

CONSUMER PREFERENCES moving away from traditional funeral services likely will accelerate in 2023, which means deathcare professionals need to provide families with alternative end-of-life celebrations to prevent losing business.

The truth of the matter is that more consumers are rethinking how to honor loved ones, especially aging Baby Boomers who are exploring options because they do not want a funeral service like their parents' generation. The Foresight Companies found that nearly six in 10 respondents (59%) to their 2022 "Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study" said they are "looking at alternative venues where they can celebrate, searching primarily for a more relaxed atmosphere." What's more, the study also found that 83% of respondents said they want the "entire user experience to be seamless from start to finish—this includes the website, price list, and purchase process."

Embrace More Technology

Why are we confident the number of alternative end-of-life celebrations will continue to increase? We believe it is because consumers want, and have come to expect, the ability to purchase products and services that are tailored to their unique needs—and to do it easily with a few clicks of a mouse (or touches on smartphone or tablet screen).

Today's digital marketing technology provides companies with the tools to accomplish that objective. Consider this from the March-April 2022 issue of the *Harvard Business Review*:

"We are now at the point where competitive advantage will derive from the ability to capture, analyze, and utilize personalized customer data at scale and from the use of [artificial

intelligence] to understand, shape, customize, and optimize the customer journey ... The obvious winners have been the big tech companies, which have embedded these capabilities in their business models. But we also see challenger brands, such as sweetgreen in restaurants and Stitch Fix in apparel, which have designed transformative customer experiences based on first-party data."

Funeral homes need to adapt to make buying funeral services simple, and help guide consumers through the process, especially with pre-need sales. New deathcare companies such as Cake, Empathy, Everplans, and Lantern are using technology to make it easy and transparent to buy funeral services—and as a result have been growing market share.

Get Comfortable with Digital

If you do not have a digital customer journey mapped out, here's how to get started:

1. Enhance the resources on your website

There's a well-known saying: "You don't get a second chance to make a first impression." For many families in your community, their first impression of your funeral home is your website. These days, your website should be more than just a brochure for your funeral home and the services you provide. It needs to feature resources that inform

No Second Chance to Make a First

by Bill Williams

and help consumers make the best purchasing decision for their families. The more educational content you have on your website, the better the likelihood families will do business with your funeral home. Two must-haves on your website should be:

- **“How to” articles and informational brochures** to help families better understand the planning and purchase process.
- **Videos** to showcase your team’s personality and provide tips on how families can plan alternative celebration-of-life services.

Articles, brochures, and videos are low-cost, potentially high-return investments that reinforce your value-proposition and allow you to connect with families. In addition to possibly generating new revenue, the traffic on your website will

provide you with invaluable consumer purchasing behavior about your funeral home’s products and services.

Remember, the same individual who spends hours on travel and hospitality websites booking customized vacations and family get-togethers are the same ones who will buy unique end-of-life celebrations. Those individuals will need help identifying and coordinating all the moving parts involved in that non-traditional service.

2. Make it easy to find pricing information

Today’s consumers do not like surprises when they are ready to buy. So do yourself a favor and make sure consumers can easily find a pricing guide on your website. The Foresight Companies



***Now Is the Time to Enhance
Your Online Presence***

Impression

survey bears this out when it found that 71% of respondents said “lack of upfront pricing” was a reason that families would not do business again with a funeral home.

Given the Federal Trade Commission’s review of the Funeral Rule, we can safely assume that change is coming – and that change could result in a requirement that each funeral provider includes, at least, access to its General Price List (GPL) via link on the funeral provider’s website.

There is an upside to pricing transparency when it comes to personalized end-of-life celebrations. Families that have the flexibility to customize services into a unique package likely will pay more. Expedia Group, the well-known travel and hospitality booking company, found that average daily hotel room rates were 30% higher for travel/vacation packages when compared to standalone rates when rooms were purchased separately.

3. Be active on social media

To connect and engage with families in your community, you need to know where they are hanging out virtually. These days, it is still predominantly social media. Sprout Social, a publicly traded, leading provider of cloud-based social media management software, estimates that 68% of consumers have

A strong social media presence allows you to start a conversation with prospective customers, showcase the people in your business ..., and demonstrate how you are the primary resource for funeral services



purchased products and services directly from social media.


If your business is not active on social media, here are two ways to get the ball rolling:

- **Create a monthly content calendar.** This will help you organize your posts to make sure you are providing families with resources to take the mystery out


of planning and buying pre-need and at-need funeral services.

- **Lean on highly targeted social media ads.** On platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, you can target potential customers by location, interests, age, gender, and occupation. This allows you to speak directly with those who most closely fit your current and target audience.

A strong social media presence allows you to start a conversation with prospective customers, showcase the people in your business who care for families in their time of need, and demonstrate how you are the primary resource for funeral services.


This is an exciting time for the death-care profession, particularly as the number of families holding services has resumed to pre-pandemic levels. Now is the time to fully embrace today’s digital tools so you can meet the needs of the increasing number of families who want to honor loved ones with unique, non-traditional services. 

Bill Williams is president and CEO of Funeral Services Inc., a leading deathcare trust administrator and subsidiary of deathcare trustee and fiduciary wealth management firm, Argent Financial Group. Under Bill’s leadership, FSI has expanded to offer services in more than two dozen states across the country.



CEMETERY DESIGN & PLANNING GREVER & WARD

- CEMETERY MASTER PLANS
- CONSTRUCTION PLANNING
 - SECTION LAYOUT PLANS
- CREMATION GARDEN PLANS
- LANDSCAPE PLANS & SPECS
- LOT LAYOUT & SALES MAPS
 - SITE EVALUATIONS
 - SPACE RECOVERY

WWW.GREVERANDWARD.COM
 **GREVER & WARD, INC.**
 CEMETERY PLANNERS
 800-952-0078 • 716-662-7700
 INFO@GREVERANDWARD.COM