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MAGAZINE

February & March 2020
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Memorialization & Aftercare

Exploring the “Whys” of Grief by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., C.T.

“6 “Aftercare” Ides to Connect With Your Community”

Beginning the Cremation Memorialization Conversation by Joe Weigel

Finding the Right Team Members in a Changing World by Bob Heidlage

6 Tips for FaceBook Marketing in 2020 by Ashley Montroy

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notes from the editor

By: John Yopp

6 “Aftercare” Ideas to Connect With Your Community

1. Host a Social Event for Seniors

To erase the perception of a funeral home as a morbid or depressing place, many firms have begun hosting fun events for senior citizens in their area. These events bring together those that have experienced a loss with others that have gone through a similar experience. By encouraging the public to socialize in the funeral home, directors can create an atmosphere with positive associations where seniors can feel comfortable sharing stories and reflecting on the past.

2. Hold a Contest or Competition

If you want the public to engage with you, brainstorm some ideas for a contest your funeral home could hold that would inspire creativity in your neighborhood. Invite the public to help you name something such as a new pet at the funeral home or hold an essay writing competition. Send a press release to your local paper and use your social media sites to share information on your contest.

3. Offer Grief Therapy

Family members often will turn to the funeral home after their loved one’s service for advice on coping with their loss. Directors can play a key role in helping the bereaved by providing resources, literature, classes and/or recommendations. While some funeral homes have a grief counselor on staff to provide individual or group sessions, others work with outside bereavement organizations. Additionally, there is also a great deal of online grief therapy that directors can refer to those who live far away or cannot commute. By treating families like a high priority after a loved one’s service, funeral professionals can offer assistance to those suffering after a loss and foster lasting relationships within their communities.

4. Hold a Clothing or Food Drive

Throughout history, funeral directors have never turned a blind eye to those in need. Helping those

less fortunate demonstrates your altruistic support for others. Ask yourself what causes matter most to you and how your funeral home might be best equipped to help. Others will hold canned food drives for their local food banks or collect clothing for the homeless, women’s shelters, and others in need. By making your funeral home a designated drop off point, you can interact with residents who stop by with donations while helping those in need. Using social media and your website to share information about your charity drive will help you to spread awareness and increase donations.

5. Provide Educational Seminars

Many people aren’t sure where to begin when researching life insurance, prearrangements, irrevocable trusts, probate laws, estate taxes and other complicated end-of-life concerns. Funeral directors can act as a resource to those who need this information by offering monthly educational seminars on these issues. Providing facts and materials to seniors in an understandable and interesting format can help you to position yourself as an expert on these issues within your community.

6. Honor Lost Loved Ones During the Holidays

Many funeral homes will organize an annual service of remembrance or tree lighting ceremony for those that lost someone during the previous year. This allows the bereaved to come together to honor their loved ones and share experiences with others who understand their grief. Funeral Directors often provide candles so that attendants can light a candle in memory of a loved one or place an ornament on a memorial tree. These symbolic gestures can have a profound emotional effect for families that attend. Hosting a service of remembrance can be a very moving experience for funeral directors as well. It provides an opportunity to reconnect with all the families they have touched over the year.



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Exploring the “*Whys*” of Grief

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., C.T., www.centerforloss.com

“At bottom, every man knows well enough that he is a unique human being, only once on this earth; and by no extraordinary chance will such a marvelously picturesque piece of diversity in unity as he is ever be put together a second time.”

~ Nietzsche

The wilderness of your grief is your wilderness—it is a creation of your unique self, the unique person who died, and the unique circumstances of your life. Your wilderness may be rockier or more level. Your path may be revealed in a straight line, or (more likely) it may be full of twists and turns. In your wilderness, you will encounter places that are only meaningful to you and you will experience the topography in your own way.

In life, everyone grieves, but their grief journeys are never precisely the same. Despite what you may hear, you will do the “work of mourning” in your own special way. Be careful about comparing your experience with that of other people. Do not adopt assumptions about how long your grief should last. Just consider taking a “one-day-at-a-time” approach. Doing so allows you to mourn at your own pace.

This touchstone invites you to explore some of the unique reasons your grief is what it is—the “whys” of your journey through the wilderness. Of course, the whys that follow are not all the whys in the world—just some of the most common.

Why #1: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PERSON WHO DIED

Your relationship with the person who died was different than that person’s relationship with anyone else. For example, you may have been extremely close, or “best friends,” as well as husband or wife. Perhaps you loved the person who died, but you had frequent disagreements or divisive conflicts. Or maybe you were separated by physical distance, so you weren’t as close emotionally as you would have liked.

The stronger your attachment to the person who died, the more difficult your grief journey will be. It only

makes sense that the closer you felt to the person who died, the more torn apart you will feel after the death. Ambivalent relationships can also be particularly hard to process after a death. You may feel a strong sense of “unfinished business”—things you wanted to say but never did, conflicts you wanted to resolve but didn’t.

Whatever the circumstances, you are the best person to describe and work toward understanding your relationship with the person who died.

Why #2: THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH

How, why, and when the person died can have a definite impact on your journey into grief. For example, was the death sudden or anticipated? How old was the person who died? Do you feel you might have been able to prevent the death?

A sudden, unexpected death obviously does not allow you any opportunity to prepare yourself. But are you ever “ready” for that moment at all? After a death due to terminal illness, friends and family members often tell me that they were still, in a sense, shocked by the death. I know this was my experience when my dad died. However, I did feel fortunate that I was able to share special time with him before he died and that we had ample opportunity to tell one another how we felt.

The age of the person who died also affects your acceptance of the death. Within the order of the world, we usually anticipate that parents will die before their children do. But when a child dies, this order of the world is turned upside-down. Or your grief might be heightened when a “middle-aged” person dies in what was thought to be the “prime of life.” Basically, we often find our grief easier when we feel that the

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person who died had a chance to live a full life. When we believe that the life was cut too short, our innate sense of injustice colors our grief.

You may also be asking yourself if you could have done anything to prevent the death. “If only I had gotten him to the doctor sooner,” you may be thinking; or, “If only I had driven instead of her.” The “if-onlys” are natural for you to explore, even if there is no logical way in which you could be held responsible for the death. What you’re really feeling is a lack of control over what happened. And accepting that we have little control over the lives of those we love is a difficult thing indeed.

Why #3: THE RITUAL OR FUNERAL EXPERIENCE

Decisions you make relating to the funeral can either help or hinder your personal grief experience. There is no single, right way to have a funeral. We do know, however, that creating a meaningful ritual for survivors can aid in the social, emotional, and spiritual healing after a death.

The funeral is a time and a place to express your feelings about the death, thus legitimizing them. The funeral also can serve as a time to honor the person who has died, bring you closer to others who can give you needed support, affirm that life goes on even in the face of death, and give you a context of meaning that is in keeping with your own religious, spiritual, or philosophical background.

