded to more products requested of us. Deciding to also offer these product lines direct to the end-user. We manufacture our own line of products such as AC units, casket rollers, bier pins, flagstuffs and mounts, a broad line of lights and custom umbrellas and more. We help the Funeral homes take care of their customers.

### What makes Infinite unique?

Infinite is the only central stocking warehouse for GM and Ford for parts to the builders of hearses, limousines and Sprinter vans. This means Infinite is set up with a special direct purchasing, which helps our customers receive the parts they need at competitive prices. Our direct partnership with GM and Ford sets us apart from our competitors. We can deliver and warehouse the specialty parts not available at a dealership or anywhere else at competitive prices and have been doing it since 1987. The manufacturers who build these vehicles trust us, which speaks volumes on the quality of parts we sell.

### What are some notable projects that Infinite has worked on?

We worked with Lincoln to develop and now supply the stamped doors for the special 80th anniversary model of the Lincoln Continental extended Coach. Also currently working with Cadillac on the new XT5.

### What are the benefits to funeral homes and cemeteries using Infinite?

Time and money. Customers often call us not knowing what it is they need. With our team of expert's combined experience of over 200 years in this industry, we know exactly what questions to ask our customers to find out exactly what they need. Saving the customer time and money. We are the manufacturer of a big percentage of the parts allowing the Funeral homes to save by buying direct!

### We listen to our customers and develop products that they can't find.

Infinite had represented a couple of different lines of A/C and heat units for the past 20 years to the Coachbuilders. Due to unreliable supply lines, Infinite decided to take the best of each unit offered to the industry and combine them, developing our own product line of units. We now supply most of the cars being manufactured. Most recently customers requested a quick-release flagstaff, and without hesitation, Infinite developed it.

### How does your company provide a solution for funeral homes?

Our job at Infinite is to help funeral homes keep their hearses and limos looking brand new. We understand that wear and tear can happen with repeated use. The manufacturers that built your vehicle bought a lot of these parts from us. They trust us because we work directly with GM and Ford. We are not just a parts company. We employ experts in the vehicle manufacturing industry, ensuring that our clients receive the customer service and parts they deserve. Infinite understands that funeral homes need to focus on their families and buying car parts takes them away from that. Our team can help you replace parts while saving you time and money.

### COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

Infinite Innovations  
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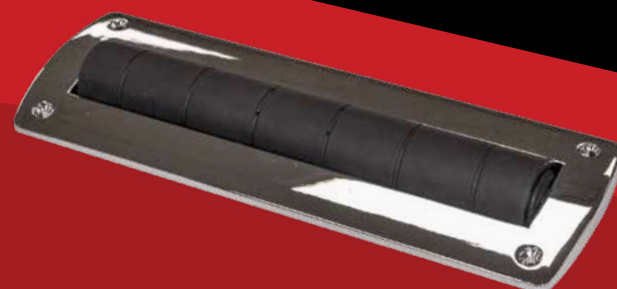
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# SPOTLIGHT ON: PERSONALIZATION & MEMORIALIZATION AND WHY IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Families want their loved one's funeral experience to be unique to who they were, and personalization products allow them to better honor them. Memorialization items also help the family and friends to remember their loved one in a personal, meaningful way that they will cherish forever. One of the hardest things we all know about losing a loved one is when the rest of the world has moved on and we are still struggling. Many personalization items become conversation pieces, so when we are asked about it, we have a natural reason to speak about our loved one and it helps keep their legacy alive.

Ultimately, families want products and solutions that help them best honor and remember their loved one's life. They want the product to be unique to their dearly departed and honor their legacy in a meaningful way. This way, it can be something that they cherish forever and pass down to their family for generations.

"Technology is playing a major role in memorialization and personalization," begins Jennifer Goldade, Senior Content Specialist with Frazer Consultants. "For example, instead of picture boards displayed at the funeral, funeral homes are creating tribute videos to showcase a loved one's life story. And instead of only viewing obituaries in newspapers, families are viewing them online too. Many funeral homes even have their own tribute walls on their websites for those who are grieving to share fond memories of their loved one," Jennifer elaborates.

Change can be scary, but don't be afraid to embrace new ideas. The new personalization and memorialization technology solutions out there are designed to make things easier for your funeral home, not more difficult. By expanding your offerings, you can boost your bottom line while helping families find meaningful ways to honor and remember their loved ones.

The use of computers and the Internet has introduced a sea of change in the way people are remembered and honored. So much information is placed online about funeral services which is accessible to thousands of people instantaneously. People from across the country, in rural areas and densely populated cities, all have equal access to worldwide information about conducting memorial services. The family of a loved one may urge their local funeral directors to conduct a service or offer products like those that they spotted on Pinterest or Instagram. Tons of creative and unusual memorial items can be found on social media sites and easily shared.

"Everyone is different and assuming a family has to deal with death maybe every ten or twelve years, I'm not sure a family knows what to look for, what is available, or ultimately what they want. That said, it is important for funeral professionals to know what is available and consequently, what products would be appropriate for display and presentation at services and as aftercare

comfort items," states Karl Weisenbeck, President of Funeral Home Gifts. "It is important to be open minded. Realize that this is a dynamic and constantly changing industry in terms of what will resonate with family members of different generations. What worked in the past may not work at present or going forward. Stay up to date on current trends and consumer demands," Karl advises.

Families are seeking products and services that strike a chord with their own values and concepts about the meaning of life, love and death. The Internet has made it possible for families to review and select memorialization products on their own time, when they feel ready to contemplate what would be appropriate. This allows funeral homes to focus on their core mission to help families and removes pressure on families to make memorialization decisions during the arrangement meetings.

"There is a need for traditional items that feature Bible verses and familiar visuals, but there has been a shift to honor the deceased in a contemporary, updated fashion. Celebration of Life services are popular, where the individual is memorialized in a deeply personal, unique way that may or may not incorporate time-honored religious themes. Funeral home directors and celebrants are seeking new memorial items that are not one size fits all," explains Richard Gentry, Manager with Lamcraft, Inc. "Some families may be content with tried-and-true offerings, but others seek out unconventional items that reflect today's changing attitudes toward death and funeral practices. Flexibility is essential for funeral homes to evolve and meet the expectations of the families they serve," Richard adds.

While the need to grieve hasn't changed, the ceremonies we use to help us through the process has. Celebration of Life services are more than just a trend – they are part of a major shift in the industry. While traditional practices remain at funerals, families are also incorporating more storytelling and the sharing of happy memories and accomplishments. The overall focus is not on the death, but on the joy that the person brought to others. Celebration ceremonies can be held in addition to a traditional funeral service or as a stand-alone event.

"Accessibility to the customer is probably the most notable change we've seen due to technology and the Internet. The Internet has allowed families to easily search for products and research the most efficient way to acquire them. While we do not sell directly to the public, the customer can reach out to us and we will work with them in getting in touch with a funeral home in their area that offers our jewelry. Social media has also been a great way for us to market our products. While we are a bit new on the scene, we can already see the way that you're able to amplify your brand via the various platforms. The ability to easily get new products and promotions in front of customers is an important tool," says Joni Cullen, Co-Owner of Madelyn Company.



Personalized products provide families and friends with strong physical ties to their loved ones, which helps to blunt the feelings of loss. Families today are stepping far out of the realm of traditional funeral ceremonies and looking for ways to remember and celebrate the life of their departed in unique and memorable ways. To stay relevant, funeral homes must pay close attention to evolving trends; it is essential to the future and growth of their funeral home. Offering memorialization and personalization services will help any funeral home make up for the loss in revenue caused by the rise in the popularity of cremation.

"We are seeing an increase in the desire for extreme personalization—that is, creating a keepsake that reflects not just a physical characteristic of the loved one, but also is specifically representational of that person's life or personality. A fingerprint on a football helmet for a big sports fan, a print in a piece that incorporates the design of a tattoo the deceased had. The possibilities to tailor something specific are endless," describes Michael McCormick, Art Director with Thumbies, Inc. "Consumers are always looking for new ideas (designs and materials), but more importantly, they are looking for ways to take personalization to the next level with extreme customization; to make a product even more representative of the individual they are looking to celebrate," Michael goes on to state.

In today's world, it is often difficult for relatives to physically visit a grave. Some may not have the opportunity or resources to do so. Memorialization and personalization products provide families with the ability to take a memory with them, wherever they go. Personalized products bring up good memories and spur conversations and remembrances of good times rather than focusing on the grief and solemn circumstances of the current moment.

Memorialization tributes are important components of a memorable service and personalization offerings further enhance the funeral experience. It is important to make sure families know what your funeral home offers.

Learn more about the importance of memorialization and personalization for your business by receiving advice from top providers in this feature editorial. **FBA**



#### What products or services do you offer?

Frazer Consultants has an all-in-one personalization suite Tribute Center that meets and exceeds all your personalization and memorialization product needs. Funeral directors can easily create funeral stationery products, memorial candles, Tribute Videos, and so much more. Additionally, our funeral home websites have Tribute Walls for viewing obituary information, leaving condolences, sharing memories, lighting virtual candles, and more. We also offer customizable memorial ornaments made of crystal and glass that families can use to honor loved ones during the holiday season or year-round.

#### What does a funeral home owner need to know about your products and/or services?

For funeral homes who have a Frazer-powered website, Tribute Center integrates with it to eliminate double data entry and make creating memorial and personalization products even easier. You also can easily share a loved one's Tribute Video to their Tribute Wall.

#### What sets you apart from your competition?

We strive to work as a partner to funeral homes to provide them with the tools and resources they need to give families the best funeral experiences possible. In addition to our products and services, we have a resource library on our website filled with a variety of free resources for funeral homes, including eBooks and blog posts about funeral personalization and memorialization ideas.

#### Do you offer any special offers/promotions, or discounts?

From March 15th to April 15th every year, we offer free shipping on all ornament orders in the U.S. and 50% off shipping to Canada. These crystal and glass ornaments are easily customizable and come with their own gift boxes for safekeeping. Our customers love giving these to families during their holiday remembrance programs at the end of the year.

#### When speaking to a prospective client/funeral home owner what are some frequently asked questions that you receive?

One of the main questions we get is, "how can we stand out from our competitors?" When it comes to personalization, offering more options is a big way to differentiate your funeral home in your community. Many funeral homes offer the same five options for funeral stationery and keepsakes that they have for years, but what if families had hundreds of options instead? Moving to print-on-demand gives you that option without having to stock up on supplies you'll never use.

Answers submitted by  
Jennifer Goldade, Senior Content Specialist  
with Frazer Consultants.

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## FUNERAL HOME GIFTS

### THE FINAL TOUCH

#### What products or services do you offer?

Funeral Home Gifts is the premier provider of woven and printed Tribute Blankets, custom cap panels, photo urns, framed and curved acrylic portraits, neckties and personalization products to death care providers throughout North America. Delivered next day, our products comfort families, provide revenue through re-orders and provide vision to transition families from direct cremation to personalized memorial services.

#### What does a funeral home owner need to know about your products and/or services?

All Funeral Home Gifts' products are manufactured in the United States and are available for next day delivery. We offer thousands of different backgrounds and designs for all of our products and have developed a robust online order process that only takes about five minutes for orders to be placed.

#### What sets you apart from your competition?

Funeral Home Gifts is the manufacturer. All our products are made in our own mill in Lynn, NC by an American workforce. Our simple online order takes about five minutes and allows our customers to see and approve their design prior to submitting their order.

#### Do you offer any special offers/promotions, or discounts?

Funeral Home Gifts is proud to provide a free Tribute Blanket for the service of any service man, police officer or firefighter killed in the line of duty. Also Tribute Blankets resonate best when unexpectedly displayed and presented as a surprise gift at first viewings, visitations and services. We are happy to provide a free blanket to new customers wishing to prove out the gifting process in real time so that they can experience it for themselves and decide if it is a product that they want to integrate into their current process. We also offer discounted pricing on reorders and volume discounts on some of our personalization products.

Answers submitted by

Karl Weisenbeck, President of Funeral Home Gifts



#### What products or services do you offer?

Lamcraft is one of the leading providers of laminated products and services in North America. We offer a full-service design department as well as a production and manufacturing facility, all located in Lee's Summit, Missouri. We offer a wide range of clear laminating pouches, micro-perforated sheets for printing, memorial cards, presentation cards, body tag components and other accessories in our product line. We also create finished laminated products such as personalized Tribute cards and our For Keeps™ cards with a writable surface and detachable keepsake bookmark. We can fabricate any size and proportion of clear laminating pouch upon request, as well as custom shapes.

#### What does a funeral home owner need to know about your products and/or services?

Lamcraft, Inc. is a well-established small business, located in the heart of the United States, who has catered to funeral home needs for more than 45 years. Many of our staff are long-time employees, dedicated to providing top-notch customer service and the highest quality laminating products to our customers. We welcome the comments and requests from funeral home directors and strive to be the primary source for their laminating needs.

#### What sets you apart from your competition?

Complete flexibility in our product offerings. Lamcraft produces almost everything in-house. We can design, print and manufacture memorial cards and produce clear laminating pouches for a variety of funeral home needs. We offer Micro-Perforated bookmarks if customers prefer to print and laminate their own memorial keepsakes. We produce custom Tribute cards that are finished laminated bookmarks featuring the loved one in a personal way. We also offer custom imprinting services that allow funeral homes to brand the products they use.

#### Do you offer any special offers/promotions, or discounts?

We always offer quantity discounts on many of our products sold by the carton, if more than five cartons of a like item are purchased. In addition, we feature four quarterly sales each year which are promoted by email blasts, and occasional pop-up sales throughout the year.

Answers submitted by

Richard Gentry, Manager with Lamcraft, Inc.

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#### What products or services do you offer?

Madelyn Co. offers an extensive collection of keepsake jewelry. The collection ranges from necklaces and bracelets to hanging domes where the pendants can be displayed. Pendants range from small to mid-sized and come in a range of finishes (gold, white gold, sterling silver, bronze, etc.). Each pendant has a small chamber inside that holds a small portion of cremated remains or a clip of hair (whichever the customer prefers). We have an entry level price point that makes our pendants accessible to everyone. Our company also offers the option to personalize the keepsake pendants with engraving. When the pendant arrives at the funeral home, not only does the design appeal to the families, but the engraving makes it even more special and unique. We offer a lifetime guarantee on our pendants and pride ourselves on excellent customer service and same day shipping.

#### What does a funeral home owner need to know about your products and/or services?

The most important thing to know is that we back our products 100% and we pride ourselves on our customer care. The funeral industry has allowed our business to grow to where it is today. Therefore, we sell strictly through funeral homes. We're forever grateful for the support they've shown us and the relationships we've made over the years.

