

THE LOWDOWN ON HIGH TECH FOR THE DEATH CARE PROFESSION

by Paul E. White

Let's face it: the death care profession is a very traditional one. That is understandable. After all, the need our profession fulfills for services and for human compassion is—and always has been—essential to carrying out our mission. Human needs don't change. And perhaps that's one of the reasons that many in our profession have been reluctant to change with the times.

But even as long ago as the second century AD, the emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote that "the Universe loves nothing so much as to change the things which are and to make new things." People have always recognized the inevitability of change but have paradoxically been resistant to it.

Perhaps never before in human history has change been so rapid and all-encompassing. The dizzying advances of technology have touched nearly every aspect of our lives. And if death care professionals are to survive and thrive, we must embrace and benefit from that technology.

Many in our profession still prefer pen and paper for running their businesses. It's familiar. It's comfortable. It has always worked. Unfortunately nowadays, it can also be costly in terms of lost opportunities for greater efficiency and profitability. As new generations of death care professionals begin to succeed older ones, they are more welcoming to technology and understand the need for business services like ours to interface with their computers, tablets and smartphones.

These are the tools that the customers of today are accustomed to. They are what consumers want. And they are the tools we must adopt if we are to address our customers on their own turf and in their own language.

To help you gain a sense of direction and develop an action plan, here are three tech-focused tips to keep up with a changing profession.

#1 - Meet Customers on Their Own Turf

Because today's consumers make purchasing choices online, we must—as a most basic strategy—offer websites that allow and encourage decision making.

Consumers of today are used to performing their own financial transactions online, so we must offer them the convenience and transparency of viewing information

and performing other tasks digitally.

For many, these transitions will not be welcome and may not be quite as simple as many technology providers promise. But the tides of time are clear, and they flow toward technology. Survival and success depend on our ability to adapt.

#2 - Make Your Website a Sales Force

It would be rare these days to find a business without a website. But are you making the most of its potential? Today's consumers often don't seek the traditional face-to-face way of doing business, preferring to make their decisions online. That means you must be sure to offer a compelling case for your business in the digital world. Maybe even more important is the ability to purchase products and perform tasks such as preneed planning directly on your site. This can help create a seamless transition from prospect to customer.

#3 - Go Mobile

Another way to appeal to today's consumers is to make sure your website and any software you use is suitable for mobile devices, including smart phones, laptops and tablets. This provides the on-the-go convenience that consumers are starting to take for granted in today's world.

Get on Board: Today's technology is becoming more and more important if your business is to survive and thrive in our changing times. It pays to keep alert to new technologies that can benefit both you and your customers. The key is making things convenient, simple and accessible at all times.

We've made it a priority to stay up-to-date with society's trends and innovate so we don't fall behind in a world that won't look back, and we encourage you to adopt the same mindset.

Of course, it's very likely that some of your customers will prefer to do business the traditional way. That's okay. You can still use the conventional pen-and-paper approach for those who prefer it.

When you think about it, offering customers the ability to do business with you the way they want to—and expect to—is just another means of offering good



old-fashioned customer service. But no matter how thoroughly you adopt today's technology, always make sure your customers know you care about them and that you are always just a phone call or an email away. This is always a winning strategy that will never become obsolete, no matter how advanced or savvy technology becomes. **FBA**



Paul E. White is vice president of client development and marketing for Funeral Services, Inc. In this role, he is responsible for educating prospective and existing clients about FSI's products and services and maintaining the highest quality of customer service. He has a 40-year career in at-need and preneed operations and an extensive background in funeral home client development and sales and marketing services. Prior to joining FSI in 2005, Mr. White was a partner in and served as vice president of sales for one of the country's leading preneed sales and marketing organizations. Mr. White began his death care career at age 15 in a family funeral business in western Pennsylvania. He graduated from the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science in 1975 and became a licensed funeral director and embalmer in 1976. Mr. White trained and became a Certified Celebrant in 2010.