If you were unable to attend the funeral of the person who died, or if the funeral was somehow minimized or distorted, you may find that this complicates your healing process. Be assured, however, that it is never too late after the death for you to plan and implement a ritual (even a second or third ceremony) that will help meet your needs. For example, you might choose to have a tree planting ceremony in the spring in honor of the person who died. Or you might elect to hold a memorial service on the anniversary of the death. The power of ceremony is that it helps people heal. You deserve it, and so does the person who died.

Why #4: THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

Mourning requires the outside support of other human beings in order for you to heal. Without a stabilizing support system of at least one other person,

the odds are that you will have difficulty in doing this work of mourning. Healing requires an environment of empathy, caring, and gentle encouragement.

Sometimes other people may think that you have a support system when, in fact, you don’t. For example, you may have family members or friends who live near you, but you discover that they have little compassion or patience for you and your grief. If so, a vital ingredient to healing is missing.

Or you also may have some friends and relatives who are supportive right after the death but who stop supporting you soon after. Again, for healing to occur, social support must be ongoing.

Even when you have a solid support system in place, do you find that you are willing and able to accept the support? If you are ashamed of your need to mourn, you may end up isolating yourself from the very people who would most like to walk with you in your journey through the wilderness of your grief.

Why #5: YOUR UNIQUE PERSONALITY

What words would you use to describe yourself? What words would other people use to describe you? Are you serious? Silly? Friendly? Shy?

Whatever your unique personality, rest assured that it will be reflected in your grief. For example, if you are quiet by nature, you may express your grief quietly. If you are outgoing, you may be more expressive with your grief.

How you have responded to other losses or crises in your life will likely also be consistent with how you respond to this death. If you tend to remain distant or run away from crisis, you may do the same thing now. But if you have always confronted crises head on and openly expressed your thoughts and feelings, you may follow that pattern of behavior.

Other aspects of your personality, such as your self-esteem, values, and beliefs, also impact your response to the death. In addition, any long-term problems with depression or anxiety will probably influence your grief.

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Why #6: THE UNIQUE PERSONALITY OF THE PERSON WHO DIED

Just as your own personality is reflected in your grief journey, so, too, is the unique personality of the person who died. What was the person who died like? What role(s) did he or she play in your life? Was he the funny one? Or was she the responsible one?

Really, personality is the sum total of all the characteristics that made this person who he or she was. The way she talked, the way he smiled, the way she ate her food, the way he worked—all these and so many more little things are gone all at once.

Whatever you loved most about the person who died, that is what you are now likely to miss the most. And, paradoxically, whatever you liked least about the person who died is what may trouble you the most now. If, for example, your father was a cold, uncaring person, after his death you may find yourself struggling even more with his apparent lack of love. You may have always wished you could change this aspect of his personality, but now that he is gone, you know with finality that you can't.

Whatever your feelings are about the personality of the person who died, talk about them openly. The key is finding someone you can trust who will listen to you without judging.

Why #7: YOUR GENDER

Your gender may not only influence your grief, but also the ways in which others relate to you at this time. While this is certainly not always true, men are often encouraged and expected to “be strong” and restrained. Typically, men have more difficulty in allowing themselves to move toward painful feelings than women do.

Women sometimes have a hard time expressing feelings of anger. By contrast, men tend to be quicker to respond with explosive emotions. And because men are conditioned to be self-sufficient, they often resist accepting outside support.

We must be careful about generalizations, however. Sometimes too much is made of the differences between genders and not enough is made of the essence of the capacity to grieve and mourn. Willingness to mourn often transcends gender.

Why #8: YOUR CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Your cultural background is an important part of how you experience and express your grief. Sometimes it's hard for modern-day North Americans to articulate what their cultural background is. “My mother is half Irish, a quarter Mexican, and a quarter I don't know what,” you might say. “And my father comes from a strong Italian family.” So what does that make you? And how does this mixture influence your grief?

When I say culture, I mean the values, rules (spoken and unspoken), and traditions that guide you and your family. Often these values, rules, and traditions have been handed down generation after generation and are shaped by the countries or areas of the world your family originally came from. Your cultural background is also shaped by education and political beliefs (religion, too, but we'll get to that in a minute). Basically, your culture is your way of being in the world.

Why #9: YOUR RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND

Your personal belief system can have a tremendous impact on your journey into grief. You may discover that your religious or spiritual life is deepened, renewed, or changed as a result of your loss. Or you may well find yourself questioning your beliefs as part of your work of mourning.

When someone loved dies, some people may feel very close to God or a Higher Power, while others may feel more distant and hostile. You may find yourself asking questions such as, “Why has this happened to me?” or “What is the meaning of this?” You may, however, not find the answers to all of your questions about faith or spirituality.

The word “faith” means to believe in something for which there is no proof. For some people, faith means believing in and following a set of religious rules. For others, faith is a belief in God or a spirit or a force that is greater than we are.

Mistakenly, people may think that with faith, there is no need to mourn. If you buy into this misconception, you will set yourself up to grieve internally but not mourn externally. Having faith does not mean you do not need to mourn. It does mean having the courage to allow yourself to mourn.

With the death of someone you love comes a “search for meaning.” You may find yourself re-evaluating your life based on this loss. You will need someone who is willing to listen to you as you explore your religious or spiritual values, question your attitude toward life, and renew your resources for living. This process takes time, and it can lead to possible changes in your values, beliefs, and lifestyle.

Why #10: OTHER CRISES OR STRESSES IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW

What else is going on in your life right now? Although we often think it shouldn't, the world does keep turning after the death of someone loved. You may still have to work and manage finance. Other people in your life may be sick or in need of help of some kind. You may have children or elderly parents to care for (or both!). You may have too many commitments and too little time and energy to complete them.

Whatever your specific situation, I'm sure that your grief is not the only stress in your life right now. And the more intense and numerous the stresses in life, the more overwhelming your grief experience may be.

Take steps to de-stress your life for the time being, if at all possible. Now is the time to concentrate on mourning and healing in grief.

Why #11: YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH LOSS AND DEATH IN THE PAST

One way to think about yourself is that you are the sum total of all that you have experienced in your life so far. Your consciousness is in large part a creation of what you do and what happens to you. Before this death, you may have experienced other significant losses in your life. Did anyone close to you die before? What was that death and subsequent grief journey like for you? How did it affect your expectations for future deaths in your life? Have you found those expectations to be true this time?

The more “experienced” you are with death, the less shocked you may feel this time around. Often people find that the more deaths they mourn, and the older they get, the more natural the cycle of life seems to them. This not to say that they aren't sad and don't need to mourn, for they are and they do. But it is to

say that they begin to integrate death and loss more seamlessly into living.

Other non-death losses in your past may also influence your grief journey. Divorce, job loss, financial downturns, severed relationships—all these can affect your worldviews as well as your capacity to cope now.