#### What sets you apart from your competition?

Madelyn Co. is the originator of cremation jewelry, having been in business for almost 30 years. We take immense pride in the quality of our products; we want our customers to see the Madelyn Co. stamp and know they have the highest quality cremation jewelry available. We strive to offer the products families are asking for in terms of shapes and sizes, so our product line is ever expanding. Madelyn Co. is family owned and operated, so all of our employees believe in the company and our products. This makes it easy for us to provide great service to our customers.

#### Do you offer any special offers/promotions, or discounts?

We offer a select monthly discount on our website or when you call to order you can ask about the monthly discount. Our Tabletop Presentation Case is offered at a 25% discount. This display case includes 14 pendants and 2 display domes as well as the case itself. We also offer weekly discount codes on our Instagram page @madelynpendants.

Answers submitted by  
Joni Cullen, Co-Owner of Madelyn Company



#### What products or services do you offer?

Thumbies® offers an ever-expanding range of jewelry keepsakes and accessories that can be personalized by incorporating print types of both people (finger, hand, foot) and pets (paw and nose prints) into the design of the item. Some products incorporate cremated remains which allows for customized keepsakes for those lacking available prints. In addition, we have the professional jewelry staff and expertise to be able to customize, often from scratch, any kind of keepsake design. We have produced fingerprint keepsakes in the shapes of states, animals, and objects, and have adapted existing items to be able to include a print.

#### What does a funeral home owner need to know about your products and/or services?

Our base product lines are just the starting point. We are constantly in development of new keepsake types and are committed to releasing at least six (6) new product designs a year—three in the Spring and 3 in the Fall. Partners enjoy generous profit margins and extensive Sales and Marketing support as well as highly responsive Customer Service support. In addition, we provide many Marketing and Sales supplies free of charge, including our new mobile App for taking/submitting prints.

#### What sets you apart from your competition?

First and foremost, the quality of our work. Virtually all our keepsakes are hand crafted from the finest raw materials, by trained artisans in the U.S. heartland, using a combination of cutting-edge technology and the ancient art of lost wax casting. Our competition by-and-large simply etches jewelry blanks that have been mass produced, usually outside the U.S. We have on staff a range of jewelry professionals, including CAD designers, goldsmiths, and Certified Gemologists, who work together to bring life to any custom request that goes beyond our already extensive product lines.

We are innovators and have introduced over the years original designs as well as proprietary materials that are available exclusively from Thumbies®. Add to that a very responsive Customer Service staff that has been consistently lauded since we began operations in 1998, and dedicated Sales and Marketing departments with decades of experience in the bereavement industry.

#### Do you offer any special offers/promotions, or discounts?

Thumbies® Partners receive generous wholesale pricing on keepsakes. We also offer occasional promotions designed to increase Partner income.

Answers submitted by  
Michael McCormick, Art Director with Thumbies, Inc.

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### Who is Foundation Partners Group?

Foundation Partners Group is a leading provider of innovative funeral and cemetery experiences and products. As one of the largest privately-owned funeral and cemetery operators, Foundation

Partners owns and operates over 135 funeral homes, cremation centers, and cemeteries in 20 states. With headquarters in Orlando, Florida, Foundation Partners is committed to revolutionizing the funeral profession while harnessing the power of relationships and partnership within their network and the communities they serve.

Foundation Partners is driven by five unique truths – Partnership, Relationships, Innovation, Compassion and People Focused – that keep them true to their principles. Their desire to preserve their partners' legacies, combined with their innovative approach, sets them apart from other aggregators and positions them for a leadership role in defining the future of the funeral industry.

### How did Foundation Partners Group get involved in the funeral industry?

Foundation Partners Group began in 2010, with funeral home and cemetery owners partnering with experienced business executives to reinvent the future of the funeral profession. Since that time, Foundation Partners has experienced significant growth and now serves more than 60,000 families annually across the country.

Critical to this growth has been the Foundation Partners leadership team and Field Advisory Board. This combination has strong roots in the funeral services profession and understands how to merge the most compassionate and memorable end-of-life care with new ideas and technology.

### What makes Foundation Partners Group unique?

Families today are looking for a different kind of funeral experience – an experience that involves a guest-centered approach to celebrate the lives of loved ones, utilizing the most advanced technology available. To meet that need, Foundation Partners created ShareLife® – a unique, comprehensive approach to funeral planning that ensures every life is honored and celebrated. Whether prearranging, planning a life celebration, or selecting permanent memorialization, ShareLife weaves together a variety of products, services and options that transform a traditional funeral into a one-of-a-kind celebration focused on beautiful memories spanning a lifetime. ShareLife is not just one thing, it's everything we do to make experiences personal and memorable.

With the advanced video, sound, and scent technologies in our patented ShareLife Multi-Sensory Experience, we listen, imagine and work together to create an event designed to fit each family's individual needs. At our facilities, outdoors or at other locations, thoughtful professionals create an unforgettable experience, custom-designed to celebrate what made each loved one special.

### What are the benefits to funeral homes joining Foundation Partners Group?

For most business owners, selling their company will be a defining moment in their life. Whether it's a family-owned business that has been passed down through generations, or a company they've started from scratch, the key to selling depends upon their life goals and the lifecycle of their business. Regardless of their motivations, Foundation Partners is focused on helping owners preserve and grow their legacy into the future. With Foundation Partners' size and scale, they have the experience to understand each unique situation and help owners reach their goals.

Regardless of their motivation, Foundation Partners strives to help them preserve and grow their legacy into the future while respecting their brand, employees, and community.

### How does Foundation Partners Group provide a solution for Funeral Homes?

Foundation Partners combines the knowledge and compassion of longtime funeral home owners with the expertise of diverse business experts, to ensure each owner receives both the care and innovative insights their business needs to succeed. They avoid the cookie cutter approach and work with owners to understand their business and community, while welcoming their ideas and leadership in developing programs tailored to each situation. When owners partner with Foundation Partners, they have access to the resources, technology, products, services, training, and back office support they need to meet their goals.

Because Foundation Partners is a private company, it has the opportunity to make long-term decisions that embrace each funeral home's individual characteristics and community values while avoiding the pressures of short-term decision making that many other firms face.

### How would a funeral home contact Foundation Partners Group for more information?

If you're interested in becoming part of Foundation Partners Group, you can learn more by visiting [FoundationPartners.com](http://FoundationPartners.com) or calling 888.788.7526.

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# WHEN ONE THING IS GOOD EVERYTHING IS

## HOW PERSONALIZATION ENHANCES YOUR FIRM'S BRAND

BY GEORGE PAUL III

Are you a nitpicker? I bet you'll say you're not, but we all are in certain situations. For example, let's say you're having work done on your house. If the work comes out good then everything is good. You're happy and you write the contractor a check. This is because the contractor delivered a pleasant brand experience. But what happens when you're not happy with the overall outcome? You turn into CSI and start uncovering all the details he missed as evidence of your dissatisfaction. Let's walk through what that entails.

You're going to complain about the lack of responsiveness, the sloppiness of the finished work, the fact they didn't clean up and so forth. Now because people buy to satisfy an emotional need your complaints may even take on a level of psychosomatics. The contractor created pain and suffering because you're not keeping up with the Jones'. The overages were unnecessary, not approved and thus not responsible for. Even worse, now your mother-in-law has another reason as to why you're not good enough for her son, just look at the place you've decorated! And so on.

What you've done is nitpicked the details of the experience and amplified them as your valid reasons of your dissatisfaction. If this is what you might do with work being done on your home how much more will that level of scrutiny be with a grieving family?

Therefore, you must personalize the experience families have at your firm. Sweat the details because it's the details people notice both when they're happy and unhappy. Our brand's success is because we make the overall experience families have at the firms we partner with unforgettable. As a result they're more forgiving over things that may not go according to expectations and they come back when another loved one passes. This only happens when you control the experience families have at your firm from start to finish. Included in that is giving them white glove treatment which means personalization.

As I've written before, you have to plan the entire experience of laying their loved one to rest. In doing so you'll see where you need to have a tight rein, where you can be open and most importantly where you can personalize to make the brand of your funeral home stand out. Let's dissect that experience.

### When They Start to Research You

This is done without your knowledge which is why you need to pay the most attention here. You want them to move onto the next stage and that won't happen unless you address their underlying concerns. What are those? You already know it. Think about the positive things families have said about your firm. Create a follow up survey to get their feedback on how well you addressed their pain points.

Once you know those pain points highlight them on your website and in your content so that potential families will feel at ease coming to you. You personalize this stage of your brand experience by putting the human touch on it. Post your family reviews (even better if it's accompanied with their picture) and they'll see, "Others like me have been to this firm and like it. So I should give them a call." Then they will take the next step.

### They Call, Text or Email

First and foremost personalize this stage by showing gratitude and condolences. I start all my phone or email conversations with families by expressing my condolences and asking how they're holding up. Note I said holding up instead of how are you doing since that's more general. By asking, "how are you holding up" I'm recognizing the situation and giving them opportunity for personal expression which I can comment on making the experience more personal to them. We're people first, business owners second. Afterward I give them the rundown of our process emphasizing convenience, necessary procedural details and conclude by saying I know this isn't an easy time, but we're going to take great care of you.

Families have even said that in their reviews stating, "they said they were going to take good care of me and they did." When families express sentiments like that in your firm it shows they feel you're giving them personal attention. Lastly in my conversations I express gratitude because I understand they could've gone anywhere but have chosen to come to me and I won't disappoint that confidence.

These are the same principles you need to put in place in your firm when families inquire. Be sure to conclude with the call to action because you haven't closed the sale yet, but this should move them to the next stage where you do close.

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### The In-Person Experience

This is where the red carpet is rolled out. One firm I went to asked me if I wanted something to drink. It was a hot day and I said yes. They brought me chilled water on a silver platter. That made me feel a certain way. Internally, I went, "man, I'm just a vendor and this is how they treat me I can only imagine what they do for families." And that's exactly what families think. They'll go deeper and starting noticing the décor and finishes equating it all to the personal attention they're experiencing. Keep in mind they won't say this out loud. This is all subliminal, yet again you're satisfying an emotional need and your personalization needs to reinforce the emotional need your firm satisfies.

This is where your brand can stand out by specializing because the emotional need isn't always care or comfort. It could be they grew up Catholic and want to be serviced by a funeral home that specializes in Catholic burials. It could be that they want something over the top and you specialize in grandiose celebrations of life. It could also be they want something intimate and your firm has lots of salons for privacy.

We all know families and attendees want keepsakes of the loved one to keep after the service. When you're showing families keepsake options don't drop two or three different sample books on the table from the two or three vendors you use. Show your primary vendor and if they don't like that then you can show more. Limiting their options in that way keeps them from being overwhelmed (which they already are) and gives them the freedom to go deeper on how they'll personalize the keepsakes they chose (thus enhancing your brand experience). When we meet with families we show them gender specific designs and let them know how they can personalize it. Then the experience becomes more cathartic than a chore. At this point they've left your establishment and are now doing other things to get ready for the service. This is where you have the freedom to automate your personalization by helping them dot the "I's" and cross the "T's".

### Preparing for the Service

I read somewhere that a family has to make nearly 150 decisions when laying a loved one to rest. That means the ball WILL be dropped somewhere. If you can provide a step-by-step process to follow they'll feel that you've walked them personally through this difficult time. Bonus points to those that incorporate this process into reminders that you automatically text to the families to make sure they're staying on top of things. Now you've delivered an unforgettable experience.

Other areas that deliver personalization could be implementing a clothing pick up like dry cleaners do. Essentially, anything you can do to lessen the travel and tasks they have to do will be repaid with repeat business and 5-star reviews.

### The Day of the Service

Little things like extra time with the loved one before attendees arrive, ample tissues, water bottles, fans and

so forth all deliver personalization that the family will appreciate. You have to think of what they'll need as well as what they don't realize they'll need and provide it ahead of time. No one realized they needed a smartphone until Apple came out with it. Now no one can live without it. Don't forget this is a celebration of life and anything you can do to show your firm is celebrating THEIR life not just another body will go miles in your favor. I've seen firms customize staff clothing to the loved one's colors, wrap the casket and more. We're all seeing the trend of staging the loved one. While some scoff, its personalization the family wants and will pay for. One that I thought was amazing was the family said the loved one was a jokester and requested to play a recording when he was being lowered in the casket. That recording was him yelling and screaming he's still alive, it's dark in here and to let him out. They even had sounds of him "banging on the casket" Yes, it had to be preplanned, but having the loved one including in his own funeral made people say that was "just like him". People were laughing rather than crying at the service. Do you think that family is going to a different firm when another loved one dies? Yeah right! But there's one more area where you can deliver an unforgettable personalized service.

### Aftercare

This is where you show your gratitude as well as help usher them into the next stage of the grieving process—moving on. What can you provide regarding information that will help console them to a greater degree? What other necessary tasks do they have to handle that they may forget or need to know? What gifts can you provide as a token of appreciation for the business they just gave you? All of these things show the family you care and you're not leaving them on their own now that the service is completed. This is something you can automate, but again, because they are getting these gifts and reminders they will take it personally.

### It's All-Good

Personalization requires being detail orientated. I strongly suggest you document it and turn it into a system of delivery. Doing so makes training new staff and apprentices easier because all they have to do is follow the system. Conversely it also makes adjustments and improvements easier because you can identify potential breaks and rectify them. By delivering a system of personalization you'll begin to turn your funeral home into a funeral experience that families will prefer over others in the area. Now you have a brand that is poised to survive to the next generation. **FBA**

George Paul III is a branding expert and award-winning designer. He's the founder of Cherished Keepsakes, a provider of memorial keepsakes such as prayer cards, memorial programs, buttons, photo collages and more. Their innovative designs have been sought after by families and funeral homes across the country. Additionally, he assists firms and companies in the funeral industry with their branding and marketing. To connect with George, email gpaul@cherishedkps.com, call 617-971-8590 / 617-980-1476, or www.cherishedkps.com or www.seizethebrand.com.

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# AFTERCARE, MARKETING, & PRENEED SALES... FROM AN OBITUARY?

BY MANDY BENOUALID

Take a moment and think about all the technology you use daily in the operation of your funeral home. Software, apps, databases and web tools. These are all key to running your internal business operations and processes. But how many of those technology solutions enable you to build relationships with your families and community, seamlessly provide aftercare to your families, initiate preneed sales and drive digital marketing?

Building solid relationships leads to a better client experience and ultimately, more business opportunities. Relationships lead to revenue, so why aren't the technology "solutions" making it easier to build and manage relationships? Guests at a memorial service are considering their own advanced planning and may become your next preneed client, or a guest offering condolences may choose to purchase flowers for the family. The point is that making a great impression at the funeral and providing valuable aftercare can drive that return business. While the service is first and foremost a sacred memorial, it's also an opportunity for you and your staff to demonstrate your skills and communicate your care.

