



funeral service **insider**

independent news & guidance for funeral home owners and operators

Funeral Professionals Gaze into the Future, Share Best Practices on Navigating 2019

Who would have thought that in 2018 American Enterprise Group would acquire Great Western Insurance Co., Park Lawn Corp. would stun the industry by buying The Signature Group and Citadel Management for a combined \$136.4 million and Cardinal Memorial Partners – unknown to most – would buy Heritage Family Funeral Services' 40 funeral homes, cemeteries and ancillary businesses?

We also saw a steady spate of buying from Foundation Partners Group and other big headlines, such as the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling against the joint ownership of cemeteries and funeral homes, Homesteaders Life Company expanding its "Finding Resilience" program to include a video series featuring Jason Troyer, Ph.D. – a move that has drawn rave reviews, and a Texas jury awarding \$8 million to the family of Julie Mott, whose body mysteriously disappeared from Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemeteries in San Antonio.

And who can forget the huge victory that the New Jersey State Funeral Directors Association celebrated against the Roman

Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, which in March announced that it would not challenge a federal judge's ruling that prohibited religious cemeteries from entering the monument and private mausoleum business or entering the funeral business in any form.

There is no doubt that 2019 will also bring plenty of surprises, but that doesn't mean we can't glean some wisdom from thinking about what might be around the corner.

To that end, we reached out to funeral home operators and experts throughout the profession to see what they think is in store for the next 12 months.

Watch the Vendors

While there were numerous funeral homes that changed hands in 2018, the more noteworthy story *this* year will likely be consolidation among vendors, according to Glenn Gould, CEO of MKJ Marketing, and Courtney Gould Miller, chief operating officer, legal counsel and head of digital marketing for MKJ.

Putting in a Crematory? Then Don't Miss This.

Christine Toson Hentges, president of The Tribute Companies, knows firsthand the issues that come up when trying to install a crematory in a reluctant community, and she'll be sharing her hard-won lessons at the Crematory Innovations Summit, May 3, in Charlotte, North Carolina.



Christine Toson
Hentges

"Understanding the challenges that come along with opening a crematory facility in your community is key," she says.

Neighbors often feel perception is reality when it comes to the operation of a retort, she says. "This causes undue fear and turbulence that can derail approval of a crematory, no matter how prepared we might feel we are," she says.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to maximize your chances of having a crematory in your community approved, and she'll reveal what they are at the summit.

Other speakers include Chris Farmer, founder of The Farmer Firm; Welton Hong, founder of Ring Ring Marketing; Coleen Ellis, a pet loss pioneer; and Matt Bailey, president of CT Life Tributes.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/yd2ckw4e> to register.



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“The biggest consolidation news in 2019 will be in the vendor segment of the industry,” they say. “Funeral homes will see fewer and fewer sales and customer service reps, as acquirers look for ways to reduce overhead. There are too many vault companies, so look for consolidation there; the same applies to casket distributors and web/technology companies.”

The Goulds also see continued consolidation on the funeral home side, as well. “There’s no question that the consolidation in the industry will continue in 2019,” they say. “In fact, it will continue until weak funeral businesses are eliminated through competition. This is a normal process that nearly every industry experiences at some point, i.e.: newspapers, airlines, etc., and at the end of the consolidation, the ones that remain will benefit tremendously from the decrease in competition.

But consolidation will start to look different, they predict.

“Contrary to the past, however, many of the firms to sell will be small and mid-size volume firms,” they say. “Most of the large volume firms have been

approached so often, the remaining independents have made the decision to remain private and have developed their own succession plans. Several of the more recent consolidation firms have limited funding, causing them to focus on firms they can afford. This isn’t to say there won’t be any large firm acquisitions, but the predominance will be mid-size firms with the goal of reducing operating costs while maintaining multiple locations.”

Tony Colson, president and CEO of Segue Memorial Group Holdings and president and owner of Halo International, agrees that consolidation among vendors and funeral homes will produce noteworthy headlines in 2019.

“Valuations will be subject to volatility driven by profitability, strategic value of eliminating competitor capability and presence, leveraging operating synergies and efficiencies, and always the proactivity of motivated buyers driving up multiples (of earnings before interest, taxes, amortization and depreciation),” he says. “The other big variable is generational – the number of owners reaching the age of retirement and the amount of talent, both available and willing to be that transitional bridge, is in scarcity.”