Why #12: YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

How you feel physically has significant effect on your grief. If you are tired and eating poorly, your coping skills will be diminished. If you are sick, your bodily symptoms may be as, or more, pressing than your emotional and spiritual ones. Bear in mind that taking care of yourself physically is one of the best things you can do to lay the foundation for healthy mourning.



MOVING FROM WHYS TO WHATS

What else has shaped your unique grief journey? There are probably other factors, large and small, that are influencing your grief right now. What are they?

What is even more fundamental for you to be attuned to is what your thoughts and feelings are. What are your feelings today? What have you been thinking about for the last day or two? A big part of healing in grief is learning to listen and attend to your inner voice and to give those thoughts and feelings play as you experience them.



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Beginning the Cremation Memorialization Conversation

by Joe Weigel

Getting Started

When a family selects cremation as the means of final disposition for a loved one, it's unreasonable to expect them to have the knowledge base to understand fully what products and services are available. People plan or arrange funerals but once every decade, so it's rare when you encounter a family who has recently planned or played an active role in a funeral.

To many consumers, selecting cremation as the means of final disposition is the easy alternative. They expect to go to the funeral home; answer a few questions to complete the death certificate. Their loved one is then cremated and returned in some kind of container. However, you are doing the family and your firm a disservice if you don't make the effort to explain all the service and memorialization options. And the best way to do this is to start a conversation.

During the arrangement conference, some conversations are easy – like “Tell me about the deceased” – and some can be a little more difficult – such as “How do you plan to pay for the funeral?” One that is becoming more common these days and just as important is: “Now that you've selected cremation as your means of final disposition, how do you plan to memorialize your loved one?”

To begin the conversation, go back to the questions raised in the previous paragraph. Ask everyone at the arrangement conference to tell you something special about his or her loved one. Let them get comfortable sharing fond memories that can form the basis for the discussion on the memorialization options available that will take place later in the conference.

Put the Products to Work

There are steps you and your funeral home can take

before meeting with families to put yourself in a better position to start or continue the memorialization discussion with families. One very simple way that conversation can be initiated is to show the cremation products “in action”, many times outside the selection room.

This could include:

- Cremation jewelry is meant to be worn and not stored away in a jewelry box. Make the jewelry you offer available to counselors to wear in memory of a loved one they lost. This is a great conversation starter during the memorialization discussion at the arrangement conference.
- Urns take on a new and different persona when engraved. That's why I recommend that funeral homes have a sample or two on display to families. A square wooden box or bronze cube looks very different when engraved with the personal information and the photo of the deceased.
- In some situations, the family may not initially choose an urn and opt for the temporary plastic or cardboard container. When this occurs and the families come to pick up the remains, deliver the cremated remains and container inside a memento chest engraved with your firm's logo. At the very least, they will be impressed with your professionalism and, who knows, you may sell an engraved memento chest.
- Consider creating a “brag book” – a photo album with pictures of the memorialization products and services in which your firm has played a role – how your firm has engraved urns for families or how families have incorporated memorialization products into the services that were conducted. This provides families with what I call “permission to believe” these things are possible

Tell – Don't Sell Families

We've all heard for years that families aren't selecting cremation solely on price and that many times these consumers are well-educated. However, being well educated doesn't mean well-informed about the cremation process and cremation products. To help families better understand the cremation products you offer, try these ideas:

- Make use of point of sale materials about how the products are manufactured or created as well as the materials from which they are made. You can also display materials about the artist who created the memorialization product to provide a "human" element or connection to the urn.
- If a family specifies a desire for direct cremation, that does not mean they are not interested in memorialization, just that they don't see the benefit of a memorial service of any kind. You owe it to these "direct" families to inform them of the availability of cremation merchandise to remember their loved one.
- When a family indicates they will be scattering the cremated remains, be sure to inform them of urns created specifically for scattering. Additionally, inquire if they will be performing a "traditional" scattering or "ceremonial" scattering. The difference is that traditional scattering distributes all the cremated remains, while ceremonial scattering sprinkles only part or most of the remains – leaving a portion for placement in an urn, an urn keepsake or a piece of jewelry.

A few final thoughts

When necessary, be sure to differentiate between customization and personalization. A good friend in funeral service drove this point home to me long ago. With customization, you to modify something based on individual or personal preferences. An example would be adding a branch of military service emblem to an urn.

With personalization, you build or add to a product with a person's initials, name, photo or other personal information. An example would be adding a branch of service emblem to an urn as well as engraving the loved one's date of birth and death on the urn. As you might expect, typically personalization holds much greater value in the eyes of consumers than customization.

While this is an article about memorialization products for families choosing cremation, don't limit these suggestions just to cremation families. Many of these products and the merchandising techniques are effective with your "burial" families as well.

At the end, it all about finding your comfort level in presenting cremation merchandise to families. This task is much easier if you spend the time getting to know the families and the loved ones they lost as well as being knowledgeable about all the products and services available today.

Joe Weigel is the owner of Weigel Strategic Marketing, a marketing firm focused on the funeral profession that delivers expertise and results across three interrelated marketing disciplines: strategy, branding and communications. For more information, you can visit his website at weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com. He can be reached by phone at 317-608-8914 or by email at weigelstrategicmarketing@gmail.com.

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Finding The Right Team Members in a Changing World

by Bob Heidlage

Change is constant, and the pace of change seems to be speeding up every time we stop to consider how our world is changing around us. The changes we have seen over the past couple of decades in Funeral Service will likely pale in comparison to the changes we will see in the next 20-30 years. So as we think about the team-building and hiring processes within funeral service, we believe they may need to be adjusted to accommodate those changes taking place. Let's take a look at a couple of changes and a few suggestions on how we might be able to deal with them within funeral service.

First a couple of facts that may surprise you if you do not regularly watch the news. **Unemployment is at record lows** across the land, and is less than 4% in most areas of the country! There were 7.3 million job openings in the USA in the closing quarter of 2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Anyone who has peeked at any of the "deathcare industry" websites or job boards knows that **there are many, many unfilled job openings** in every part of our nation. Some of them have remained open for 6-12 months or longer. Clearly, the leading indicators available to us all point to the same conclusion: there is a need for more licensed Directors in all parts of the country, and the available talent pool is shrinking.

That squares with our learning as we speak with

hundreds of funeral professionals each month, whether owners, hiring managers or individual candidates looking for their next role. The reality is that **we are in the midst of a strong, and strengthening, "seller's market"** in all parts of the country. That means the individual now holds more of the relative power in the negotiating relationship with owners perhaps being a bit more desperate for help than has been the case in the past. One more specific trend that we have noticed in our business is that the shortage seems to be even more acute in the rural areas of our country. Simply put, the demand for Licensed Funeral Directors is outpacing the available local supply.

So what can be done to combat the trend? Well, remember that while trends are macro in nature, you have the ability to micromanage your activities. First, **make sure your valued team members know that they are valued.** It is much better, and cheaper, to keep a happy staff member employed than to replace an unhappy team member. And that is especially true in a tight market for talent. No less an expert than Virgin Group CEO Sir Richard Branson famously suggests we, "Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to."