In funeral care, client interactions usually take place over 2-3 meetings and culminate in a single ceremony, but with aftercare offerings and online memorial pages, that doesn't have to be the case. Your funeral home has the opportunity to continue to serve families long after the ceremony. In our digitally connected world, it has become more and more difficult to make meaningful connections in the brief and emotionally intense window we have with our clients.

This is where online memorials can bridge the gap, by offering a unique opportunity to stay connected. Online memorial pages can be so much more than static obituary text, a collection of grainy pictures and comments full of typos. A well-designed online memorial website will have features that allow the family to share memories and return again and again for years to come.

## Online Memorial Pages, Bridging the Gap Between Tradition and Digital Life

As a standard, nearly every funeral home offers an online obituary today. In many cases, it contains basic information about the memorial service accompanied by a picture, if one has been provided by the family. If your funeral home is still uploading and maintaining information for client families, it's likely a time-consuming task for back office staff and rarely leads to further business. While online obituaries are an appreciated service by some families, it is difficult to see any other benefits to your business.

What if your online memorial page offered value-added services to families, drove sales and future business, and gave you the opportunity to begin developing an ongoing relationship as a trusted advisor in funeral care? A well-designed online memorial page offers all those features.

Although common, online memorial pages are not all the same. No longer just a simple obituary, online memorial pages offer features like genealogy, photo and video storage, and event invitation and management. A well-designed digital memorial platform should focus on visitor interactivity by providing the opportunity for a community to reach out and support one another during a difficult time. It should provide opportunities for guests to purchase floral or other bereavement gifts for the family directly through the website. It should enable guests to easily leave a message of condolence, sign a digital guestbook during a service, and share their favorite images of the decedent.

Think of the online memorial page as an ongoing celebration and visitation, where friends and family can return to remember their loved one over time, especially if the final resting place is too far to visit in person. Just like you host events on-site, your website hosts this memorial and all the guests who contribute to it. You wouldn't ask guests to climb a steep stairway or sit on uncomfortable folding chairs – and so your digital memorialization offering should also be comfortable and easy to navigate.

## Technology That Leads to Revenue

Beyond the benefits to the family, an online memorial platform can turn interactivity into revenue generation and marketing opportunities. Every interaction, including each guest book contribution, tribute, photo share or condolence, requires the contributor to enter at a minimum their name and email address. Often overlooked, this simple information is extremely valuable.

An ideal solution would be to store this contact information directly into a digital marketing system. As soon as someone leaves a condolence or purchases flowers for the family, their email address is automatically transferred to your internal marketing system, and they begin to receive communication from your funeral home. There is no need to get technical help to retrieve and send your email lists to other email marketing systems, and no need to ask your staff to learn yet another complex system.

With the right solution, you can use automated emails to provide aftercare support, stay connected and continue to build a relationship with that client family, and their entire community. Some examples of successful automated emails include invitations to your community events, grief support

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services and reminders to purchase flowers for their loved ones as important anniversaries or holidays approach.

Furthermore, as that individual begins to prepare for their own funeral care, they will be more likely to reach out to a professional they already know and trust – you. They will have had a positive experience with you already and will feel like they know you and are supported by you. When they are ready to make their own arrangements, you will be the first professional they think of.

**Driving Preneed, Floral and Product Sales from an Obituary?**  
Once you've collected the contact information of your online memorial page contributors, your funeral home will be able to initiate aftercare. Without creating any extra work for your staff, the email addresses collected from the online memorial page can be seamlessly transferred to your existing contact management system.

As any funeral director knows, effective and consistent aftercare leads to future preneed business. By demonstrating your commitment and expertise to individuals who've had a personal experience with your funeral home, you're marketing your funeral home's services to the best audience.

There are plenty of marketing consultants who will tell you that connecting with guests during or immediately after a funeral service is not the only way to source prospects. There is always someone selling an overpriced marketing list, direct mailers can be tempting and, if you just had the time to pull together all the email addresses in the files, you could send out a newsletter. The time it takes to evaluate all the marketing options could be

a full-time job, not to mention the cost. By collecting contact information from your online memorial page, you cut through all that noise, saving valuable time and money.

**Building Relationships Drives Sustainability**

As a funeral director, you know that building relationships with the communities, families and individuals you serve is vital to the future of your business. You understand the value in offering products and services that provide comfort and ease of use for your families. It's that simple – all the products and personalization, services, and specializations are for the sole purpose of building and maintaining relationships with your clientele.

As a standard, you are already offering your families a digital obituary. Elevating that obituary to provide a meaningful tool for your families and their community, while also simplifying and amplifying your direct communication and marketing, is a no brainer. **FBA**

Mandy Benoualid is the CEO of Keeper, today's leading digital memorialization platform. Since 2013, Mandy has been dedicated to helping cemeterians and funeral directors create new and meaningful experiences for their families, using cutting edge technology that drives results. Keeper notably works with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration on the Veterans Legacy Memorial project, memorializing Millions of American Veterans. Mandy speaks regularly at professional funeral and cemetery conferences. She can be reached by phone at 844-970-7900, or via email at [mandy@mykeeper.com](mailto:mandy@mykeeper.com).



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# HOARDING MY FATHER

BY PETRA LINA ORLOFF

I'm a tough sell. I don't browse, I don't like salespeople, and I certainly don't need any help or advice. When I am in a store, no matter the kind, I know exactly what I need and why I need it. When I purchased an automobile this past summer, I simply walked into the dealership and presented the salesman with a typed-out list, detailing make, model, color, and so on. I told him to get me exactly what I specified in the list. When he attempted to describe some new features I could purchase, I interrupted his sales pitch, referred him to the list and told him to phone me when the vehicle was ready. "There's no need for a discussion," I said, "I've done the research."

Quite possibly, I am a jerk. Most certainly, I know what I want.

So, what happened last week when I walked into a meeting with a funeral director to discuss business and walked out, an hour later, convinced I needed to buy another urn, a plot, and a stone memorial for my father, who died 16 years ago?

Stories. That's what happened. Simply, stories. When I met with this funeral director, the conversation we were having about community outreach began as I anticipated. He listened to me. He asked a few questions. I replied. He expressed interest in my work and offered to help. I uttered something about memorialization and then, the conversation became really dynamic.

Immediately, the funeral director took over our discussion. He spoke with an impassioned, but measured tone, relying on anecdotes to reference his examples. His wisdom, like many of you, was passed along familial lines; His experience, honed by his upbringing. For me, his ability to articulate what memorialization means and how its understanding and use effects the industry and the client is unparalleled. Without prompting, the stories he told spoke to my own experience. Without knowing, he was appealing to my emotions. Without selling, he sold.

Before leaving the office, I was already reconsidering a number of choices I had made concerning my dad.

Memorialization is innate. Like ritual, customs, and tradition, memorialization is significant to our culture. You have all read the data and the studies which indicate how important memorialization is in this industry. I don't need to repeat that here. We are also a ceremonial culture. We like to provide a frame of reference for everything in our lives: birthdays, holidays, milestones, religion, rites of passage, nothing in our world escapes the mechanisms of ceremony. And we suffer from the loss of a familiar ceremony, especially when it is incurred because a loved one dies. How do we start the day without our life partner? How do we not celebrate a birthday we have always celebrated? How do we spend an anniversary without the one who made the anniversary possible?

This is where the conversation is at its most potent and most genuine. To be clear, I speak to this aspect of your work as a potential client, not an expert. We have immediate and urgent needs when a loved one dies, but we aren't considering the long-term implications of our own needs. For example, my father wanted a direct cremation, no obituary, and no funeral. I gave him the direct cremation, but wrote him a rather spirited obituary, and held a weekend-long memorial for him. My father's urn, a nice wooden box, remains with me in my own home. When I see it, I feel good that he is close to me, but what about my siblings, my father's siblings, and for a time, his own father, my grandfather? How do they mourn? How do they honor my father? Where do they go to remember him, love him, and memorialize? I had not considered anyone else when I arranged for my father's remains to sit atop my library bookcase, alongside my favorite photograph of him. As we all do, my father touched many lives. He had many friends and many people loved him. In my grief, I felt alone. In my grief, I felt isolated. In my grief, I wanted to be selfish. Finally, I had my father completely to myself.

At the time, no one explained to me the need for others to memorialize him. No one explained that others who loved him needed a place to grieve him, talk to him, and continue loving him in his death as they had during his life. No one explained

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to me what memorialization actually means: how and where we preserve memory and honor life.

After my meeting with this particular funeral director, I phoned my eldest brother and apologized for hoarding my father. For keeping him all to myself. For tucking him away into my life and depriving everyone else who loved him a place to honor him. Years ago, my eldest brother had even asked me for a portion of his remains: "Undignified," I yelled, "absolutely not." Splitting my father, what was my brother thinking? Who does such a thing? Apparently, many people, but at the time no one told me that this, this dividing of ashes, this father-fractioning, this cremained splitting was not uncommon. This was my first close experience with death. This was the first time I had to truly say goodbye, the first time I had ever held a dead body. This was also the first time I had ever planned a funeral. I could have used stories about memorialization. I could have used the very simple example the funeral director with whom I was meeting used to introduce the subject: "Think about what this country does to help us process war and other national tragedies, we build a monument. We memorialize to help us grieve. Think about the World Trade Center and the Vietnam Memorial in D.C."

My experience with death is limited, but my experience with tragedy, with war, with our country's founding fathers and statesmen, with authors, composers, and beloved actors is great. When memorialization was contextualized to me outside of my own grief, it became more meaningful, more nuanced, and much, much more necessary. When I left the home after planning

my father's funeral, the only thing I knew was that I was going to have a non-religious gathering and I was to bring photos. No one had put memorialization into context for me. I had no indication of what my fellow countrymen were doing with their own dead loved ones. Had I known what I know now, I would have done so much more, not for me or my father, but for the others that loved and respected him. I plan on doing that now.

Speak with your clients through stories. Enlighten through experience. You are the experts. You have the wisdom. You have the knowledge and familiarity. I have been speaking with funeral directors for four years about how they speak with clients and how they define memorialization, and no one has ever responded to me with the kind of pointed, emotional anecdotal support that this man did. Even though the way we grieve is intimately personal, there are touchstones to which we can all relate: use those touchstones to highlight how memorialization can help your clients grieve, preserve legacy, and celebrate life. **FBA**

Petra Lina Orloff is the president and CEO of Beloved, which creates custom, creative, personalized obituaries and eulogies, and the founder of Death Talk, an ongoing series of public discussions on death and dying. She has been a professional writer for nearly 30 years and completed her doctoral studies in English at Wayne State University in Detroit, where she also taught composition, literature, and American Studies. To connect with her, [petra@beloved-press.com](mailto:petra@beloved-press.com) or 248-894-7076 or visit [www.beloved-press.com](http://www.beloved-press.com).



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# 4 STEPS TO PRENEED SUCCESS



BY TOM HOLLAND

I have had the privilege to work in the preneed market with funeral homes and counselors for many years and have seen many best practices that are time tested and true to increase your preneed results and ultimately your at-need calls.

One of the most important is that in order to sell more funded prearrangements you must prospect for people who are looking for information on how to prearrange and preferably in their homes. Our target demographic, the 50 plus age group, is in our favor today so taking advantage of the growing potential preneed arrangement market makes perfect sense. A good way to prime the pump is to use direct mail or digital marketing as a starting point, as long as you follow up promptly with a phone call and set that all-important appointment. I want to share a four-step program that will boost your preneed results and ultimately your call volume.

## Step 1: Prime the pump with direct mail or other targeted marketing.

It all starts with a direct mail campaign, in which you send to selected families in your servicing area. I recommend using services or companies who have a great understanding of your business and have the heart of a teacher on direct mail efforts. Since direct mail is not inexpensive obtaining a return on your investment is the goal here. Using a provider with expert knowledge of our industry or direct mail house may be an option for you after all, they are the experts, and their services do not have to cost an arm and a leg. Some direct mail providers will work with you on your efforts so again knowing who the experts are is crucial to your campaign. Your direct mail message should be short and sweet, just one page, and have a clear call to action. The easier you make it for people to respond, the more responses you'll get. Use large font, black and white print. You want your message to be easily read by our target demographic. Using black and white print for example rather than full color cuts your costs,

and color does not always guarantee that your response rate will be higher. You may also want to sweeten the pot by including a free gift with each survey. The secret is to make sure the gift is practical. Items that seniors may want such as keychain flashlights, eyeglass repair kits and planning guides. Of all the gifts I've experimented with, the one that seems to be well received is the miniature eyeglass repair kit. Why? Seniors need them. At the same time, you mail the surveys, I suggest placing an ad near the obituary section of your local paper. The ad doesn't have to be large; it should simply announce the fact that you've sent information to the community and invite them to respond or contact you. This works to spread your message even further, and you might be pleasantly surprised to get phone calls from people in zip codes you didn't mail to but who read your ad and want to know more about what you have to offer.

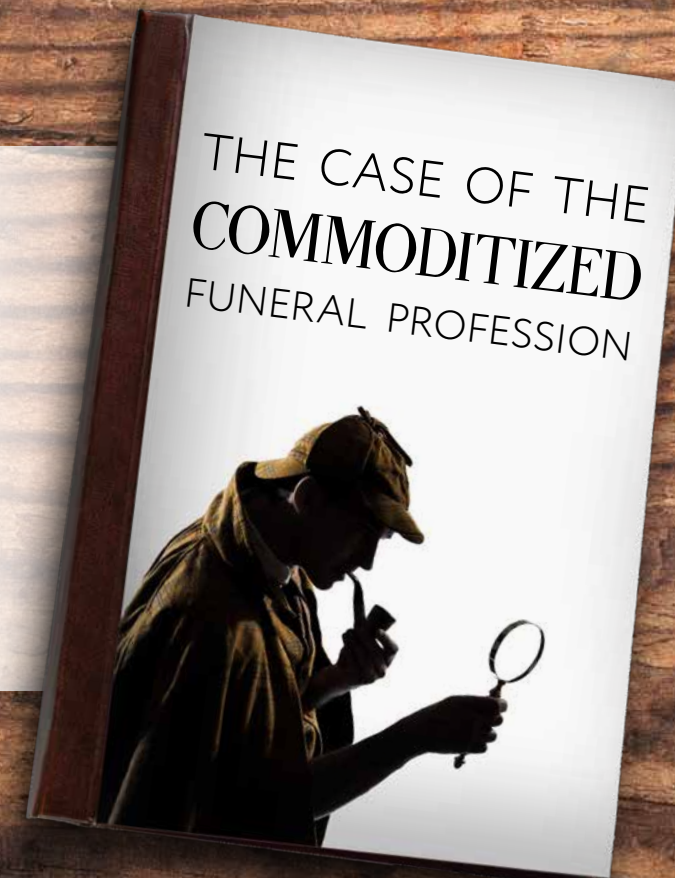
## Step 2: Follow up on the phone.

