

Positioning Your Funeral or Cemetery Business In The Age of COVID-19

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As the coronavirus is gripping the country (and the world) medically, it's also infecting the flow of business, including those who are engaged in serving families at the time of loss. We've had to quickly make changes to our clients' websites and digital media as everyone is trying to navigate this crisis without precedent.

At the same time, every critical challenge is also an opportunity. An opportunity to show that you share your families' concerns, that you're responsive to their needs, that you're part of their community. You're in the business of being the anchor in a families' stormy seas; this is the time to visibly step up to demonstrate your value without sounding mercenary.

Here are some things that as a funeral home or cemetery you might say to your community during this pandemic and be positive voice as people look for answers now and later. Your community will value this information.

1. Let people know that as an essential business resource during this time period, you're still helping families and conducting your work pretty much like normal. Families are still counting on you to care for their loved one in your possession.
2. Let them know you've instituted a COVID-19 policy that is in place not just to comply with government orders, but to protect them. And be certain to continually update protocols for the protection of those who will attending services. Post this on your website, include links to the protocols in your social media and send out press releases to all the local media channels.
3. Let families know you're staying in contact with government agencies as well as industry associations so you can continue to provide the care and service that has always defined your mission regardless of the circumstances.
4. Do not be a silent voice right now. Make sure you continue using social media and all other channels you're typically on as an assurance to the public that you're engaged with them and stepping up to deal with the crisis.
5. Make certain to call out the fact that you see this as your responsibility to the community to be a calm, assuring voice of information and guidance. (If you have done so in past emergencies such as earthquakes, tornados, or other such disasters, mention how you've stepped up in the past and are ready to do so now and in the future.)
6. Consider messaging channels and methods you've not used in the past. This is a great moment to grab your cellphone or digital camera and record a series of short video messages; production quality is not at issue, but your caring and words of calm are! Post these to your social media and in emails to your families. Partner up with other community resources such as hospice, churches, social services, doctor offices and hospitals, even first responder agencies. Be a shared community voice.

7. Consider using a webinar service such as Zoom or GoToMeeting to offer “town hall” discussions about grief, funerals, your policies, family gatherings and any other relevant topic during this crisis, and invite other resources to join and participate.

How you pose your public presence now can make a huge difference in the minds of local families needing to find comfort during this uncertain time. You'll not only be of the greatest possible service, in keeping with your mission to serve with compassion, you'll likely be alone at the top while your competitors maintain a relative silence. The residual impact after calm ultimately returns will reward you with new and stronger relationships within your community.

You're not being opportunistic. You're being responsible. You're being who you intended to be when you first got into this profession.

Stay well.