Glenn Gould



Courtney Gould Miller



Tony Colson

Jeff Harbeson, better known as “The Funeral Commander,” who is director of marketing at The Foresight Companies, adds, “We’ve seen casket



Jeff Harbeson,
“The Funeral
Commander”

companies merge, software companies sell to equity companies, chemical companies buy casket companies, service providers align, and of course funeral homes continue to jump onto the consolidating train. What are these examples telling us? Going at it alone is risky and there is strength in numbers.”

Some firms – especially low-volume ones – will want to sell but won’t be able to, says Gene Ogrodnik, president and CEO of Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science and a certified business appraiser and certified valuation analyst.

“Some of these will never sell, due to the simple fact that the business volume is not high enough to bring economic value to the table,”

he says. “My valuation practice is receiving an increased number of inquiries for service. However, many of these inquiries are turned away, since there is little value more than that of real estate, furniture, fixtures, equipment and inventory.



Gene Ogrodnik

Orderly liquidation is probably the best solution for these parcels,” he says.

But Ogrodnik goes on to say, “Many boomers are indeed in the position to sell their businesses to (non-family) members, since 2017 only presented about 17 percent of mortuary students who were related in some manner to a licensed family member, some of which were not owners themselves. The sales of funeral businesses are indeed on the uptick.”

The environment, however, is not as aggressive as it was in the 1990s, he says. “Many business transactions are strategic in nature – being sold to either an employee (unrelated to the owner) or to a competitor. What I’ve seen is many of these are purchased by private owners who are expanding their portfolio of locations, as opposed to the larger operations that continue to be transferred to the large publicly-traded companies at a much slower rate than we saw in the 90s.”

After a long period of stagnation, sales multiples also seem to be on the uptick, Ogrodnik says. “It is not nearly what it was (in the 1990s), but there has been a slight bump,” he says. “Hopefully the auction environment that was seen then will never be revisited, as funeral homes were way overvalued at the time.”

More Succession Options

Colson gets calls all the time from various private equity groups and

investment banks wanting to talk about the “space and thesis,” he says.

“These are bright people, and they know what we know demographically,” he says. “The aging or graying of America becomes the death of America eventually. The biggest wave (of deaths) since the Depression is right now in front of us; the boomers and many of us are in that demographic wave.”

The number of deaths for the next 50 years will continue to rise, and if funeral professionals are smart, they’ll exploit this, Colson says. “(Potential entrants) know that controlling that capacity and maximizing it is like mining gold,” Colson says.

Labor Crunch Will Worsen

If you’re struggling to find qualified staff to join your team, get ready for the struggle to get *even worse*, Ogrodnik says.

“As past president of the American Board of Funeral Service Education, I can unequivocally state that for nearly 25 years, the enrollment and graduation from the collection of all funeral service education programs has been flat,” he says. “This is in spite of the fact that the number of programs has increased and online education has proliferated. The profession has failed to encourage newcomers into funeral service. In fact, many continue to *discourage* new entrants. Speaking for PIMS, as very much

invested in online education, we have attracted a new demographic of student (by design), but even this hasn't touched the shortages seen across the country."

"Economics 101" should drive compensation packages up – especially in areas that are not not attractive to the masses, Ogrodnik says. "I recently heard of a newly licensed professional who was offered \$50,000 plus benefits," he shares. "2019 will probably be witness to more of these types of hiring solutions to existing shortages."

In fact, Ogrodnik has already talked with owners in the Midwest, Southeast, Mountain states and West Coast, and they all indicate they are willing to "pay the freight" if they find the proper fit, he says. "I predicted this phenomenon years ago, and it indeed was seen in 2018," he says.

In 2019, more firms will modify their businesses to provide a more predictable work schedule for staff, Ogrodnik says. "If this does *not* occur, we will start to see the demise of funeral service, itself," he warns. "I am hearing more frequently of actual work schedules that enable employees to have a personal life."

Quinn Eagan, the master preneed marketer who has sold *billions* of dollars of prearranged funerals as the president of Preneed Funeral Program, notes that he continues to hear about recent mortuary school

graduates who never enter the funeral home workforce – they simply find work elsewhere. "This will create a hardship on many firms as well as those funeral homes who want to sell if the state boards don't foresee this and relax some of the restrictions," he says.



Quinn Eagan

Eagan adds that compensation for stellar funeral directors will rise sharply as they are such a limited commodity. "So does the value of the funeral home go down in the future because overhead goes up?" he asks.

The Goulds confirm that their clients have struggled to find staff, and they think something has to give.