And second, when you need to go outside of your organization to replace a team member or increase the size of your team, **think deeply about exactly what**

skills and experience you really need to serve the consumers of the present and future. We have all been hearing for some time that the “Consumer of the Future” is here, that family dynamics are changing. Less religious affiliation but perhaps more celebration. Higher cremation and new ways of memorializing. Do you have people on staff who specialize in those areas, who have been trained to educate and lead these new consumers toward different solutions?

If not, your next search may involve finding someone with different skills, expertise in emerging areas, and complementary to your existing team. Perhaps you are thinking about finding someone who can be more of a celebrant, event planner, facilitator, host or a great communicator who will be proactive in your community. And if those people are not top of mind, what do you do?

First, think about what you really would like to have, and then about the people in your community who may not be licensed but who fit the profile. For the past 30 years I have heard that former teachers, ministers, healthcare & hospice workers can make the best team

members. Are you searching them out? What about others you know from local organizations who might be in a position to make a mid-career change. Mortuary schools are full of 2nd career funeral professionals, and those folks are coming from somewhere. Don't be afraid to ask local contacts who seem to have what you are looking for. Remember, **you are competing with others for talent in a tight talent market, so do not be afraid to be proactive with those in your local circle.**

Second, the people coming into funeral service in the 21st Century are much different than those entering the profession even 20 or 30 years ago. Most new entrants, for instance, are MUCH more **computer literate** generally, comfortable on **social media** (maybe too comfortable), and will likely not be intimidated by the myriad of **online administrative tools** that have become such a ubiquitous part of funeral service. They will learn and adopt these software tools much faster than folks 30 yrs ago when I first came to the profession.

Many newer members of our profession will also

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turn” is not as acceptable to younger workers as it once was. And that presents a challenge to owners wanting to hire new team members at the start of their career and then bring them along slowly. If not properly integrated in to the activity of the team—all activities of the team—they may not stick around long enough to become an experienced, mature funeral professional.

One other piece of learning we have gathered... This new generation of funeral professionals may not have received the pre-apprenticeship training in the Embalming and Prep area that previous generations of students received. But they also might be more ready (and willing) to step into an arrangement conference sooner than previous generations of funeral directors and arrangers. Allowing new team members to participate fully in those job functions enables them to become part of the team faster.

And we know that when team members feel more fully integrated with the larger team, they are more likely to be happier, and as a result, stay in your employ. In times of tight supply, retaining your best and brightest is a GREAT strategy. And those happy team members might be able to refer you to other like-minded friends and colleagues in the business who would welcomes similar challenges and successes, access to developmental opportunities, or to just be able to work with a team dedicated to serving families in a professional way.

Finally, as you think about the skills and experience you are looking for in that next team member, and assuming you have considered local residents but have come up empty, what other options are there? Well, think about casting your net a bit wider, perhaps searching one of the many online tools to see if you can find the right kind of person. Social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn have millions of users and in some cases might provide a fertile “hunting ground”. Most of the state or national association websites have a Job Board or “Help Wanted” section and could be another place to find interested parties.

One other solution that you may not have considered is partnering with other small businesses who are in the business of finding the right people for their clients. No, I am not talking about hiring a private detective agency, but rather about partnering with a local or national search firm. These firms specialize

in providing a service that is critical for businesses looking for talented team members, and also for team members looking to find their next role. Search firms can find the right people, with the right education and certifications, and with the right skills and experience. And they generally have a national network of contacts, so can cast a much wider net than a local search that relies on local relationships.

By partnering with professionals who have contacts across a wider geography and who know how to efficiently search available talent pools, much of the heavy lifting of the search & interview process can be passed from the funeral home leadership team to the partnering search firm team. We believe the best way to serve families is by having the right people on your team when families are in need. And by leveraging local relationships, appropriate online tools, and possibly a partner specializing in the search process, your families in the future will find just the right people delivering the right message to them in their time of need!



Bob Heidlage is a Senior Search Consultant with Global Recruiters Network of Cincinnati. Bob has been an active part of the GRN team for 6 ½ years, and brings more than 25 years’ experience in the vendor/supplier side of the funeral service profession to GRN Cincinnati. Most

recently, he spent 10+ years at Batesville Casket Company where he served customers as part of the Batesville Interactive team. Prior to Batesville, he was an award-winning sales & marketing pre-need consultant with The Forethought Group. His breadth of experience working with funeral home clients gives him a unique understanding of the recruiting needs of the profession. He can be reached at 812.932.1290 or via email at bheidlage@grncincinnati.com.

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6 Tips for Facebook Marketing In 2020

By Ashley Montroy
CMO, FrontRunner Professional

I created my Facebook account all the way back in 2006. It was a different time then and the way people interacted on the site was nowhere near what it is today. Over time, more and more people signed up, and eventually businesses caught on that this is where they needed to be if they wanted to reach people. At the same time, consumers spent less time reading the newspaper, they were empowered to fast-forward TV commercials, and more people turned to music streaming instead of radio. I literally watched digital advertising unfold and the “disruption” of the media space. It created a divide of businesses. You were either a company that continued to market and advertise where you had for years, with less “readership” or you were a company that evolved with consumers and followed them to keep their attention. The latter group did and continues to take advantage of new, affordable, and not to mention more measurable forms of advertising. The question is, where does your business stand with your marketing and advertising efforts?

In today’s digital age, people expect to be able to find a business on Facebook. If you’re not there, a competitor likely is and now they have that potential customer’s attention.

For businesses, social media sites like Facebook have

become a tool to not only advertise to consumers but also build long lasting relationships. According to the website Sprout Social, consumers are nearly 60% more likely to purchase from a brand they follow on social media. At the end of the day, social media can be a valuable tool for businesses of any size. With it, you can better target consumers and have a direct impact on sales and your bottom line.

While many funeral businesses are now actively using sites like Facebook, many more still choose to avoid it all together. By doing so, you’re missing out on the chance to reach more people in your community and start to build relationships with families long before they need you. With Facebook, it’s not just about posting status updates and sharing photos anymore. Funeral businesses use it every day to share helpful content and resources, redirect traffic back to their website, answer questions, engage, educate, and yes – advertise.

Here are some tips to help you get the most out of social media for your funeral business.

Set SMART Goals:

If you’re ready to start using Facebook more actively, the first thing you need to do is create SMART goals.

That means having a goal that is specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time based. Too often, we hear from clients who say things like “I want more pre-need leads” or “I want more at-need families calling”. Both are great goals to work towards, but the problem is they’re too general or open-ended. Instead of just more pre-need leads, the goal should be more specific, and time based.

“I want 50 more pre-need leads this quarter”. A goal like this is specific, it defines exactly what you want. It’s measurable. You can take action to achieve it. It’s realistic, and it’s time based. When you leave goals too open ended, it’s difficult to say whether or not they were achieved because they’re not clearly defined. When creating SMART goals, it’s important to realize that these are just one part of your overall marketing strategy. Several pieces need to come together in order for these to be achieved. However, once you have a goal defined, you can get to work on building the roadmap to get there.