Next, wait for the responses to start filtering in. Go straight for the ones who tick "yes" next to the question that reads: "Would you like us to contact you with more information?" Then get on the phone immediately and call them to set up face-to-face meetings in their homes. When you call, here's what you say: "Hello, Mrs. Adams. This is Michael Main of Main Funeral Home. I wanted to call and personally thank you for responding to our recent mailing thank you. I really appreciate you taking the time to complete your interest in getting more information. Mrs. Adams, was there a specific reason you sent this back to us? Were you looking to prearrange your own funeral or another member of your family's funeral?"

## Step 3: Find out exactly what you need to know, without saying a word.

When you ask a question wait for them to respond. If you're quiet, people will tell you everything you need to know. And after the person has finished talking, confirm their decision say this: "That's exactly why I'm calling. I have prepared

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specific information on our process for prearranging, and I'm going to be in your area on Tuesday. Are morning or afternoon appointments better for you?" That's important. You are always aiming to set up a meeting in the person's home. Experience proves that home is by far the best venue for selling preneed. Don't try to sell people over the phone, and don't settle for a promise that they'll drop by the funeral home next time they're in the area. If you want to be successful selling preneed, you've got to be a lot more proactive and set that home appointment. I can't emphasize enough how important it is to call candidates as soon as possible. Think about it: When you get a good lead, you must mentally picture that it's hot; it's burning up. You need to get them on the phone fast, because in two or three days, that lead is going to get cold. The longer you wait, the less receptive the person is going to be. Also, think of it this way: If a person responds to your survey by checking the "Please contact me with more information" box, something must be going on in her life that made her respond that way. Maybe they know of someone who just experienced a death in the family. Or maybe they went to a movie that made them think about their own mortality. Whatever it is, they won't stay in that frame of mind for long. So, get a meeting while you can. Finally, a great way to keep the aggressive edge is to keep a rotating file going of all the people you need to call. It keeps you organized and gives you daily specific tasks to follow through.

**Step 4: Training.**

I believe in comprehensive training for preneed producers from the basics on how to make a phone call to prospecting for preneed clients and closing those sales today. The Certified Preneed Consultant program CPC designation is a good start for preneed counsellors and agents. Before you begin your direct mail or other programs obtain the best training you can on how to conduct the program in the most effective way for your firm and your families you want serve in the future. Being prepared and well trained will reap you benefits today and generate more preneed results from your other initiatives you may have ongoing in your community.

By following this four-step program you will boost your preneed results and ultimately your call volume. It benefits your business and helps your families by giving them a sense of security for their families they leave behind. **FBA**

Thomas Holland has been helping funeral homes and preneed Counselors across North America for over 24 years. Tom's field positions include, Agent, Manager, Training Sales Director, Director of Conservation, Director of Development/National Accounts, Director of Preneed Development, VP Sales/CMO. Currently, Tom is the Vice President National Accounts for Atlantic Coast Life. He can be reached at 404-229-8648 or by email at [Tholland@aclico.com](mailto:Tholland@aclico.com). You can meet Tom and others senior decision makers at the ICCFA Convention in San Antonio at booth #1034.



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# OVERCOME PRENEED'S BIGGEST PITFALL

THE GAP BETWEEN GENERATING LEADS AND  
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In 2004, Precoa opened its first Funeral Planning Center (FPC) because it saw how challenging it was for funeral homes to follow-up with families. By calling leads and setting high-quality appointments, the FPC could support advance funeral planners and help funeral homes grow.

Yet it runs even deeper than that. The conversations that begin in the FPC extend in so many unexpected ways, enriching the lives of everyone they connect. Read on to find out how.



**Matt West**  
Associate Director  
of FPC



**Jesy Guerrero**  
FPC West Region  
Manager



**Andrew Maiden**  
FPC Training  
Manager

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FPC

At first glance, training at the FPC might seem conventional. But look closer. The latest cohort of planners rehearsing calls and offering kind, constructive criticism have built an enviable degree of trust.

As you can probably already guess, this compassionate bond is no accident.

"When we recruit, we're looking for individuals who can truly connect with people," FPC training manager Andrew Maiden says. "No family sets an appointment unless they trust the person they're talking to."

By the end of their second week, planners have internalized the FPC's script, making it their own so they can focus on listening carefully and having quality conversations with families.

And quality is what counts. "Even without an appointment, we want the families we call to have the best possible experience," FPC associate director Matt West says. "As representatives of the funeral home, we need to make sure we maintain their reputation for excellence."

Unlike a run-of-the-mill call center, the FPC's emphasis on quality means planners are encouraged to develop relationships with families.

"I've called families in July who might not set an appointment until December," FPC region manager Jesy Guerrero says. "Taking the time to *really* get to know a family and hearing their stories—it gets to the point where I just say hello and they already know who it is."

Such careful nurturing requires persistence, patience, and most of all a talent for connection. In the case of the FPC, it also required unique software, which Precoa developed in-house. Known as the planner app, this software helps planners call the right leads at the right times and allows them to quickly navigate the complex schedules of advance funeral planners who may be serving multiple funeral home locations.

Still, funeral home owners are often curious to see this at work for themselves. On average, more than fifty owners come through the planning center each year.

Matt West has led many of these visits. "When funeral home owners arrive, we can sometimes feel their skepticism," he says. "Yet afterwards, the feedback is always positive. They say, 'These folks understand what we're trying to accomplish.' Owners quickly realize our planners are who they want calling on behalf of their funeral home."

## CASE STUDY #1

# LORD AND STEPHENS FUNERAL HOMES

## BUILDING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS FOR EVERYONE

Nestled in the close-knit community of Athens, GA, Lord and Stephens Funeral Homes was founded because owner Tom Lord believed an independent, locally owned funeral home could provide families with the highest quality service.

"Tom is the kind of guy who is always there, setting the example for how to serve and care for families," Advance Planning Specialist Ray Finger says. "He believes we can serve families from the very first time we meet them, years before they even have a service."

Preneed was instrumental in helping Lord and Stephens build these relationships with the families surrounding their three locations. As a former minister, Ray thrived when he could sit down with folks and learn their stories before helping them make wise decisions.

But following up with leads took time. "I was never able to gain momentum or reach the full potential of the position because I was spending so much time on the phone," Ray admits.

When Tom first learned about Precoa, both he and Ray shared concerns about partnering with a larger company. Yet their expectations

**“THE SUPPORT THEY  
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WE COULD NOT HIRE  
ANYONE ON OUR STAFF  
TO DO WHAT THE FPC  
DOES. IT'S JUST AN  
EXTENSION OF OUR  
FIRM, AND THAT'S  
WHAT WE WANT.”**

quickly changed. "Trust me when I say I did my research," Tom says, "and I was impressed by what I read, and even more impressed when I



**Tom Lord**  
Owner and Founder



**Ray Finger**  
Advance Planning  
Specialist

talked to other firms. I got absolutely zero negative comments."

Especially key was the follow-up support through Precoa's Funeral Planning Center, which established a meaningful rapport with families, setting them at ease about a subject many find challenging.

"Now I don't see how we could do without it," Tom says. "The support they provide behind the scenes is amazing. We could not hire anyone on our staff to do what the FPC does. It's just an extension of our firm, and that's what we want."

The FPC also connects Lord and Stephens to an array of additional support, including the most efficient lead generation sources. "Precoa has given me every tool necessary to serve families," Ray says.

And this has led to extraordinary growth. "Precoa takes a lot off of our shoulders," Tom says. "We've grown so much in the last three years, and I know that what they're doing, they're doing right."



FPC STATS  
**80,000**  
APPOINTMENTS SET  
- 2019 -

Portland, OR



**66 Planners**  
Est. 2004

Anaheim, CA



**12 Planners**  
Mar. 2015

Provo, UT



**25 Planners**  
Jan. 2017

## CASE STUDY #2

# LUCAS FUNERAL HOMES



**Jimmy Lucas**  
Director and Owner

## CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EFFICIENCY

With fourteen locations and a legacy stretching back 160 years, Lucas Funeral Homes has mastered the art of caring for families. In large part this is due to their staff. Each of the more than 90 full- and part-timers receives extensive training—in fact, owner Jimmy Lucas will soon start Lucas Academy, where each of his co-workers will learn a consistent standard of care.

Yet preneed presented a challenge. “We were struggling to take it to that next level,” Jimmy says. They expected their program could reach more families, but the investment in lead generation, not to mention the follow-ups, was daunting.

So when Jimmy met with Precoa, his interest was piqued. The proposed

increase in preneed volume impressed him, but he was also struck by their values. As he often says about recruiting new staff, you can teach people anything except empathy and compassion.

Once the partnership with Precoa got going, the Funeral Planning Center’s support became vital. They were soon reaching more families through preneed than ever before, and every lead source was more efficient. “Theirs wasn’t a four-cylinder approach,” Jimmy says. “It was the full V8.”

Preneed volume doubled, but Jimmy saw more meaningful benefits as well. For one, advance funeral planners now had complete control over their schedules. No longer did they have to find the extra time to conduct every follow-up. Work-life

balance improved, resulting in a better quality of life, and they could now focus on doing what they loved best—meeting with families who want to preplan.

When it comes down to it, Jimmy says Precoa feels like another piece of the family business.

“I’m looking forward to serving as many families as we can together,” he says. “We want to keep moving forward, and Precoa has the wherewithal to walk alongside us. They have the ability to go bigger—not just anybody can do that.”

Learn more about what the FPC can do for you. Visit [precoa.com](http://precoa.com) or call **773-263-5187** to schedule a consultation.

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**Funeral Business Advisor** sat down with William McReavy, funeral director with Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels in Minneapolis, Minnesota to learn more about his career and experience in the funeral industry.



**Did you always want to be a funeral director? What inspired you to join the profession?**

*I always thought I might follow in my father's footsteps, but I had two other professions I was considering. One was an airline pilot and the other was a professional drummer. I ultimately decided that due to all the airline deregulation a pilot wasn't the most secure idea and on considering being a drummer, I just didn't know if I could go without food. Life brought me back to funeral service and the more that I saw, the more that I liked it. I absolutely love this profession and I cannot imagine doing anything else.*

**What is your favorite part about working in the profession?**

*My favorite part is the acquisitions and expansions, but those don't happen all the time. In the meantime, I just love to serve our families - and love to do so to the best of our ability. At the end of the day, this business is all about the quality of service you can provide and exceeding expectations. I am constantly trying to refine what we do so we can be a better company each year.*

**Can you tell me a little bit about Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels and what makes your firm stand out from others?**

*We got our start in 1857, one year before Minnesota was even a state. We are family owned and operated and were the first established funeral organization in the*

*state. Today, we have 16 locations which include four cemetery funeral home combinations, three crematories, a flower shop, and a highly successful prearrangement division. We really put an emphasis on our staff training, facilities, and equipment. We work really hard so when a family does call us, we are prepared not only to meet, but exceed their expectations and we have been successfully doing so for five generations.*

*We have two trademarks, The Most Trusted Name in Funeral and Cremation Services and Quality & Value Funeral & Cremation Services - we really stress the trust that people place on us and take that very seriously. We do everything we can to provide quality at every step. We have positioned ourselves to be able to provide quality service, facilities, and equipment at a reasonable price. With 16 locations, we have a lot of economy of scale and there are a lot of synergies that exist between our properties.*

*Beyond that, we have been great at adapting to trends over the years. We take time to evaluate which ones are worth embracing and implementing in the business and which ones we should avoid. We don't want to be Blue and White Taxi when Uber comes along; like any profession, we are constantly evolving.*

*Our greatest challenges have led to our greatest achievements. I always ask the question, "Who can stand up in a hurricane?" and that is my number one objective - to make sure we are always standing no matter what type of storms or turmoil we encounter. That means making sure*



every area and aspect of the business is strong enough to withstand the challenges that might come along over the next several decades.

**What are you most proud of so far in your career?**

I am most proud of the successful expansions and acquisitions we have completed. Our ability to successfully grow the business since before Minnesota was even a state is something truly remarkable.

**What is the most rewarding aspect of your job? What have you personally gained by being a funeral director?**

Funeral service is about taking it one service at a time and making sure expectations are always exceeded. When a family, or anyone attending the service, comes up to you and thanks you for the work you've done, that's the best part. Our job is to serve our community and it's very rewarding, and reassuring, to know that our service is deeply appreciated.

**Do you have any advice you would share with other funeral directors, especially those just now entering the profession?**

There was a recent study that I read that said the number one reason people join this profession is because they consider it a calling. Take that natural passion and continue to learn with every experience and every transaction. Never stop learning. There are always ways you can improve upon what you are doing and grow to be the best you can possibly be. Even if something doesn't turn out exactly like you thought it would, you can learn from that process.

**Looking forward to the future, what are you most excited about?**  
I look forward to continuing to take on the daily challenges

that we face. I am excited to serve our community and to get better at what we do each day. I love our ability to constantly improve and grow and I look forward to continuing that.

**What do you see as the biggest challenge in funeral service?**

Societal changes. Everything changes and everything evolves. When I first started out, the thought of having a celebration of life at a country club or a VFW wasn't even thought of as a possibility by society. Today, we not only accept that as the norm, but we also embrace it as being a great idea. The traditional business model of funeral service is constantly being challenged and you have to learn how to adapt. Funeral homes that refuse these changes are going to be left behind.