"While it may not happen in 2019, very soon state licensure laws and rules will be relaxed and even eliminated as funeral businesses will be unable to find staff, let alone qualified staff," they say. "It's a constant stress for our clients to find and keep good talent, and changing licensure requirements for arrangers is the fastest way to change the talent pool at this point. In the meantime, training has never been more important, and funeral homes of every size and market should look to improve the staff they have for phone, arrangements and customer service training."

Business Practices Must Change

Saying "cremation will rise" is not a prediction but a certainty, Colson says.

What must happen in 2019 is more funeral home owners must change their business practices to truly accommodate for the increase, he says.

"For owners and managers to continue in their legacy business practices of subsidizing operations by underpricing services and overpricing merchandise or ignoring the cremation segment and pricing burial to compensate, is just plain stupid," he says. "I know that's course language, but it's true. I own a funeral home as well. I can tell you, that when we bought the firm (Harper Community Funeral Home in New Haven, Indiana, in 2014), the cremation rate was modest compared to the state and national average, but virtually every cremation being done was a direct cremation. Today, after successfully designing and deploying a value progressive, well merchandised and presented menu of three cremation packages, our cremation mix is now 75 percent with services and only 25 percent direct. That's a big difference, and if I can do it, you can do it. I'll share with anyone who calls, how they can do it, too. Survival and viability depend on commercial courage. Those who adopt it will do well – and those who don't will continue to languish and complain."

Ogrodnik notes that while cremation will rise nationally, the West Coast will start to see a leveling of the cremation rate. “Unfortunately, there is still a small issue with the perception of funeral service providers that cremation is cheap,” he says. “Funeral service is into a couple of decades where educators and associations have been trying to educate the practitioners that cremation need not be cheap, along with providing ways and means of tackling this misunderstanding so we can increase the profitability of these changing services.”

More Focus on Customer Retention

The battle for the undecided family is fierce and the cost to acquire each one of them is on the rise, says Ellery Bowker, founder of Aftercare.com.



Ellery Bowker

“Funeral homes will begin to invest in ways to maintain relationships with families so they don’t choose a competitor the next time they have a need,” he says. “Whether you call it aftercare, relationship building, or just good customer service, funeral homes will start to do more to remind customers they exist and provide value after the service is over.”

Firms playing the short game and investing only in winning the minimal service, at-need cremation

family will eventually see that the cost to acquire these customers is substantial – and the lifetime value of these customers not so much, Bowker says.

Personalization Will Get Stronger

More funeral directors will start converting to a culture of “memorialization” to help offset the loss of burials, Eagan says. “This translates to more personalized services and services that create an experience for visitors that honor the life of the deceased. The real challenge is that families have to realize this value on their own as opposed to funeral directors telling them about it,” he says.

The Gap Will Grow

In 2019, the gap between thriving funeral and cemetery businesses and those who are breaking even or *losing* business will grow, says Jason Troyer, Ph.D., founder of Mt Hope Grief Services.

“Thriving businesses will continue to look for completely new revenue streams, will expand social media outreach, will make more use of video in all aspects of their marketing, will continue to set themselves apart with exceptional and inventive aftercare, and will keep questioning longstanding assumptions about how to do business,” he says.



Jason Troyer, Ph.D.

He adds, “Alfred Edward Perlman (a railroad executive) said, ‘After you’ve done a thing the same way for two years, look it over carefully. After five years, look at it with suspicion. And after 10 years, throw it away and start all over.’ Some things, like showing care and compassion to families, never go out of style. But if you haven’t made significant adjustments to your training, your marketing, your staff scheduling, your aftercare, or other businesses processes in the last 10 years, you’re overdue for some big changes.”

Harbeson agrees, noting, “Funeral homes that continue to improve their business operations, profitability, train staff, embrace technology and provide meaningful marketing will enjoy prosperity.” He adds, “The leaders of these firms understood the operating model of yesteryear is broken and took steps to adapt their business to consumer demand while maximizing profit. I’m not saying successful funeral homes are the most expensive, however, they charge *differently*. Take a look in your own market, and I think you will find that the busiest firms are not the low-end storefronts.”

For firms that think “cremation is just a fad” or that still advertise in the Yellow Pages, 2019 will *not* be kind, Harbeson warns.

“Their approach is completely different because their model has not changed since (Maj. Gen. William Tucumseh) Sherman burned down the South,” Harbeson says. “Pricing

is based on whatever the competitor charges less \$100. They cling to ‘we give the best service,’ which is unquantifiable and silly because they have never attended their competitor’s services. This group blames the loss of business to ‘the low-cost direct disposers’ yet never consider consumers are rejecting their cigarette-stained ceilings with mint green and mauve décor.”