Use Visuals

We look at screens now more than any other time in

history. On a typical day, my iPhone says I spend over 5 hours looking at the screen. That equates to more than 76 days out of the year. Now yes, I work in marketing so I’m always testing how things look across different devices and using it to communicate, but my screen time isn’t that much more than the average consumer. Part of that is because video content continues to grow in popularity. In fact, some experts are now predicting that 80% of content on the internet will be in video form by 2022. Including videos on your social media page can be highly effective. In many cases, they often generate more engagement than any other type of content. As you start to plan out your social media marketing strategy for this year, make sure that video is a part of it. The smartphones we all walk around with today are powerful tools to create incredible looking videos. Plus, with the option to go live on Facebook, it makes it even easier to connect with people in real time by answering questions and capturing their attention.

Pay to Play

When Facebook first started allowing businesses to create ads back in 2007, digital marketing changed forever. In the second quarter of 2019 alone, Facebook

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reported 16.6 billion dollars in ad revenue. Nowadays, it's pay to play if you really want to reach consumers. You can post organically on your page, but it won't have nearly the same reach or results as targeted advertising. Something to keep in mind when comparing advertising options is that Facebook ads can be more targeted and cost less than other traditional forms of advertising.

Facebook offers several different types of ads to help you meet your goals. Whether it's a lead ad to gather contact information right on Facebook or an engagement ad to get clicks to your website, there are plenty of options available. The great thing about advertising on Facebook is how you can target people. Using a traditional option like a billboard next to the highway with 20,000 cars passing by each day sounds like a good choice. But, consider the audience. If only 5% of those people are interested in preplanning or live in your area, then you really only reached 1000 people (for a significant cost).

Alternatively, you could use Facebook and target people by age, sex, location, and interests. You can find people who better fit your ideal customer persona and reach more of them (for less). Of course, Facebook advertising alone isn't going to get your phone ringing off the hook. But when it's part of a larger overall marketing strategy, it's a great way to get in front of the right people and start to educate and inspire them so they know exactly who to turn to when they need death care services. In the past, we've seen clients generate nearly 150 leads from campaigns that started on Facebook. Others have increased their call volumes, and some have even entered new markets to grow the cremation side of their business.

Use Facebook To Build Relationships:

Funeral businesses can use Facebook (and other social media platforms) for more than just advertising. As mentioned earlier, it's an incredible tool to build relationships with families and offer them something of value.

Have you ever been recognized by someone and wondered how they know you? As you get more active on social media in your community, this tends to happen. By putting yourself out there on your social media pages, people start to put a face to the name. Sharing content helps introduce yourself to the community. As a business, you now have the tools to

make your community know you before they meet you in person. Now, you're not just another stranger, but instead someone they know a little bit about and can trust in you caring for their family.

Use Facebook to Educate People:

Your Facebook page should be a hub for helpful information and content. By sharing content, you can find people who are interested in your services. In turn, that means you can redirect them back to your website where they can learn more about what you offer. This also creates a way to gather contact information you can use to follow up with the person. For instance, if you create a funeral pre-planning resource like a brochure, use Facebook to promote it. Next, redirect those who are interested back to your website to download the resource. Once they do, you have a lead to continue to nurture or follow up with. Of course, what happens next is up to you and your overall marketing strategy. Some funeral homes will follow up soon after the download to reach out and check in with the person. Others may wish to continue to nurture the lead through email marketing and sharing more resources with them.

Get to Know People in a New Way:

Offering resources shouldn't be the only way you build relationships. Facebook is a social network, so get social. Engage with people on posts by responding to comments, answering questions and creating a dialogue. The little interactions you have with people can go a long way in building trust and a rapport with the consumer. Sharing stories, and photos of your staff behind the scenes helps people connect with your business and introduce them to funeral professionals who are there to serve their family. You already attend plenty of offline events throughout the year to network. Social media should be an extension of that and another place you're actively connecting where members of your community spend their free time.

Going live on Facebook is another great way to do this. Live videos have been shown to have outstanding engagement and require very little work. Consider hosting monthly "live sessions" where you can answer questions families might have about planning a service or discuss different options and services available to them. Or ask for questions ahead of time and answer them live each month.

2020 is the start of a new decade. Take the leap to

social media, I promise you won't regret it. If you're not already using Facebook to market your funeral business, now is the time to start. The platform only continues to grow in users and baby boomers are among that. Today, people expect you to have a Facebook page. Some might even visit it before going to your website or actually stepping foot inside your doors. In some ways, a company's Facebook page almost acts as a second website for them. Now, it's not one that necessarily searched for like your website is on Google, but instead it's integrated into where people spend their time.

Don't miss out on opportunities to connect with families in your community. If managing your Facebook strategy seems daunting, FrontRunner is here to help. As the strategic arm behind hundreds of funeral homes' online strategies, we understand what it takes for a funeral home to be successful with digital advertising and truly build relationships online. Are you ready to ramp up your social media marketing? If so, we'd love to help you out. At the very least, the advice offered above should get you well on your way to driving results online in 2020.



Ashley Montroy, Chief Marketing Officer of FrontRunner Professional has been in funeral service her entire life. She grew up directly above her family's funeral home in Gananoque, Ontario which is also where FrontRunner was born. For the last decade, Ashley has helped FrontRunner grow to

be one of the largest funeral technology companies in North America. Recently, she has built the company's marketing agency that creates and manages social media and search engine strategies for hundreds of clients. Today, Ashley oversees the company's corporate marketing division and internal marketing agency, while regularly teaching at national, state and provincial conferences to help funeral professionals get more from the online world.

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Express Funeral Funding Reveals New Brand Design and Logo



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Express Funeral Funding announced a major rebranding to reflect the company’s evolution of becoming the largest privately-held funding company in the nation. Since 2002 Express Funeral Funding has been providing funeral homes and cemeteries nationwide, the FASTEST. EASIEST. funding of at need life insurance assignments. Express Funeral Funding has been a leader in funeral funding, becoming the largest privately-held funding company in the nation.

Deanna Dydynski, sales and marketing director at Express Funeral Funding, said, “Our new brand design marks the start of a new era. Our goal has always been to provide our partnering funeral homes and cemeteries the ultimate funding experience and this year is going

to be even greater. With the addition of our Messenger Stationery family, we are raising the bar yet again. We are thrilled to introduce our new look as it truly represents how far we have progressed to meet the needs of our clients.”

Express Funeral Funding’s marketing team has created a new style guide for the brand including: a new color scheme, logos, fonts, marketing materials and promotional items. Additional updates will be made to their website and social media platforms.

“Our company has made great advancements on its path as one of the fastest growing companies in the funeral profession. We are proud to bring our new look to the industry,” said Andy Buckman, executive vice president of sales and marketing.