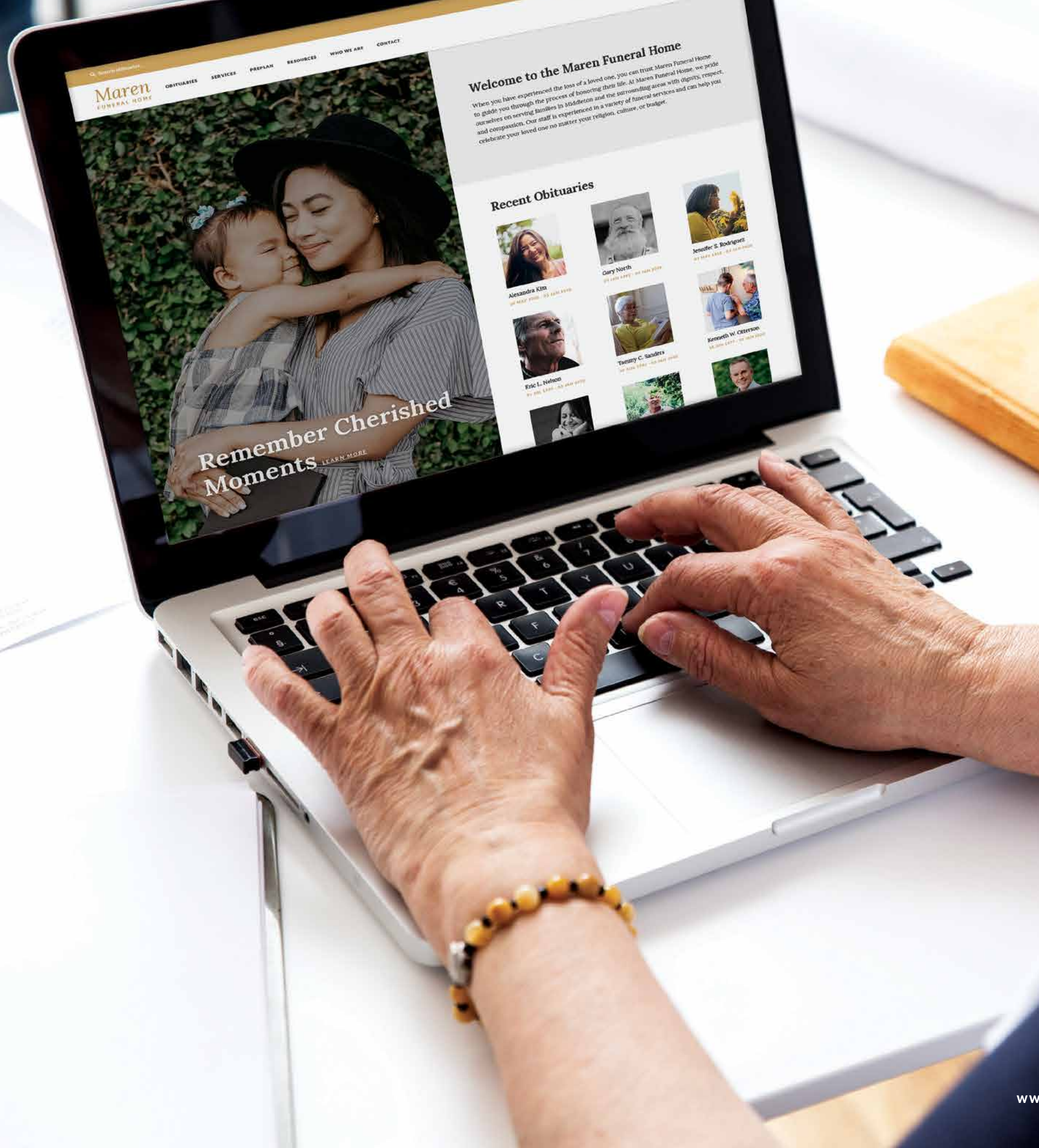
**When you do have a little free time, how do you enjoy spending it?**

I like to crunch numbers and look at things inside out and from all angles, so I can see things from a different vantage point. I enjoy spending time meeting with employees to get first-hand feedback from them on their experiences and where we can make improvements in order to be more efficient and make the environment better for them. I want to help them with anything they need to make their jobs easier and enable them to do their job to the very best of their ability, so they can feel good about what they are doing.

On a personal level, we all need a break from work to come back refreshed. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, working out almost every day, playing golf in the summer, and skiing in the winter. I recently purchased my dream drum kit. The best part about working in funeral service and drumming is that I can afford to eat! **FBA**







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## PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

### MATT MANSKE

Over the years, Matt has helped many funeral directors navigate their way through the funeral home transaction and financing process. His direct experience working in funeral homes gives him an in-depth understanding of the day-to-day operations. In 2005, Matt founded [www.4bsf.com](http://www.4bsf.com) to help educate funeral directors about buying, selling and financing.



#### How did you get into the funeral industry?

*I worked my way through college living and working in funeral homes. I worked at two different large firms and then finished my master's degree in accounting working for a smaller firm. My work experience taught me the value of funeral directors. And the value funeral service brings to families and communities. When I finished college, I followed my degree path and never thought I'd see a funeral home again except for attending a funeral service.*

*After two years with a CPA firm and eight years in medical sales, I decided to pursue other options. In 2004 I began working for a company doing funeral home acquisitions. And just like that I was back in the funeral industry. I learned the ins and outs of funeral home acquisitions and have worked for banks ever since.*

#### What is BSF and how did it get started?

*Funeral directors often have little or no experience in financial transactions. They are care givers by nature. This can leave them vulnerable to those who present themselves as industry experts and charge enormous*

*fees to merely advise on a transaction. Browsing the internet is often no help because that's how these advisors find new customers. There are always three parties to most transactions – buyer, seller, and lender. I've seen transactions where an advisor charges all three parties. To me, practices like these are simply unfair to buyers. Funeral directors need education and guidance on the risks involved with buying, selling and financing. I founded [www.4bsf.com](http://www.4bsf.com) to help make the transaction process more transparent and less intimidating to buyers and sellers.*

#### What is your favorite part about working in the industry?

*Going through the transaction process with buyers trying to achieve ownership and establish themselves in the industry is very rewarding. I also enjoy seeing a seller reap the rewards of their life's work. Seeing a new partnership develop between a buyer and seller. Seeing the seller feel good that they found the right buyer to hand the baton to.*

*Most funeral directors are very genuine people, so it's pleasant to work with them on a day in, day out basis. I make a lot of good friends. I think it's because of the*





types of people drawn to serve in the funeral industry. It's unique. The people are passionate, and truly care about serving families in their community.

Looking forward to the future, what are you most excited about?

Cremation rates will continue to rise as different areas of the country embrace it. We will continue to see rapid change in traditional funerals. Volume will continue to rise with the passing of the baby Boomers. Transaction activity will stay strong over the next ten years and I'm looking forward to being a part of that. As a lending segment, the funeral industry is still not embraced by lenders as much as I think it should be. But there are more lenders serving the industry than in the past, and that competition is good for buyers.

When it comes to financing, what is your go to advice for funeral directors and funeral home owners?

First, call me or visit [www.4bsf.com](http://www.4bsf.com) to learn about the ins and outs of funeral home transactions. The best advice I can offer a buyer is to take your time and talk directly with lenders. If the person you're talking to is not an employee of a bank than move on. The best advice I can give to a seller is to talk with your accountant several years before you want to sell. Make sure your federal tax returns are showing your funeral home in the best possible light. Make sure you are planning for the sale before you get burned out. It will result in a much better transaction. And, be careful with any advisor offering you a fee contract. If you have questions, don't hesitate to reach out.

When you aren't in the office, what are some things you like to do with your free time?

My wife and I have two kids, 16 and 12 so their activities keep us pretty busy. I love spending time with family, exercising, traveling, and playing a little golf now and then.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your career?

The fact that I get to establish relationships that last. I get to serve some clients on multiple transactions. It feels good to play a small part in someone else's success. I really enjoy looking at deals. And, because I work for a bank, I don't have to charge someone a fee to do it. I think mostly I like the hunt of finding that next good deal with a buyer. **FBA**



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# THE KEY TO DIFFERENTIATION: STAGING COMPELLING FUNERAL EXPERIENCES

BY SHANNON CUMMINGS



Ask any ambitious business owner what's on their agenda for 2020, you'll likely hear something to the tune of working on marketplace differentiation and strengthening brand identity. Standing out from the pack and cultivating an appealing and engaging brand is a recipe for success in today's economic landscape. The most successful way to achieve both of those sought after goals is through staging personalized and engaging experiences for consumers.

This concept was first put forth by co-authors Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore in their seminal work on experience innovation, *The Experience Economy*. First published in 1999, *The Experience Economy* was re-released this past December with an updated forward written by the authors discussing the present day challenges of competing for a customer's time, attention, and money. The authors remind readers, "businesses that relegate themselves to the diminishing world of goods and services will be rendered irrelevant. To avoid this fate, you must learn to stage a rich, compelling experience." (34)

## Zooming in on Personalization

To zoom in on one specific element that is necessary for the creation of any experience that applies to the funeral profession, let's first look at the power of personalization. Whether it's the first or the 1000th time you've waited for a Starbucks order, there's something special about seeing your name written on the cup, it's that small, personalized touch that adds to the overall appeal of a Starbucks Experience. Think about where you can implement personalized updates within your funeral home or place of business. Think small too; sometimes the barely noticeable anecdotes create the most indelible memories. Evaluate where you can inject these powerful elements of personalization and begin updating everyday processes working towards turning every opportunity into experiential moments.

Don't be afraid to stretch your comfort zone, if you do have the resources to go all out for a particular family, give them the experience of a lifetime. When you begin to effectively stage personalized experiences for families in your care, you'll find that they are willing to spend what they can truly afford and plan what they truly desire for their loved one's funeral; thereby increasing the customer's perceived value of the funeral experience. Experiences are the basis for future growth and prosperity in all businesses. Once you begin putting in the work to stage a personalized experience is rewarding not only for the funeral director's soul but also for his/her bottom line too.

## Making the Experience Work for You

As you begin staging experiences for customers, the positive results will become

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visible and palpable within your funeral home. Families and guests will begin spending more time with you because of the immersive experience you provided. The return on the experience investment will be robust.

You will begin to see that the experiences that you are providing can replace tired and traditional marketing efforts. No longer will you and your competitor be toting the same tired messages of generational family businesses and updated facilities. When you provide compelling experiences, the event itself is all the marketing you will ever need. Pine and Gilmore explain this point further in the updated forward urging business owners to: “wean yourself off the increasingly unfit and intrusive activity that is advertising. Instead, create an entire portfolio of memorable and engaging experiences—a rich mix that in total can reach an equally great number of people, as advertising does, maybe more, especially when amplified via social media to quickly disseminate news, photographs and videos of unique experiences.”

Start thinking about utilizing your staff in different ways. Do you have anyone on your team that is interested in photography? Invest in a camera to keep around the office and some photo editing software to ensure professional quality photos. What if there's someone on your team with sound, lighting, or audio/visual interest? Take a look at the talent your staff already possesses and challenge them to document each experience, building a portfolio like Pine and Gilmore suggest. Next, evaluate the assets your team has been busy stockpiling. If the experiences were done well, the photos of the experience will speak for themselves. Shape your advertising and marketing messages around the experience. Instead of targeting your potential customers with the same boilerplate ads or messages that your competitor may be using, showcase the customized content from the experiences you've staged.

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Aside from the bottom line growth and marketshare advantages you will see experience staging creates, we are also heightening the standard for our profession. When we engage customers with a funeral experience, we add value and possibility to what it means to say goodbye to a loved one. With the experience method, funeral homes can begin to teach communities a better way to grieve and heal through a personalized funeral experience.

It's our duty as funeral professionals to lead our communities through the darkest days. I believe author and theologian Thomas G. Long put it best when he said: “The best funeral directors see themselves as helping

professionals, public ministers of a sort, they are concerned about the health of their clients and of society. They know through experience that the rituals around death—from caring for the dying person to gathering for a funeral to the marking of the time after the funeral—deeply matter and can be powerful instruments of healing.” Pg. 98 Accompany Them With Singing

Through experience creation, funeral directors are helping to keep the sacred profession viable in the 21st century. Families still need someone to guide them through the unimaginable pain of losing a loved one. Ensuring a family's journey through grief is one that is full of personalized touches and experiential elements are the keys to marketshare differentiation and bolstering brand identity growth. **FBA**

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# TREND TOWARD LARGER AMERICANS PRESENTS DEATH CARE INDUSTRY WITH A COMPASSIONATE IMPERATIVE, AS WELL AS A BUSINESS CASE TO RESPOND

BY LYNN BLAKE

**N**ow that nearly 40 percent of U.S. adults are considered obese, the nation's funeral business professionals, and those supplying and supporting them, must make room for change – literally.

**A Marketplace Trend Too Big to Ignore:** According to recent data reported by the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), nearly 40 percent of the nation's adult population is now considered clinically obese. The JAMA report cites a National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), a large-scale federal survey approved by the National Center for Health Statistics research ethics review board, in which standardized measurements of weight and height were collected and assessed.

NHANES's The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America 2018, states that the trend in obesity shows a marked increase when compared with statistics the organization collected just a decade ago. The scale of the problem is hard to ignore and many industries engaged in ergonomic design have had to rethink, if not reengineer everything from automotive seatbelts to office furniture and of course, medical equipment to aid in the treatment of weight-related illnesses of heart disease, diabetes and various forms of cancer.

There may be nowhere to go but up. If predictions based on research conducted by Columbia University in New York and the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom are correct, 50 percent of Americans will be obese by 2030.

**Meeting the Growing Challenge with Compassion and Business Acumen:** To accommodate the unique funeral needs of this new wave of obese decedents and their families, the death care industry faces challenges on a multitude of levels. Not only will early adopters have a competitive advantage from the start, they will leave their less responsive colleagues to fight over a shrinking market for the care of smaller decedents.

"Who wants to inform the grieving family of an obese loved one that their need can't be met at their preferred facility," said Katherine Symonds-Salyards, principal partner of Symonds Funeral Homes and The Lakes Crematory. "Not only can forethought and planning help industry professionals avoid a perceived final insult of fat shaming, they can help the bereaved by normalizing and dignifying their experience and can fairly profit by doing so."

Along with her brother, Mark Symonds, Symonds-Salyards runs a multifaceted operation that specializes in serving the needs of larger decedents in northern Illinois, including metropolitan Chicago and portions of Wisconsin within a 100-mile radius.

**Making It Big:** Far ahead of the curve, the team has been eyeing the obesity problem as a business opportunity since the 90s. By consistently focusing their attention and investing in new technologies, they have built a significant portion of their business on a foundation of helping other death care providers cope with the influx of larger remains. Two of their most robust service segments include the intra-facility transportation of remains and cremation of large-scale remains.

Mark Symonds explains that it all starts with appropriate transportation of decedents. "Traditional cots and modes of transportation simply weren't designed to accommodate larger remains and you're at a standstill unless you're able to convey remains in a dignified manner. We've invested in technology that enables us to more easily facilitate the loading and transport of oversized cots, as well as combinations of cots and cremation containers, air trays and caskets on multiple levels."

Symonds adds that transporting multiple sets of remains in a single vehicle makes that vehicle and its driver highly productive. "By expanding our vehicle capacity, we've reduced labor and fuel costs," he said.

Katherine Symonds-Salyards points to their investment in large-capacity cremation chambers as a key to their support strategy. "We now have eight retorts and were recently able to accommodate a decedent who weighed 1,038 pounds. There is a significant demand for our services and our unique expertise, I don't see it diminishing anytime soon."