New Leaders Will Emerge

New leaders in funeral service will emerge – and they will increasingly be women, Harbeson predicts.

“Women continue to take leadership roles and (they will be) a driving force shaping our collective future,” Harbeson says. “I once heard from an elder funeral statesman, ‘You have to be relevant to have an opinion,’ so I challenge new leaders to step up and have a voice to elevate our profession for the long haul.”

Focusing on the Essentials Pays

The basic tenets of merchandising and value progression dictate that if the consumer spends more, they should receive more, Colson says.

But many firms have abandoned such principles in search of “innovative” or “creative” ways to drive sales and profitability – and Colson can’t stand it.

“To borrow a saying from an old mentor of mine: *Just because there is no chrome left on the fenders,*

doesn’t mean there isn’t plenty of fire left under the hood. In other words, just because many have abandoned the former practices of sound value progression merchandising doesn’t mean it’s no longer effective. It is,” Colson says.

He continues, “Many people have asked me, ‘Tony, since you bought a place, do you do all that stuff you used to preach while you were with Batesville?’ My answer is, ‘I do and a few more things I’ve learned from my general management experience with Pella, Wilbert and yes, Genesis.’ The message is: *It works.*”

If more owners returned to focusing on creating value progression, pricing appropriately and managing to a total solution rather than focusing on one element (such as cost) of profitability, they would realize benefits, Colson says.

Online Reviews to Take Center Stage

Consumers already pay huge amounts of attention to them elsewhere, so why not for funeral service?

Online reviews will take on a greater importance in funeral service in 2019, according to Dan Katz, president of LA ads, and Rolf Gutknecht, a partner at the marketing agency.

“Through website technology, more and more funeral homes and cemeteries will provide families the opportunity to leave reviews directly on the website and do so in a more

meaningful way than some innocuous ‘XYZ funeral home did a great job,’” they say. “The review revolution is here. A whopping 93 percent of local consumers use reviews to determine if a local business is good or bad, and displaying reviews can increase sales conversions as well. Whether you are an early or late adopter, believer or nonbeliever, online reviews are a major driver of new customers and leads.”

Welton Hong, founder of Ring Ring Marketing, agrees that online reviews are extremely important, but funeral homes that truly care about them have so far been in scarce supply, he says. “I’m always thrilled when I work with a funeral director who is gung-ho about generating more positive reviews, because for a while, it was pretty much equivalent to finding a unicorn. Who water-skis. And juggles chainsaws. At the same time.”

While Hong understands why some funeral homes are wary about soliciting reviews from families, that doesn’t change the fact that doing so is an absolute necessity now. “With more people every year choosing both at-need and preneed providers over the internet, your online reputation is quickly becoming just



Dan Katz



Rolf Gutknecht

as important – if not *more so* – as your offline reputation.”

Google continues to put more emphasis on a local business’s online reputation every



Welton Hong

year, and that will continue in 2019, Hong says. “Whether your funeral home appears in the local three-pack (the top three search results on Google) or ranks highly in search results at all will be based substantially on how many Google reviews you’ve generated,” Hong says. “And that’s not even considering Facebook reviews, which are growing in influence as well.”

In virtually every decent-sized metro area, you’ll find that one or two funeral homes have taken the initiative and have dozens of reviews while competitors have a handful – if that, Hong says. “The latter are ceding control of the local market for no good reason, purely through ignorance or apathy,” Hong says. “I’d strongly encourage all funeral home owners and funeral directors to take a hard look at their review generation efforts and make a plan to generate many more reviews in 2019. Get serious about it.”

Preneed Will Stay Strong

Funeral directors will use preneed as a means to lock in more traditional funerals while they still can, Eagan says.

“Preneed will always be an effective way to secure future business. But as always, when looking at your business and industry trends, keep score to see numerically what is really happening,” he says.

Families prearranging cremation will be particularly robust in number, Eagan says.

“One of our preneed clients out West developed a new cremation brand with no facilities and in the first year sold over 5,000 preneed contracts – and you might think it was a \$595 offering – it was closer to triple that amount! It isn’t just about price,” Eagan says.

Smart funeral home owners have realized that capturing today’s buying habits through preneed boosts income while also building a “protective base” for years to come, Eagan says. “However, don’t lull yourself into a sense of security by just writing what walks in the door,” Eagan says. “You have to meet with families, both those you have already served and, more importantly, those you have *not* served and who may have used a competing firm. This is accomplished through effective marketing and broad conversations where the families see the value in preplanning. They will choose you with the right conversation and presentation.”