Express Funeral Funding has been providing funeral homes and cemeteries nationwide the ultimate funding experience since 2002. Express Funeral Funding eliminates the challenges of working with insurance companies by limiting administration, providing immediate payment and advancing complete policy funds. For more information on Express Funeral Funding, please visit www.expressfuneralfunding.com or call 812.949.9011





CONTINUING EDUCATION ON-LINE

John A. Gupton College has developed online continuing education courses. These courses have been approved for CEU hours by both Tennessee and Kentucky Boards. The online subjects range from funeral service history, embalming techniques, funeral home management, grief psychology and bereavement counseling. **For information concerning cost and program call 615-327-3927, go to our website at guptoncollege.edu or email admissions@guptoncollege.edu.**



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by Curtis Rostad

COMPLIANCE ADVISORY 19-02 Overtime Rules Changes

In May 2016, President Obama attempted to raise the mandatory overtime threshold to \$47,000/year with an automatic cost of living adjustment (COLA). There was also a plan to redefine the exemption test that was used to qualify employees for exempt status. Overall, this proposed law would have significant impact on funeral homes and was intended to go into effect December 1, 2016. It never happened. Twenty-one states filed suit against the administration blocking implementation of the new law. Their argument was that the Department of Labor (DOL) had overextended their authority with the sweeping changes in the proposed new rules. A Texas Federal judge agreed and in 2017 the Obama era overtime rules were scrapped. When President Trump took office, he tossed the issue to the new Secretary of Labor. The position of Secretary of Labor became a rotating door and the outcome of new overtime laws became unclear. Finally, on September 24, 2019 the news broke that the overtime laws were changing based on the work completed under Secretary of Labor, Alexander Acosta. What does this mean for funeral home owners?

Under the Fair Standards Labor Act (FSLA) employees are only exempt from overtime if they meet specific duties tests and are paid a salary. Previously, the salary threshold was \$455 per week (\$23,660 per year), now the threshold is \$684 per week or \$35,568 per year. The new rule does allow funeral home employers to use bonuses and incentive payments (including commissions) to be included as part of the calculation of total salary. The bonus and incentive payments cannot exceed 10% of an employee's total salary, must be paid at least annually and must be non-discretionary. To clarify, the bonus cannot be a randomly occurring bonus that is simply offered to the employee as a gesture of goodwill. A non-discretionary bonus is a budgeted, planned commitment on the part of the company to the employee.

Determining where an employee falls in terms of exempt or non-exempt status is crucial for funeral business owners and managers. There are various

duties tests but the ones most likely to be applied in the funeral industry are the Executive, Administrative or Professional duties test. All these exempt status tests start with the premise that the employee is being paid a salary and that they are meeting the minimum salary threshold which beginning January 1, 2020 will be \$35,568 a year. From that point, the duties tests differ but there are some key elements that stand out for each test:

1. The Executive test requires that the employee manages (with the ability to make substantive employment decisions such as hiring, firing, giving raises) at least two other full-time employees.
2. The Administrative test addresses specific administrative duties that would be typical of an office manager or executive secretary.
3. The Professional test refers to employees who work jobs that require "learned" skills and experience.

If a licensed employee is actively managing two or more employees, then they would meet the Executive duties test. The Administrative duties test is not likely to be an appropriate fit for a licensed funeral director/embalmer. The DOL has already defined funeral directors/embalmers as employees who arrange the details and handle the logistics of funerals as Professional employees. However, the Professional duties test has a specific guideline for funeral directors/embalmers to meet the exempt from overtime standard. It is:

Funeral Director or Embalmer must be licensed by **and** working in a state that requires successful completion of four (4) academic years of study beyond high school, including graduation from college of mortuary science accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education.

There have been federal court cases on funeral directors meeting this standard. Such cases have occurred in Michigan and New York where the courts found that the funeral directors would qualify as professionals based on an educational requirement that includes at least three (3) years of education beyond high school and a one-year internship to qualify to receive a state license. Only states that have this level of educational requirement may meet the federal exempt standard.

In the past only fourteen (14) states have met this standard, but states can and do change their licensing requirements periodically, so the list of states is ever changing. It is important that you seek legal counsel within your state to determine if your state licensing requirements for a funeral director meet the federal definition for a professional employee.

Clearly, with the guidelines for establishing licensed staff at such a high bar for funeral employers in most of the United States, the new salary threshold becomes critical for funeral business owners to understand. Based on this threshold, employees who make less than \$35,568 per year would be qualified to earn overtime when they worked more than 40 hours per week. Overtime must be paid at 1 ½ times the employee's normal hourly rate of pay. By changing the salary threshold, funeral home owners may find that they will have to change the compensation of their employees or be prepared to pay them overtime if they are not qualified as exempt from overtime.

There are some other facts about the new overtime rules that funeral home owners/managers should be aware. The new rule also increased the threshold for highly compensated employees from \$100,000 to \$107,432. Highly compensated employees can be considered exempt from overtime if they meet a reduced duties test that consist of the following:

1. The employee's primary duty must be office or non-manual work.
2. The employee "customarily and regularly" performs at least one of the bona fide exempt duties of an executive, administrative or professional employee.

The new rule also does not have an automatic COLA although there have been statements made that the DOL intends to review the salary threshold more frequently than in the past. Additionally, funeral homes should consider how the new salary threshold and any adjustments that must be made by the business to comply with the new rules may impact other employee programs. For example, retirement or health insurance programs may have language addressing participants that are exempt or non-exempt employees. It is possible that funeral employers will have employees whose classification as exempt or non-exempt will change to address the new overtime rules.

For several years funeral service has anticipated there might be a change in the overtime rule. Now the rules are a reality and funeral homes will need to adjust to comply. If we can be of assistance, please contact HR Specialist Stephanie Ramsey or Director of Compliance, Curtis Rostad at 1-602-274-6464.

This advisory is for informational purposes only. Nothing herein shall be construed to be legal advice. You should consult legal counsel before implementing any changes in procedures or practices.

Curtis Rostad is a licensed funeral, director, embalmer and former funeral home owner. Following the sale of his funeral home in 1995 and working as a corporate trainer, he worked for Dan Isard and the Foresight Companies. He left there to accept the position of Executive Director of the Indiana Funeral Directors Association in 2005. He retired in 2016. He recently returned to the Foresight Companies as Director of Compliance and Association Relations.



Johnson Consulting Group's Customer Experience Workshop Open for Registration

Scottsdale, AZ [March 2020] – Johnson Consulting Group (JCG) is excited to announce open registration for JCG Academy's Customer Experience Workshop. The workshop focuses on working with businesses to create their customer service revolution.

JCG's Business Consulting Team has designed a course that is aimed to create customer experiences that are personalized for each family that walks through your doors, unique to your business. The workshop will target the significance of customer service and discuss strategies to improve customer loyalty by creating peak moments that will leave families with a lasting impression.