Other areas of the death care business that are now being and will continue to be impacted by obesity trends include lifting equipment, casket/coffin size and grave plot dimensions. With the need for expanded services and the use of more materials and resources, come added costs. The winners will be those death care professionals who figure out the best way to meet the growing marketplace demand associated with the ever-growing American consumer, with both compassion and an innovative spirit. **FBA**

Lynn Blake is National Account Manager CMP Products for Link Manufacturing. Link CMP is the leader in professional human remains transportation technology and the developer of the DD2000-XLC, the industry's first double-deck system for cargo vans and the first capable of accommodating the transport of multiple large decedents. To contact Blake, please call Toll Free: (800) 248-3057, Mobile: (636) 248-5210, email her at [lblake@linkmfg.com](mailto:lblake@linkmfg.com) or visit <https://www.linkcmp.com>.

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# ONCE YOU DIE, THERE ARE NO DO OVERS

BY ANN MARIE ST. GEORGE

It has been 24 years since our family arranged my sister's funeral and I still struggle with wishing we had done things differently. It wasn't a sudden death and there were opportunities to plan for what we hoped would never happen. However, for whatever reason, the definitive plans never got made and as most of you realize after someone is gone there are no "do overs."

My sister was diagnosed with a glioblastoma Multiforme Stage IV after having a grand mal seizure the night our brother's little girl was born. This type of malignancy had her in and out of hospitals between surgeries and treatments for about a year and a half. Having a flexible work schedule, I was her self-appointed partner in this unjust struggle with cancer. One brilliantly sunny warm summer day following one of several of her radiation treatments we treated each other to lunch. As we sat outside enjoying our delicious meal Lisa reached across the table and plucked out my first gray hair. As she held it up giving me one of those famous Lisa smirks she said, "I really had no idea what 'this' was doing to you." We both guardedly laughed, and it was at this pivotal point my funeral director brain said, "okay, it is now or never." I turned watchfully to my beautiful, witty, kind-spirited sister and said, "Lisa, I hope you fully recover from 'this' however if you don't, what do you want me to do?" I saw a flicker of "I thought you would never ask" seep into her eyes, her shoulders relaxed, and a devilish smile spread across her face; Apparently, she had been giving this some thought too.

In true "Lisa-style" she described in detail how she wanted to be cremated followed by a huge party with music, food and drinks and after her cremains "ashes" were to be passed out as party favors in clear plastic bags, which now in some states may be illegal. Now, I can hear a few of you saying, "Say what?!" while others are saying, "Wow, what an awesome idea!" Her ask was that people would take her on a trip and spread her "ashes" wherever they may go. At one point in her short life she was a flight attendant and she truly loved, loved, loved the fact that she got to travel so much; She wanted to continue doing so, at least in spirit. Her life may have been short however, she lived more in 29 years than most people live in a 100.

I always enjoyed my sister's willingness to create situations that were outside the norm. She loved taking one beyond their comfort zone and most people appreciated her for taking them there. I totally respected my sister's wishes and personally thought it was a fanf...ngtastic idea; However, I had no idea how the hell I was going to explain this one to my parents. The absolutely "crazy" part of her request wasn't the logistics, but the fact she and I never discussed it again. The next time it was brought up, we had gathered as a family to be with Lisa as she took her last breath. As our hearts were breaking my mother turned to me and said, "I know Lisa told you what she wanted, and I am sure I am not going to be totally okay with it, but can you please take care of it..." To most I am sure this is not the most favorite part of our chosen profession, being "the family" funeral director. It was in that moment that I knew I would have to find a happy medium. Something that my parents would be okay with while still honoring my sister's wishes; Hopefully, so she wouldn't haunt me for the rest of my life.

The compromise was a one-day wake, Catholic mass with her body present and then cremation (her death was before the catholic church changed their view on cremains being present in church). Part of her cremains were put into a marble bench in a local cemetery where we can sit and talk to her when we visit and the rest of her "ashes" were set aside for her "party", which now we refer to it as a "celebration of life." Yes, we did have that big party she asked for and yes, I did pass out her "ashes"; However, I passed them out in little glass bottles from Pier One instead of the little baggies she wanted. We also designed t-shirts with "Life's Philosophy Live, Love, Laugh" on the front and "The Lisa Moll Ball" with the date (March 2, 1996) on the back and we handed them out to everyone. I still have one that I wear on special occasions, though over time it has become a different color. Surprisingly, many of the people I gave them to were so honored they asked if it was okay to keep them/her instead of scattering them/her. I gave assurances Lisa would have been happy with whatever they chose to do. Over the years I have received countless pictures of friends and family scattering her cremains. Personally, I have scattered them in a myriad of



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Continued from page 70

countries like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Ireland, Scotland, England, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Prague, and Dubai. A few years ago, on what would have been Lisa's 50th birthday we traveled to Sicily where on a breathtakingly beautiful no cloud in the sky day we hiked down into the craters of Mt. Etna one of the most active volcanos in the world and we covered her ashes with ashes.

Okay, so why am I sharing my story with you? Besides it being a story I love to tell, it is a perfect example of why we need to initiate one of the hardest conversations we will have with those we love during their final days. As Funeral Directors we always talk about the importance of prearranging one's funeral and generally when we do so, it is with families where imminent death is far into the future, well at least that is what everyone is anticipating. What I am wishing is that this story will help open your eyes, minds and hearts to helping families initiate conversations with loved ones who are dying. If I hadn't found the courage to ask my sister that very hard question... I might not have a Catholic Priest who is still mad at me for separating her ashes, apparently there is some rule in the catholic church about keeping them all together, you would think after 12 years of catholic schools I would have remembered that one. I do know if I had not asked Lisa, "What do you want me to do?" I would not have been able to make new memories about my sister who has been gone for 24 years.

Now I know in the beginning of this article I mentioned I wished I had done things a little differently, well that was more about her service and the words I was unable to say. I gave her eulogy however it was more of me reading an inspirational poem. It was one I had saved from an Ann Landers column that I thought one day I would be reading at my parent's funeral, not my little sisters'. I wish we would have continued our "what do you want me to do" conversation, I should have made them a part of our little time left together, instead we got caught up in "stuff" that was just "stuff." If we had, I would have been reading a letter directly from Lisa to all her family and friends; Something that would have been way more impactful and meaningful than an inspirational poem. I share this trusting it will help someone else. I realize there are many of you who are already "on it", and to you, thank you!! You obviously realize once that loved one is gone there are no "do over's". **FBA**

Ann Marie St. George, CPC, a first-generation funeral director has worked for the past 20 years as a Regional Manager for Cooperative Funeral Fund, a preneed and cemetery care fund management company. Thriving in the industry for over 35 years as a funeral director/embalmer she was pulled into the world of national disasters starting with 9/11 where she lived 11 blocks north of the World Trade Center. She is a Mortuary Officer for both DMORT Region II and Kenyon International Emergency Services. The devastation and grief she has been exposed to has contributed to her unique sense of humor which she does admit may also be due to genetics. She encourages anyone reading her articles to reach out by email at [AnnMarie.StGeorge@cffinc.com](mailto:AnnMarie.StGeorge@cffinc.com) Suggestions for topics are always encouraged. For more information visit [www.CooperativeFuneralFund.com](http://www.CooperativeFuneralFund.com) or call (800) 336-1102.

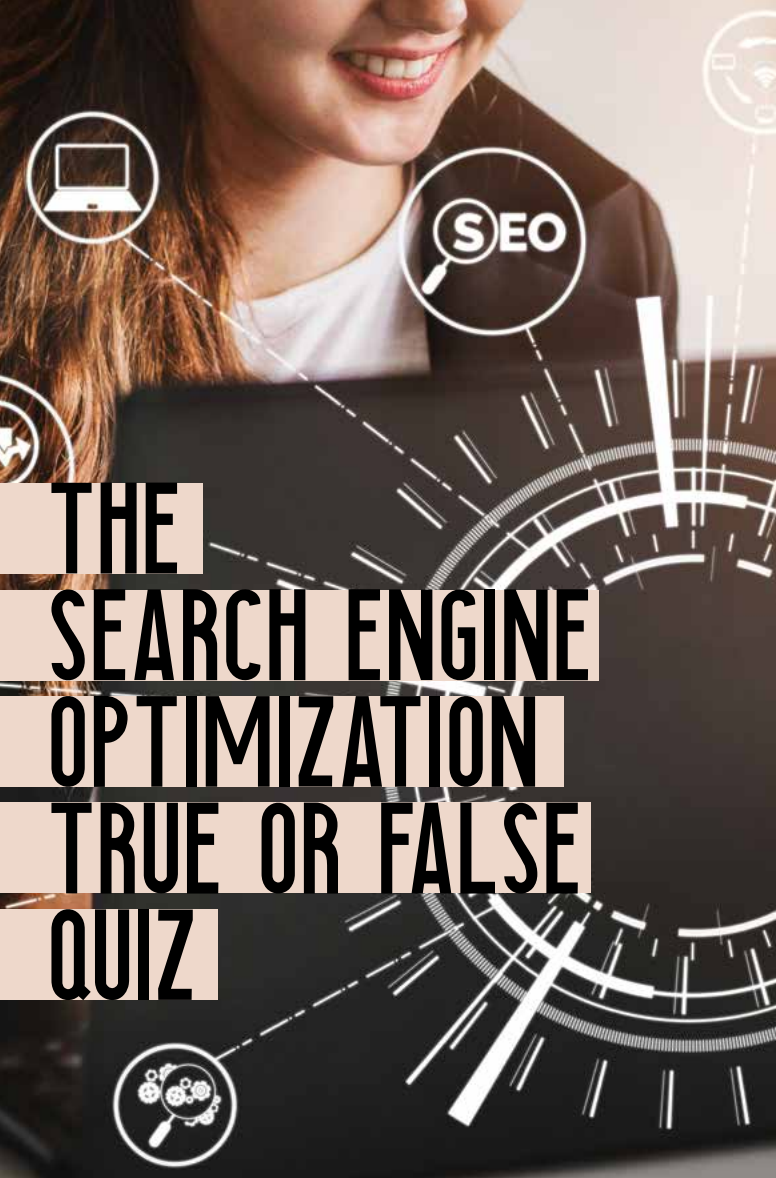
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# THE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ

BY WELTON HONG

**Q**uick history lesson: SEO is roughly 28 years old. Experts believe this internet marketing method took its first fledgling steps sometime around 1991.

By the late '90s, SEO was entering its adolescent stage—with all the awkward rebellion you might expect. It was the heyday of black-hat SEO practices, which persisted into the new century. Starting in 2000, Google began to take over search, applying rules and molding SEO into what it is today. And the search giant continues to make changes.

Just like a human grows from a helpless infant into adulthood—with all the complex changes that go along with that—SEO has come a long way in about three decades. And with so many rapid changes, it can be difficult to keep up with what's true about SEO today.

Find out how much you know (or not) about current SEO with this quiz. Simply read each statement and determine whether you think it's true or false. Then check the answer key to find out if you're right or to pick up some helpful information for deathcare marketing:

1. You don't pay for search engine optimization.
2. The right SEO company can guarantee placement at the top of SERPs.
3. You should try to rank for keywords with lower search volumes.
4. Keyword density is no longer important.
5. The most important factor when it comes to backlinks is how many you have.
6. The speed of your site is a critical SEO factor.
7. You have to submit your site to the search engines for it to rank.
8. When in doubt, just do what the big companies are doing.
9. A site that isn't mobile-friendly can be a huge negative hit for your online marketing.
10. Online reviews aren't important when it comes to SEO.
11. When it comes to content marketing, quality trumps quantity.
12. Video marketing doesn't help your SEO performance.
13. Paid search automatically improves your organic SEO results.
14. Every page on your site should have more than 1,200 words.
15. Using technology to obstruct people from leaving negative reviews online is a legitimate strategy to ensure positive reputation.

## Answer Key

**1. False.** You might not pay for your organic search results listing. But the work it takes to rank in the competitive world of SERPs costs you in either time or money. DIY approaches may seem "free," but they infringe upon customer-facing tasks (which could impact revenues) and come with internal labor costs.

**2. False.** A good SEO company can do a lot, and that often includes helping you connect with more families or potential clientele online. But search engine ranking is complex and not controlled by any outside entity, so anyone who makes guarantees about top-spot ranking is selling something they can't deliver.

**3. True.** Low-volume keywords are less competitive. If one is highly relevant to your deathcare services, you can more easily connect with a specific audience by targeting it. That doesn't mean you should only chase low-volume keywords; a varied SEO strategy that includes a range of keywords is typically best.

**4. True.** Keyword density refers to how many times keywords appear in relation to the number of words on the page. It used to be a huge SEO factor, but not today. It's more important that you have the right keywords in prominent on-page locations, such as in H2 headers or a first paragraph. When it comes to counting keywords, just be sure you aren't overusing them. Google considers keyword stuffing to be SEO abuse and might rank your page lower because of it.

**5. False.** The most important backlink factors are authority and relevance. If your backlinks are from pages that aren't relevant to your content—or if the linking pages are low quality—the links don't help with ranking. Best case scenario is a neutral impact to SEO, but too many low-quality backlinks can actually lower your place in SERPs.

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*Charles Hoffon*  
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**6. True.** Google incorporated page load speed into ranking factors in 2010, and it's only become more important over time.

**7. False.** Search engine bots automatically crawl new pages. Site plugins can help make this process faster in some cases, and a few situations may warrant submitting your site. But that's fairly advanced SEO, and you can skip it without feeling much of an impact if your site and content is quality.

**8. False.** Every site (and every deathcare company) is unique. What works for another business may not work for your firm. It's always best to test new SEO methods and tweak them to work best for you and your target audience.

**9. True.** As of mid-2018, Google is going with mobile-first indexing. That means it indexes and ranks based on the mobile version of your site first. If you don't have one—or it's not very user-friendly—you could be losing big in SERPs.

**10. False.** Google itself has said online reviews are a ranking signal. It also says that responding to your online reviews can improve your SEO.

**11. True.** Google's mission since 2000 seems targeted on improving the quality of search results it presents to users. It's better to publish one high-quality piece of content a week than three or four pieces with no authority, relevance, or expertise.

**12. False.** Including video in your online marketing can help you grow your revenue up to 49 percent faster than efforts that don't include this media. Video is one of the most engaging media types online, so it helps drive up behavioral metrics that

play a role in ranking. And you can also include keywords in video captions, titles, and meta tags for enhanced SEO.

**13. False.** While paid search (SEM) and SEO often go hand-in-hand, each taking benefits from the other, SEM doesn't automatically guarantee an SEO boost.

**14. False.** SEO gurus weigh in on this one periodically, and the current consensus on "best word count" ranges from around 1,000 to more than 3,000. But the truth is that the right word count is whatever you need to appropriately cover your topic—no more, no less.

**15. False.** This is called review gating, and it could get all your hard-won Google reviews removed. Instead, concentrate on encouraging satisfied families to leave a review if you're looking to boost your star rating.