Social Media and Preneed

The role of social media will grow for generating more prearranged

business, Hong predicts.

“At my agency, we’ve never pushed social media solutions on funeral homes that were heavily focused on growing at-need calls,” he says. “It’s simply not the right tool for the job. To grow at-needs, you need to invest in local search optimization, not social media. The latter simply doesn’t have a great return on investment for at-needs, and we’re fundamentally opposed to wasting our clients’ money.”

Even though Facebook experienced multiple crises in 2018 and its growth has slowed, its popularity with older Americans has continued to grow – and that makes it the perfect avenue through which to engage with people who could be interested in preplanning services, through both posts and Facebook advertisements, Hong says. “Granted, organic reach on Facebook is a shadow of what it used to be, but that can be overcome by paying to ‘boost’ particular posts,” he says.

“I think the best social media strategy is one that focuses on interesting, engaging content for the AARP crowd, attracting likes, comments, and (particularly) shares,” Hong says. “Antithetical as it might seem, it shouldn’t overly focus on selling the audience on preneeds. The ‘selling’ posts should be occasionally interspersed in the content – and it’s a good idea to save your ‘boosting’ budget for those posts. That will be a winning strategy for preneed growth in 2019 and for years to come.”

But don't just focus on preneed for the sake of adding volume, Colson warns.

"The importance of a *well-managed* preneed program is essential," he says. "Those who manage to both 'productive' volume and contract value will enhance their business value exponentially. Managing to just volume, is foolish."

Preneed remains the best defense against price competition, and firms will refocus their attention on preneed, whether through third-party marketers or in-house operations, the Goulds predict. "We are already seeing an increase in interest for marketing preneed, whether with our high-performing lead generation ads on Facebook, or affordable mailers and Facebook combination advertising to promote lunch and learn presentations," they say. "At the same time, look for more preneed and cremation scandals. Desperate people do desperate things; firms with financial challenges will be unable to pay crematory bills and will resort to fraudulent claims against preneed funds."

Lindsay E. Bourgeois, director of communications and program development at Preneed Funeral Program, agrees that social media will play a critical role in the funeral business in 2019.

"When I attended the National Funeral Directors Association convention in October, it was hard

to miss the several speakers delivering presentations on navigating the social media scene and the numerous booths offering social media services for funeral homes," she says. "Funeral homes have been enhancing their presence on social media sites like Facebook, and it doesn't look like that trend is going to slow down ... there will be more and more firms in 2019 executing their strategies online for both brand awareness and lead generation, utilizing Facebook's ad platform to put their message in front of their target audience."



Lindsay Bourgeois

Facebook in particular will be important in encouraging families to preplan, Bourgeois agrees. "With Facebook's audience targeting metrics, flexible budgeting and scheduling features, and built-in response forms that will deliver leads directly back to you, Facebook will be a valuable resource for funeral homes looking for an inexpensive and measurable way to generate interest in preneed," she says.

An Emphasis on Hospitality

Progressive and forward-thinking funeral service providers are re-engineering services to include first-class hospitality services to accompany the funeral service or other celebrations – and that will continue in 2019, Ogrodnik says.

"If for no other reason, it does serve to supplement the dwindling revenue streams associated with the core business," he says. "Plus, it just makes sense. However, industry associations have not fully invested themselves into this service via educational forums to get their memberships up to speed."

He continues, "We at Pittsburgh Institute will be developing programming for licensed professionals to hone their skills on this future service. Unfortunately, some states do not permit such services to be rendered by funeral businesses. Regulatory obstacles will not stop those that can see the forest through the trees."

Content Marketing Will Be Key

Content marketing plans/activities will grow as consumers continue to research options in advance of need, according to Katz and Gutknecht.

"Customers are looking for information that will help guide them before the need occurs," they point out. "While it's happening in other industries, the death-care profession is still a bit behind the eight-ball in creating the content that the prospective customer finds valuable. Right now 80 percent of businesses (outside the funeral industry) use video content in their marketing activities, and 75 percent of businesspeople have made a purchase after watching another company's video. Also, since most

companies are writing short form content, stand out from the pack and take the time to regularly craft some in depth, researched-back content that will truly wow and win over your audience.”

Watch Mobile and Smart Home Technology

Mobile devices will become even more important for death-care marketing, with smart home devices playing a role as well, according to Hong.