The full process is 90 days of JCG's Business Consultants walking you through the customer experience revolution. The first step in the process includes reading *The Customer Experience Revolution* by John R. DiJulius III followed by a meeting with the firm's owners to strategize and introduce the process. Following this meeting, the owners will select members of their team to drive this effort and participate in the two-day workshop. JCG also assists these firms with rolling out their customer experience revolution to their entire company and staff towards the end of the workshop in the form of an official launch.

With five completed Customer Experience Workshops in 2019, JCG will continue to partner with funeral home and cemetery businesses to build a sense of comradery, elevated company culture and better customer experiences among staff and families. Leading the front of the Customer Experience Workshop is Lawrence W. Michael.

Lawrence W. Michael, Senior Business Consultant at JCG, has played a key role in delivering these Customer Experience Revolution programs to clients throughout North America. Lawrence, along with the rest of the JCG team are excited about the feedback they have received.

"We have a passion for customer service and this is an opportunity for premier clients to challenge their teams to continuously improve in all stages of interaction with their customers, Lawrence, one of our clients,



a very large cemetery company in Los Angeles has already seen marked improvement of 15.4% in their customer loyalty score (Net Promoter Score) after only six months of implementing the program."

Another benefit of the program is improved company culture, teamwork and communication among staff members internally. Betsey Morrow, Funeral Assistant and STAR Program Coordinator of Hansen Mortuary and Cemetery explains how JCG's Customer Experience Workshop has been beneficial for the Hansen team as well as the families they serve.

"It really has created an excitement to create peak moments instead of only focusing on putting out fires. It has increased morale within the company as well as an appreciation and understanding for what every member of our team does to serve our families. I think we are understanding as a whole what it takes to go above and beyond and how we can better work within our company, which in turn only benefits the families experience when they walk through our doors," says Morrow.

JCG's Business Consulting Team is excited for the continued success of the Customer Experience Workshop in 2020. To reserve your spot in the program, contact us at info@johnsonconsulting.com or call 480-556-8500.

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As the premier experts in funeral and cemetery service since 1997, the Johnson Consulting Group team offers more than 600 years of combined industry experience, and is committed to partnering with business owners wherever they are in the business life cycle. Whether an owner is looking to grow in their current operations, start their exit strategy through succession planning, or take their business to market, we can assist.

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The Importance of HR in Small Business

By: Dawn Schwab, HR Consultant, Clarity HR Solutions

Human resources is a huge component of a funeral home's success story. Without people willing to serve with compassion at one of the most delicate times in a person's life, there is not a business. Human resources is the foundation of how the business operates. At a most basic level HR for funeral homes encompasses compliance with state and federal labor laws, hiring along with creating a channel for dealing with employee challenges.

Compliance and working through employee issues are probably the most challenging items for a small business like most funeral homes. Depending upon which state your company operates, there are many Federal, State and local labor laws that need to be followed. Laws cover items as to how to store your employee files, how to administer leave laws, when to pay overtime, how to classify hourly (non-exempt)/ salary (exempt) employees, how lunch breaks are administered, and what a small business places in their employee handbook.

An employee handbook is a MUST for small businesses. It is a place to compile all of the firm's policies and practices. It is the level setting tool to how the business operates and the guidelines in which both employee and employer agree upon for the relationship of the employment term. The handbook defines how

the business deals with harassment issues, what time for employees to take their breaks, how many hours an employee has to consistently work to become eligible for benefits, how the business works through medical accommodations, administering leave laws, how the small business handles performance and management challenges. This employee handbook development is how the funeral home protects themselves from employment claims which can cost the business thousands of dollars.

This article is not meant to scare the funeral home owner from continuing to grow their business. With proper development of business guidelines, the employee handbook creates an environment in which the business thrives. It shows the small business is going to be consistent and fair to their employees. The employee handbook takes the guesswork out of what the company expectations are. Streamlining and communicating with employees within the business is a magical thing!

Many of you, the funeral home owner, are thinking how do I afford a full-time HR person? Here's an idea, there is not a need to hire a full-time HR manager. The small business owner can hire an HR consultant like my company, Clarity HR Solutions, to perform necessary services for one hour at a time.

Like most HR consulting practices, Clarity's business strategy is based upon how many employees are currently employed with your funeral home. The rates start as low as \$70 per hour for a team of 1 to 5 employees. We look at your biggest opportunities for HR compliance based upon the state, county, and local ordinance in which the funeral home conducts business. We always begin with the development of the employee handbook, job descriptions, new hire documents, and any state-mandated documents that are given to the new employees to ensure the "onboarding" process is correct. We also ensure you have the right employment law posters, and safety items posted within your workplace as mandated by Federal and State Labor Law. Of course, there is more to the HR platform, and Clarity HR Solutions will work to build out the entire process.

Once the platform is built, we will send yearly updates on any labor laws and any new employment education the small business might need. Our consultancy will do this within the small business budget. We believe every funeral home deserves to have an HR manager on their terms to protect the small business from employment claims.

Regardless of what approach a funeral home may take to cover their HR needs, including HR as part of your business strategy will ensure compliance with applicable labor laws. HR will also provide a structure for communicating and implementing good workplace practices with employees. HR does not have to be difficult. HR is having the right people with the right tools accessible to your small business disposable. Clarity HR Solutions or any HR consultant wants to partner with your small business. The funeral home's success is our success too!



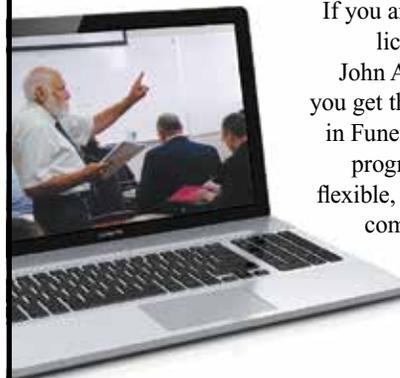
Dawn Schwab is the author of "The Importance of HR in Small Business". She is the owner and founder of Clarity HR Solutions who partners with small businesses with less than 50 employees. In her other life, she worked for 10 years in various roles within Batesville Casket

Company. She had HR responsibility for Batesville's Logistics Organization in which she oversaw employees and labor law compliance throughout the United States and Canada. She worked in the casket manufacturing plants as an HR Manager, and in her last role she was responsible for managing operations at multiple Logistics locations throughout California, Nevada, and Arizona. She is in love with coaching and developing people, business process improvements, and human resource partnership. Check out the company website at <https://clarityhrsolutions.net>.

Clarity HR Solutions will produce and maintain HR Labor Law policies which will keep your business on track with Federal and State regulations

Clarity will ensure your small business is compliant by creating procedures, policies, and documents customized for your company.