How did you do? Regardless of how you did, it is important to understand search engine optimization (SEO). Users trust search engines and having a presence in the top positions for the keywords the user is searching, increases the web site's trust, thus increasing traffic. **FBA**

Welton Hong is the founder and marketing director of Ring Ring Marketing (FuneralHomeProfits.com), which specializes in helping funeral homes convert leads from online directly to the phone line. Welton also is a speaker at funeral home conferences and the author of Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes. Reach him by email at [info@ringringmarketing.com](mailto:info@ringringmarketing.com) or call toll-free at 888.383-2848.

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# INCREASING CHARITABLE DONATIONS WITH POST-CREMATION METAL RECYCLING

BY MELISSA POLIS

Crematory owners should create an ethical recycling program that benefits families, the environment, and their business.

For decades crematories struggled with finding solutions with what to do with the metal joints, dental metals, and prosthetic implants left over after the cremation process. As a result, many crematories buried the metal in cemetery grounds, stored it in concrete vaults, or even threw it away where it would eventually end up in a landfill. Improperly disposing post-cremation metals is harmful to the environment and prevents crematories from benefiting from the recycling proceeds that can be donated to charity, used for facility improvements, or allocated to purchase new equipment.

Up until recently, there was little, if any guidance from regulators on what to do with metal byproducts left over from cremations. However, in 2015, the Cremation Association of North America (CANA) and the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA), provided recycling guidance with a joint statement that outlined best practices for recycling post-cremation metals.

According to CANA and the ICCFA, "Post-cremation items include mostly metallic waste and should be recovered following the cremation process, packaged, and recycled according to cremation provider specifications."

Go to the following link for a full joint release by CANA and the ICCFA: [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cremationassociation.org/resource/resmgr/Media\\_Press\\_Releases/NonOrganicWasteRecycling.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cremationassociation.org/resource/resmgr/Media_Press_Releases/NonOrganicWasteRecycling.pdf)

## Why Recycle?

For one, burying or throwing away the metal commonly found in prosthetic implants and dental scrap is detrimental to the environment. Materials like silver and mercury can seep into the soil, pollute fresh water sources, and hurt natural ecosystems. Recycling these materials for reuse in other products is the most environmentally conscientious thing that crematory owners can do.



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Secondly, it solves the issue of how to properly handle post-cremation metals. Metal byproducts found after cremations can be cumbersome and take up a lot of space. Without a cohesive recycling program, disposing and storing these metals can be costly, burdensome, and time-consuming.

Lastly, post-cremation recycling can generate an entirely separate stream of revenue that crematory owners can use. While it's ultimately up to the owner on how to use the extra funds, many choose to give it to their favorite charity or nonprofit or invest it in capital improvements or new equipment.

**The Value of Post-Cremation Metal**

Artificial joints and hips contain base metals and alloys like chrome-cobalt, titanium, and stainless steel, which should all be recycled at a refinery. These alloys are strong and durable but hold very little value because they don't contain any noble, or precious, metals.

On the other hand, dental metals like crowns and bridges contain precious metals like gold, silver, platinum, and palladium; which are extremely valuable. For comparison, 100+ lbs. of base metals like cobalt or titanium can typically be sold for a few hundred dollars, while just a few ounces of precious metals could yield thousands of dollars. For this reason, it's essential that crematories recycle with a refinery that specializes in maximizing the extraction of precious metals from dental scrap.

**Most value is found in dental metals.**

Casket hardware, prosthetics, and artificial joints typically make up more than 99% of the overall volume and weight of post-cremation metals, but they usually account for less than 5% of the value.

**Proper Analysis is Key**

Crematories should be skeptical of companies utilizing single-stream payment models that base metal valuations on a "per-cremation" basis. In these models, companies will pay crematory owners a highly conservative flat-rate based on the number of cremations performed each year. While this seems like a straightforward solution, funeral homes are often severely underpaid by this speculative pricing model because it doesn't involve any concrete scientific analysis.

Rather than using a "single-stream" model, crematories should work with a refinery that melts, assays, and provides detailed reports on metal composition.

An assay is the scientific process in which metal is melted and analyzed to determine its contents and purity.

**Choosing the Right Refinery**

Because the value of post-cremation metal varies so greatly per cremation, it's essential to work with a refinery that has all the tools and expertise required to maximize recovery and yields. Some crematories simply use a magnet to separate the metal found in post-cremation material, but this method won't capture precious metals because they aren't magnetic.



The best recycling companies will provide specialized tools, such as cremulators or filtration devices, to help crematory operators streamline the sorting process and maximize precious metal recovery. Without these tools, precious metal recovery on the crematory side is typically less than optimal.

Crematories should also find a refinery that has experience working with dental scrap, as this is where almost all of the value from post-cremation metals resides. Refiners with expertise in this area will be able to maximize precious metal yields, which translates to higher payments for the crematory.

Since metal recycling is not a priority for crematory owners, many don't perform enough research when choosing a refinery for post-cremation metal recycling. Instead of losing out on potential funds, crematories should find a refiner that will work with their business to maximize the value they receive. Not all refiners are the same, and crematory owners should do their research to find a refinery that meets their needs. **FBA**

**Sources:**

"ICCFA and CANA Partner on Joint Recycling Statement." ICCFA and CANA Partner on Joint Recycling Statement - Cremation Association of North America (CANA), ICCFA and CANA, 7 Jan. 2015, [www.cremationassociation.org/news/news.asp?id=209542&hh](http://www.cremationassociation.org/news/news.asp?id=209542&hh).

Mari, Montse, and José L. Domingo. "Toxic Emissions from Crematories: A Review." *Environment International*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2010, pp. 131–137., doi:10.1016/j.envint.2009.09.006.

Long, Marc, and H.j Rack. "Titanium Alloys in Total Joint Replacement—a Materials Science Perspective." *Biomaterials*, vol. 19, no. 18, 1998, pp. 1621–1639., doi:10.1016/s0142-9612(97)00146-4.

"Gold Price Today." *Kitco Metals Inc.*, *Kitco Metals Inc.*, [www.kitco.com/gold-price-today-usa/](http://www.kitco.com/gold-price-today-usa/).

Melissa Polis is a seasoned GIA certified professional with over a decade of experience. As an account manager in the crematory division at Garfield Refining Company, Melissa has worked closely with a multitude of funeral homes and crematories to help them achieve a simple and streamlined process for post-cremation recycling. Her expertise has also given her industry-leading knowledge on how to help crematories maximize the recoverable value of post-cremation metals.

We may be the largest insurance assignment company in the funeral profession, but that doesn't mean we've lost touch with our roots. Here in Rainbow City, our priorities still come down to a welcoming smile and a handshake that says we keep our promises. With all the tools and technologies that assures blazingly fast turnaround, what really matters is much more old school: personal responsibility, integrity, relationships and the pride that comes from hearing yet another client say, "You came through for us when it mattered."

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# ICCFA Creating Legacies 2020 ICCFA ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION

MARCH 30-APRIL 2 • HENRY B. GONZÁLEZ CONVENTION CENTER  
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**TUESDAY, MARCH 31  
AT 9 AM**

**Keynote: Exploring the Significance of Permanent Placement: Understanding and Teaching the WHY**

ALAN WOLFELT, PhD, CENTER FOR LOSS & LIFE TRANSITION

Dr. Alan Wolfelt will explore the reality that more and more people are questioning the value of funerals and the need for permanent memorialization. When people don't understand the WHY, they are at risk for confusing efficiency with effectiveness. Come learn from one of North America's leading death educators as Dr. Wolfelt focuses on the WHY. He will remind you that your ability to sensitively convey the value of this important decision is directly related to your fundamental belief in its importance. This inspirational, information-rich presentation will encourage you to use a model of information, education, and honoring choices.



**TUESDAY, MARCH 31  
AT 11 AM**

**Keynote: Ten Ways to Have Better Conversations**  
CELESTE HEADLEE

Celeste Headlee knows the ingredients of a great conversation: honesty, brevity, clarity, and a healthy amount of listening. She argues that listening is the true power that separates those of us who can gain a competitive advantage in whatever it is we are trying to achieve. In this keynote, Celeste focuses on the science-based fundamentals of communication and includes thought-provoking topics like "the smarter you are, the worse you are at communicating." She will also share 10 practical lessons designed to inspire self-confidence and introduces strategies for enhancing personal and professional relationships by simply becoming better at having conversations. In a time when conversations are often minimized to a few words in a text message and lack of meaningful dialogue abounds, Celeste sheds a much-needed light on the lost and essential art of conversation.



**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1  
AT 9 AM**

**Keynote: Be a Go-To Person: Be Indispensable Without Burning Out**

BRUCE TULGAN,  
RAINMAKERTHINKING, INC.

In today's interconnected, highly-interdependent workplace, collaboration is a requirement and being a good collaborator is necessary no matter what type of work you do. Unfortunately, too many people find themselves overcommitted and unable to deliver. The good news is that there is a way to become an indispensable, go-to person at work without burning out. Bruce Tulgan tackles the challenges all employees face by helping identify over-commitment syndrome and siege mentality, defining what real influence looks like in today's workplace, and discussing how to improve collaboration by aligning communication up and down the chain of command. By presenting his "when to say no" and "how to say yes" framework, attendees will understand how to build the skills that will improve their working relationships and establish their reputations as indispensable employees.

## ICCFA Annual Breakout Schedule at a Glance

Monday, March 30

	214 AB	214 CD
2 PM	<b>Thinking Outside the Casket: Educating Your Families on Green Burial</b> <b>FH Cm</b> Samuel C. Perry	<b>Prospecting to Women Influencers</b> <b>S FH Cm</b> Jodi Clock, CPLP
3 PM	<b>How Do We Thrive In The Next Decade?</b> <b>B FH Cm</b> Dan Isard & Doug Gober	<b>How to Talk to Families Who Have Suffered a Loss by Suicide</b> <b>Gr</b> Anne Moss Rogers

Wednesday, April 1

	213	214 AB	214 CD	217 AB	217 CD
1 PM	<b>People, Process, Tools: Solving the Right Problem</b> <b>T FH Cm</b> Jason Cavett	<b>The 27 Challenges Managers Face: Step-By-Step Solutions to (Nearly) All Your Management Problems</b> <b>B</b> Bruce Tulgan	<b>The Impact of Unclaimed Property Laws on Your Pre-Need Trust</b> <b>Lg FH Cm</b> Bill Williams & Wendy Russell Wiener, Esq.	<b>The Secret of Pre-Need Success: Pets as a Lead Generation Tool</b> <b>S</b> Coleen Ellis, CPLP	<b>Cremation Trifecta</b> <b>FH S</b> John McQueen
2 PM	<b>Video Streaming in the 21st Century</b> <b>T FH Cm</b> Rick Rampton & Bob Gordon Jr., CCE	<b>The Five Levels of Leadership</b> <b>Ld FH Cm</b> Jennifer Parvin	<b>Five Different Types of Securities to Maximize Income in Your Perpetual Care Fund</b> <b>Cm</b> Adam Sheer	<b>Reputation Management in Today's Online World</b> <b>B FH Cm</b> Joe Weigel	<b>Say What? How Funeral Jargon Destroys Your Customer's Experience</b> <b>FH</b> Tyler Anderson
3 PM	<b>Women in Leadership: Compassion Fatigue &amp; Self-Care</b> <b>Ge FH Cm</b> Jennifer Olvera, CCE; Tiffany Gallarzo; Gwen Mooney, CCFE; Yvonne Slonaker, CCRÉ, CFuE; Delana Pratt	<b>Disruption: Our Business Is Dying and Yours Is Too, So What to Do?</b> <b>B FH Cm</b> Chris Keller	<b>Solving Employee Controversy</b> <b>HR</b> Stephanie Ramsey	<b>Assessing The Enemy, Garrisoning the Fort, and Going on the Offense with Your Digital Marketing Plan</b> <b>S FH Cm</b> Alex McCracken	<b>Eat, Drink and Make Money</b> <b>FH</b> John Bolton, CCE, CCRÉ, CSE & Lori Salberg

Thursday, April 2

	213	214 AB	214 CD	217 AB	217 CD
9 AM	<b>Stand Out from the Crowd: Leadership Building &amp; Motivating a Winning Team</b> <b>Ld FH Cm</b> Larry Mersereau	<b>A Wrongful Pet Cremation: Mock Trial</b> <b>P Lg</b> Poul Lemasters, Esq. & Donald Ferfolia	<b>Cemetery Prospecting and Lead Development: An Insider's Perspective</b> <b>Cm S</b> Tacye Vogel	<b>The Weinstein Effect: Impact of #MeToo and #TimesUp</b> <b>Lg HR</b> Michael Pepperman, Esq. & Ivo Becica, Esq.	<b>Defusing Conflict in the Arrangement Conference: Strategies from Family Therapists</b> <b>FH</b> Jason Troyer, PhD
10 AM	<b>The Outsourced Economy: HR for Your Small Business</b> <b>HR</b> Elizabeth Kmiec		<b>The Importance of Water Management Assessments: A Case Study</b> <b>Cm</b> James Zwack	<b>Facebook Fixer Upper: How to DIY Your Facebook Strategy</b> <b>S FH Cm</b> Zack Garbow	<b>The Value of Being a 'Donation Champion' Funeral Home</b> <b>FH</b> Tina Tursi Holmes & Melissa Devenny
11 AM	<b>The Art of Hiring</b> <b>HR</b> Lance Ray	<b>Marketing 101: Promoting Your Pet Loss Company on a Shoestring Marketing Budget</b> <b>P S</b> Joe Weigel	<b>Arlington National Cemetery: Restoring Honor</b> <b>Cm</b> Jack Lechner	<b>You Lost Dad Once, Don't Lose Him Again!</b> <b>S FH Cm</b> Mike Watkins	<b>Thinking of Selling Your Funeral Home? The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly</b> <b>FH B</b> David Nixon & Steven Egna
12 NOON	<b>Employee or Contractor? Challenges in Classification of Workers and Joint Employer Determinations</b> <b>HR</b> Toby Magarian & Steven H. Gurnee	<b>Not All Cemeteries Are Created Equal</b> <b>P Cm</b> Elizabeth Kmiec	<b>Re-Imagining the Cemetery for More Relevance to the Community</b> <b>Cm</b> Mitch Rose, CCFE, CCRÉ	<b>How to Grow Your Sales with "Before I Die" Festivals</b> <b>S FH Cm</b> Gail Rubin	<b>Obituaries with More Love than Money</b> <b>FH</b> Marc Markell & Angela Woosley
		<b>You Want to Sell - Now What?</b> <b>P B</b> David Nixon			

210
1 PM
<b>Legal &amp; Legislative Luncheon: A Regulatory Update Everyone Needs to Hear</b> <b>Ge Lg</b> Poul Lemasters, Esq.; Les Schneider, Esq.; Michael Pepperman, Esq.; Keenan Knopke; Christine Toson, CCE

**B** Business management & operations  
**Cm** Cemetery  
**Cr** Cremation  
**FH** Funeral home  
**Ge** General interest  
**Gr** Grief

**HR** Human resources  
**Ld** Leadership  
**Lg** Legal  
**P** Pet loss  
**S** Sales & marketing  
**T** Technology



# MUST SEE COMPANIES AT THE 2020 ICCFA CONVENTION

## GOING TO THE ICCFA CONVENTION?

Keep an eye on the following companies. This section highlights companies and their products and services that will be exhibited at the ICCFA Convention on March 30–April 2 at the Henry B. González Convention Center and Grand Hyatt San Antonio. Product information has been supplied by the manufacturers serving the funeral industry.