“Even the septuagenarians and octogenarians who are hanging onto their landlines haven’t opted out of the mobile revolution: The most recent statistically relevant surveys indicate that 94 percent of Americans own some type of cellphone, and 77 percent specifically own smartphones,” he says.

Your senior-age parents and/or grandparents might not be sending emails on smartwatches or using talk-to-text on a Bluetooth earpiece, but many of them are using smartphones and tablets for social media, video chatting with far-off family members, and emailing and texting, he says.

“The consumer tech revolution isn’t limited to younger people

anymore; it’s fully absorbed older generations, becoming an integral part of virtually every American’s everyday life. Which is why death-care companies must prioritize mobile marketing in 2019,” Hong says.

Given that a September 2018 study indicated that over 58 million Americans owned a smart speaker, local business owners need to start thinking about optimizing for voice search in addition to mobile search, Hong says. “The latter remains the top priority, but I anticipate massive growth in the former,” he says. “It’s just so easy to ask Google, Siri or Alexa for whatever you want whenever you need it – talk about technology that speaks (both figuratively and literally) to seniors!”

Augmented Reality Is Here

Funeral homes, cemeteries and especially manufacturers now have the opportunity to bring their products and services to life and separate themselves from competitors who are using more outdated channels through various augmented reality apps, Katz and Gutknecht observe.

“For example, a funeral home could download an app from a furniture company and then

visualize how the furniture would look in their own funeral home,” they say. “AR is here, and the smart marketer will be at the front of the line in offering it to their customers.”

Smaller Cemeteries Will Be Abandoned

Smaller cemeteries will be abandoned at a rate we’ve not yet seen. They will have no buyers, and many will become wards of the state.

So says Ogrodnik, who points out how many cemeteries have “missed the boat” by failing to address the changing death-care landscape as it pertains to memorialization services that could and should be considered for the future.

Missteps have occurred at almost every step of the way, he observes. “Many have denied that the green movement is real, especially the cemetery properties that have sufficient space to accommodate a section for green burial,” he says. “Many have denied that cremated remains can be served in more economic ways than by digging another grave space for \$2,000, while at the same time meeting the needs of today’s consumer.”

Free Webinar: How to Generate More At-Need Calls in 2019

Welton Hong, founder of Ring Ring Marketing, will reveal how to win more at-need calls in 2019 on a free webinar, Jan. 22, at 2 p.m. ET. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y999nxsj> to sign up.

CANA Symposium Speaker to Showcase the Value of ‘Trigger Talk’

Customers expect more from you today than ever. What are you doing differently to meet their needs? You might say you offer the best service. But that’s what your competitors say, too.

There’s a better way to differentiate yourself, according to Daniel Lemin, keynote speaker for CANA’s 2019 Cremation Symposium and co-author of the new book “Talk Triggers.” It’s about creating conversations, or what he calls “trigger talk,” CANA says in a news release.

The first step is to listen to your customers.

This doesn’t mean poring over survey responses or combing through online reviews. It means having in-person conversations with customers to find out what their pain points are and what they really want. It means identifying a gap — an expectation gap — that you can plug.

This, in turn, creates valuable marketing opportunities. This deeper way of connecting with customers is what people will focus on when they talk about you. And with 50 to 90 percent of all purchases influenced by word of mouth, that’s significant. What’s more, half of these recommendations happen offline.

Offline recommendations have more persuasive power than online ones do: body language, facial expression and tone of voice are all magnifiers of the message. How do you make sure that message is positive?

Plug the expectation gap with a talk trigger. Have an intentional word of mouth strategy. Join CANA in February at the 2019 Cremation Symposium and hear Lemin explain all this in person.

To see the complete program and register, visit www.cremationassociation.org/CANAheroes.



Sincerely,

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REGISTRATION FEES

Cremation Innovations Summit

Before March 15, 2019:
\$495 per person

After March 15, 2019:
\$595 per person

4 WAYS TO ORDER

Web: www.kates-boylston.com/summitnc

Call: 732-746-0201

Mail: Cremation Innovations Summit
3349 Highway 138,
Building D, Suite B
Wall, NJ 07719-9671

Tax ID Number: 26-3623792

Cancellations: If you are unable to attend, you are welcome to send a substitute. Otherwise, you can cancel in writing 10 business days prior to the conference to get a full refund. After that time, there is a \$150 cancellation fee. Registrants who do not cancel and do not attend are liable for the full fee.