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SICH Casket adds six distributors in 2019

January 31, 2020: SICH Casket, a leading provider of burial and cremation caskets to funeral homes throughout North America, announced that the company brought aboard six new distributors during calendar year 2019. These new distributors join the other 20 SICH distributors in the network and enable SICH to enhance its brand presence throughout North America

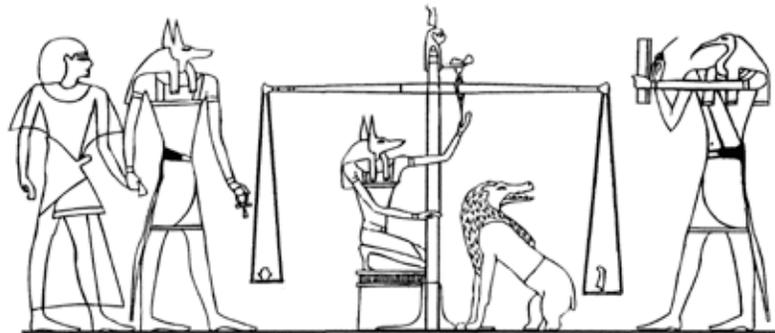
“It’s a real testament to the strength of our brand for each of these distributors to want to join the SICH family. With the addition of these six distributors, more funeral homes throughout North America will have easy access to the SICH line of both our burial and our new cremation caskets,” commented Sirius Chan, president of SICH Casket. “We are encouraged that in addition to these six new distributors, we have several others that we will soon be announcing once they build their initial inventory.”

The six new distributors and their locations that were

added in 2019 are:

- Bourgeois Casket Company – Lawtell, Louisiana
- Carolina Southern Funeral Service - Bamberg, South Carolina
- Casket Wise – Los Angeles, California
- Central Ohio Casket and Vault – Columbus, Ohio
- Continental Casket Company – Watseka, Illinois
- Grand Meadow Casket Company – Grand Meadow, Minnesota

“These new distributors have told us that in addition to our quality caskets, they appreciate our factory’s state-of-the-art production capacity and automated warehouse system that improves inventory control and reduces product damage from handling,” commented Chan. “They have also said they are grateful that unlike some of the other overseas casket manufacturers who manufacture and sell to multiple distributor networks, our factory produces only SICH caskets for sale exclusively to SICH distributors.”



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SICH distributors have access to a full line of marketing tools for use with their customers. In addition to the standard promotional items offered by most distributors such as casket images and flyers, SICH also provides its distributors with white papers, trade show banners, and posters, customizable distributor ads as well as a complete library of videos.

“We are committed to providing our distributors with best in class resources to help build their businesses,” Chan added. “As an additional measure of security for our distributors and their customers, each of our products is covered by a \$5 million dollar product liability insurance policy from one of the most renowned insurance companies in the USA.”

“Our delivery network currently consists of 63 distributor warehouses strategically located throughout North America. This distribution footprint continues to grow and expand as we add progressive distributors to the SICH family,” stated Scott Weisenbach, National Sales Director for SICH Casket. “In the coming months, we look to bring on additional partners to help

us establish and maintain a truly world-class network of distributors throughout North America.”

For more information about SICH Casket, visit www.sichcasket.com.

About SICH Casket:

SICH Caskets manufactures more than 200 models of caskets for burial and cremation, including carbon steel, stainless steel, precious metals, many varieties of beautiful hardwood burial caskets as well as recently-introduced innovative cremation caskets. Every SICH casket is built to meet or exceed U.S. standards in design, features, and quality. Founded by company president Sirius Chan, SICH sources its materials globally to provide the finest quality and best value at every price point. The company distributes caskets through a number of metal and hardwood casket distributors throughout North America.



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Foundation Partners Group Adds to Tucson Footprint

Adair Funeral Homes and Desert Sunset Funeral Homes Join Foundation Partners Group

Orlando, FL—December 31, 2019—Foundation Partners Group, a leading provider of innovative funeral and cemetery experiences and products, has announced that the company has purchased the Adair Funeral Homes and Desert Sunset Funeral Homes in Tucson, Arizona. The acquisition includes three locations in the greater Tucson area and expands Foundation Partners Group's rooftops in the market to six.

“Adair Funeral Homes and Desert Sunset Funeral Homes make great additions to our growing portfolio of funeral operations in Tucson,” stated Bob Bukala, President and CEO of Foundation Partners Group. “The Adairs have set a high standard of service for their families and their community that perfectly matches ours. We are very proud to have Martha, Ron, Hank and their team join Foundation Partners and help us grow our presence in Arizona.”

The Adair Funeral Homes were founded in 1956 by Arthur and Martha Adair. After Arthur passed away in 1973, Martha along with her sons, Ron and Hank, continued operating the firm. The second Adair chapel opened in January of 1975 on the northwest side of Tucson, and a few years later, Desert Sunset was added to the company. Over the last 20 years, Hank's daughter and son, Hillary and Taylor, joined the firm to continue the Adair legacy in the funeral profession.

“When I first met Bob Bukala a while back, I saw we shared the same vision of where the funeral profession is headed,” said Martha Adair, owner of Adair Funeral Homes. “Now, having learned even more about Foundation Partners Group, I am convinced that they are best positioned to help us continue to address the needs of Tucson's families in the coming years.”

“Our family sensed a real comfort level with the team at Foundation Partners, especially after we talked with other friends in funeral service who had joined them,” added Ron Adair. “Foundation Partners Group will let us not only maintain our legacy in the Tucson market but allow us to grow it as well.”

“We continue to explore partnerships with the finest



independent funeral homes and cremation centers in our profession,” stated Jason Widing, Vice President of Business Development at Foundation Partners Group. “We are pleased to welcome the teams at Adair and Desert Sunset to the Foundation Partners family.”

About 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 funeral homes, cremation centers and cemeteries in 20 states and is actively seeking to expand its presence throughout the U.S. With headquarters in Orlando, Florida, Foundation Partners is committed to revolutionizing the funeral profession through its innovative ShareLife® customer experience-centered approach and harnessing the power of relationship and partnership. For more information, visit the Foundation Partners Group website at www.foundationpartners.com.

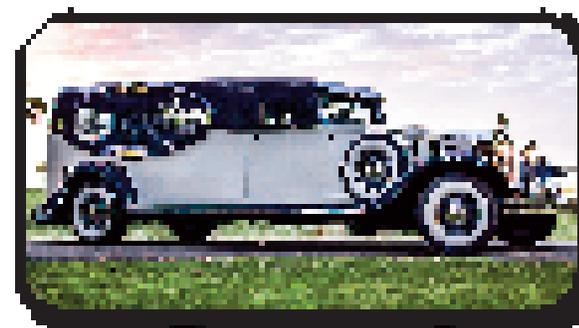
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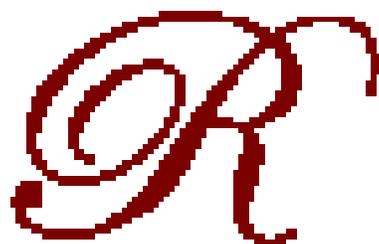
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