### American Pre-Arrangement Services, Inc. BOOTH #6112

APASI's Guaranteed Travel Assurance Plan, creates peace of mind, because we do it all for you. Through our world-wide membership coverage that offers six global response centers, we provide assistance at the time of need. We eliminate confusion and language barriers, manage all documentation and transportation with no cap on expenses, other than the initial cost of membership. With 25 years of experience and nearly 500,00 members, APASI is the leader in repatriation services. Come see us in San Antonio at booth 6112 and ask us how we can improve your Pre-Need program.

855-746-2727 | [www.apasiplan.com](http://www.apasiplan.com) | [info@apasiplan.com](mailto:info@apasiplan.com)



### AP Lazer

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### ClearPoint Federal Bank & Trust

BOOTH #3042

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800-763-0234 | [www.clearpointfederal.com](http://www.clearpointfederal.com) | [customer.service@clearpointfederal.com](mailto:customer.service@clearpointfederal.com)



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BOOTH #1058

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## Eagle's Wings Air (EWA)

BOOTH #4105

EWA is the nation's leading provider of air transportation management to North American funeral homes and shipping services. Transportation specialists not affiliated with any single airline, but offer one-call access to the entire airline industry. EWA has a client-focused business strategy where airline professionals provide exceptional customer service, and since our founding in 2008 have proudly managed the air transportation of more than 155,000 loved ones returning home for ceremony. Learn more at [www.EWAcares.com](http://www.EWAcares.com).

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## National Mortuary Shipping & Cremation BOOTH #6018

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## Garfield Refining Company

BOOTH #5083

Garfield Refining has provided a variety of industries with award-winning recycling solutions since 1892. As a family-owned business, Garfield understands the importance of responsive customer service and sustainable recycling solutions. Our goal is to develop lifelong relationships with our crematory partners by ensuring that they get the most out of their post-cremation recycling program.

Garfield is passionate about recycling, and we fully support CANA and the ICCFA's commitment to the substantial environmental benefits of recycling post-cremation metals.

800-523-0968 | [www.garfieldrefining.com/crematory](http://www.garfieldrefining.com/crematory) | [mpolis@garfieldrefining.com](mailto:mpolis@garfieldrefining.com)



## Osiris Software

BOOTH #2090

Osiris is powerful, yet simple to use, funeral care software created by funeral directors and cemeterians for funeral professionals. It streamlines your website, payments, scheduling, accounting and documents all in one easy place. With Osiris you will receive highly rated, unlimited support! We understand every establishment is unique, and our Customer Success Managers are pros at customizing Osiris to fit your business needs.

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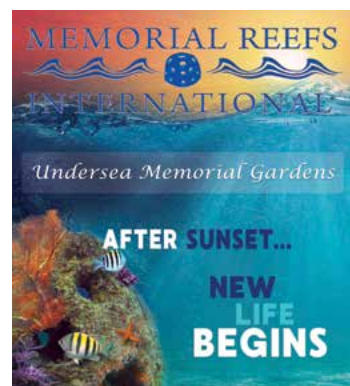
800-645-8966 | [www.kanga-woo.com](http://www.kanga-woo.com) | [info@kanga-woo.com](mailto:info@kanga-woo.com)



## Progressive Environmental Services, Inc. BOOTH #1035

The cremation rate in the United States stood at 53.1% in 2018; this figure was forecasted to grow to 79.1% by 2035. You need a company that is familiar with the death care industry, yet who also has extensive experience in the metal refining industry and is also knowledgeable about environmental laws and regulations. With over 40 years of experience in the precious metal refining industry, Progressive Environmental Services is an industry leader in the recycling of post-cremation metallic implants and dental alloys, while doing so in a transparent, ethical and environmentally conscious manner.

800-323-9785 | [www.cremation-recycling.com](http://www.cremation-recycling.com) | [jnjesse@progressive-environmental.com](mailto:jnjesse@progressive-environmental.com)



## Memorial Reefs International

BOOTH #1008

What if you could create a living legacy that supports marine life for generations to come? Here at Memorial Reefs International™ we provide families and their loved ones a unique resting place that creates and perpetuates marine reef ecosystems essential to facilitating marine life biomass restoration and coral generation.

Our undersea memorial gardens are located in areas where natural habitats have been weakened by climate change and human activity. The Memorials are specially designed for regrowth and revival of local marine life. Now, you can give your family the opportunity to help new life begin with our living memorials!

877-218-0747 | [www.memorialreefs.international](http://www.memorialreefs.international) | [info@memorialreefs.international](mailto:info@memorialreefs.international)



## Ready Capital Specialty Finance

BOOTH #2060

Ready Capital is a national, direct lender that specializes in providing financing options for the death care industry. Ready Capital has a team of loan-specialists that have as many as 20 years of experience financing funeral homes. Ready Capital provides funding for acquisitions, buyouts, debt consolidation, renovations and construction. The loan structures that they provide accommodate not only the value of the fixed assets, but also the goodwill value of a funeral home. They understand that the value of a funeral home is in the people who operate them and the communities that they serve.

888-987-2001 | [www.ReadyCapital.com](http://www.ReadyCapital.com) | [john.tonjes@readycapital.com](mailto:john.tonjes@readycapital.com)





## Ring Ring Marketing

BOOTH#6031

For funeral homes and cemeteries suffering from serious maladies such as "too few at-need calls," "low online reputation," "weak website conversion" and "mediocre search engine ranking," Ring Ring Marketing is presenting its first-ever RRM Walk-In Clinic in Booth 6031 at the 2020 ICCFA Annual Convention. Marketing experts will be on hand to diagnose disorders in funeral homes' and cemeteries' marketing efforts and prescribe solutions. Unlike other doctor visits, you don't need an insurance card or a copay: Your "marketing checkup" is 100% free. Simply swing by Booth 6031 to get your funeral home and cemetery on the path to revenue wellness!

888-383-2848 | [www.FuneralHomeProfits.com](http://www.FuneralHomeProfits.com) | [info@RingRingMarketing.com](mailto:info@RingRingMarketing.com)



## The Bancorp

BOOTH#2094

The Bancorp, Inc. (NASDAQ: TBBK) is dedicated to serving the unique needs of non-bank financial service companies, ranging from entrepreneurial start-ups to those on the Fortune 500. The company's subsidiary, The Bancorp Bank (Member FDIC, Equal Housing Lender), has been repeatedly recognized in the payments industry as the Top Issuer of Prepaid Cards (US), a top merchant sponsor bank and a top ACH originator. Specialized lending distinctions include SBA National Preferred Lender, a leading provider of securities-backed lines of credit, and one of the few bank-owned commercial vehicle leasing groups in the nation. For more information, please visit [www.thebancorp.com](http://www.thebancorp.com).

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## Thumbies®

BOOTH#1115

Thumbies® and Buddies Pet Keepsakes® are highest-quality personalized print keepsakes, many of which incorporate cremated remains. Beautifully decorative or highly functional, these keepsakes help people celebrate life and the ones they love utilizing the indelible sense of touch. Capabilities include the unmatched ability to create 100% custom, made-to-order, designs. Handcrafted in precious metals by artisans in the U.S. heartland, these keepsakes are cast for maximum tactile quality. Contact us to experience the Customer Service our Partners love. For more information, please visit [thumbies.com](http://thumbies.com). Visit Booth #1115 to see all our Spring 2020 New Releases!

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## TribuCast™

BOOTH#1093

TribuCast™ is an easy-to-use, portable, pay-per-use remote attendance system that helps funeral directors reduce a family's heartache and stress when planning a service by including everyone, regardless of their location or circumstances. The TribuCast™ Remote Attendance System™ creates a private online environment that closely matches the in-person experience of attending a service which enables all loved ones to grieve effectively. TribuCast™ is accessed through a private website and is accompanied by highly personalized interactive content that puts the life that was lost into context. For more information, contact TribuCast at 800-782-0104 or see a demonstration at booth #1093.

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# MUST SEE PRODUCTS & SERVICES AT THE 2020 ICCFA CONVENTION

## GOING TO THE ICCFA CONVENTION?

The following “Must See Products & Services” section highlights companies and their products and services that will be exhibiting at the ICCFA Convention on March 30–April 2 at the Henry B. González Convention Center and Grand Hyatt San Antonio. Information has been supplied by the manufacturers serving the funeral industry.

### The Amazing Amp



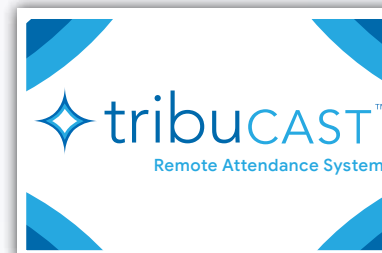
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### MobileFH® Texting



MobileFH® Texting is the first and only text message solution that helps facilitate mobile communications for funeral homes. Developed in-house by ASD, MobileFH® Texting connects the funeral home's business line or any other funeral home number to the ASD Mobile app, allowing directors to send and receive text messages from anywhere using the funeral home's main business phone number as the sending number.

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**AP Lazer**  
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www.aplazer.com

### Away From Home Assurance



Sepio Guard offers Away From Home Assurance, a service to retrieve mortal remains when a death occurs 75 or more miles from home. By providing proprietary sales technology and innovative sales tools, including their mobile app, Sepio Guard is able to equip organizations with robust hands-on support, while delivering client families a first-class customer experience.

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# ON YOUR SIDE

The Federal Trade Commission recently asked for public comment on whether to make changes to its Funeral Rule. Read about how the ICCFA is working on behalf of our members at [iccfa.com/legal](http://iccfa.com/legal)

# ICCFA

Poul Lemasters, Esq.  
ICCFA General Counsel

**Membership That Matters.**



# Funeral Industry CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAR

**SELECTED EDUCATIONAL TRUST ONSITE JOB FAIR PITTSBURGH INSTITUTE OF MORTUARY SCIENCE**  
**March 5, 2020**  
Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science | Pittsburgh, PA  
[www.selectedtrust.org](http://www.selectedtrust.org)

**NFDA MEET THE MENTORS**  
**March 8-10, 2020**  
Emory Conference Center Hotel | Atlanta, GA  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

**SELECTED EUROPEAN SPRING MEETING 2020**  
**March 27-29, 2020**  
Bologna Funeral Exhibition | Bologna, Italy  
[www.selectedfuneralhomes.org](http://www.selectedfuneralhomes.org)

**2020 ICCFA ANNUAL CONVENTION AND EXPOSITION**  
**March 30 - April 2, 2020**  
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center | San Antonio, TX  
[WWW.iccfa.com](http://WWW.iccfa.com)

APR

**THE BEREAVEMENT CRUISE**  
**April 19, 2020**  
Royal Caribbean  
[www.funeralbusinessadvisor.com](http://www.funeralbusinessadvisor.com)

**NFDA PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**  
**April 24-26, 2020**  
Confidante Hyatt Hotel | Miami, FL  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

**SELECTED 2020 SPRING MANAGEMENT SUMMIT**  
**April 29-May 1, 2020**  
Le Méridien Tampa | Tampa, FL  
[www.selectedfuneralhomes.org](http://www.selectedfuneralhomes.org)

**NFDA ADVOCACY SUMMIT**  
**April 29-May 1, 2020**  
The Mayflower Hotel | Washington, DC  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

**INDIANA FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION AND TRADE SHOW**  
**May 11, 2020**  
Embassy Suites Conference Center | Noblesville, IN  
[www.infda.org](http://www.infda.org)

**NFDA EMBALMING AND RESTORATIVE ART SEMINAR**  
**May 14-15, 2020**  
Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science | Pittsburgh, PA  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

MAY

JUN

**NEW! NFDA YANKEE STADIUM BUCKET LIST ADVENTURE**  
**June 5, 2020**  
Yankee Stadium | The Bronx, NY  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

**SELECTED EUROPEAN CONFERENCE 2020**  
**June 10-14, 2020**  
The Grand Hotel | York, England  
[www.selectedfuneralhomes.org](http://www.selectedfuneralhomes.org)

AUG

**NFDA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**  
**August 2-5, 2020**  
Belmond Charleston Place | Charleston, SC  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

SEP

**NEW! RYDER CUP BUCKET LIST ADVENTURE**  
**September 21-23, 2020**  
Whistling Straits | Sheboygan, WI  
[events.nfda.org](http://events.nfda.org)

OCT

**SELECTED'S 2020 ANNUAL MEETING**  
**September 30-October 3, 2020**  
Le Westin Montreal | Montreal, QB, Canada  
[www.selectedfuneralhomes.org](http://www.selectedfuneralhomes.org)

**NFDA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION & EXPO**  
**October 18-21, 2020**  
New Orleans, LA  
[www.nfda.org](http://www.nfda.org)



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Chad Fondriest 614-205-7600 [cfondriest@umwsb.com](mailto:cfondriest@umwsb.com)

 [www.umwsb.com](http://www.umwsb.com)

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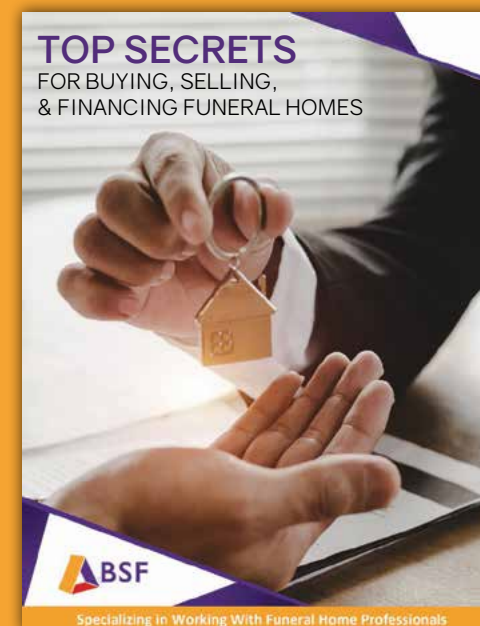
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