

Marketing

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Seven Tech Tools to Make Life Easier

Whether you run a single funeral home location or a regional firm with multiple properties, leveraging current technology is very important for success.

Small businesses that are digitally advanced drive *twice* as much revenue as their less tech-savvy counterparts, according to Deloitte research.

Technology also helps small businesses (including funeral homes):

- Drive higher year-over-year revenue increases.
- Create more jobs.
- Experience a faster growth rate.

Deloitte also notes that close to 80% of small business professionals don't take full advantage of the technology tools available to them.

In an industry as traditional as death care, it can sometimes be difficult to break out of previously cast molds and integrate technology into business and personal professional processes.

Check out the following seven ways to integrate technology into your funeral home or professional life to benefit from better productivity. (Note: My firm and I have no compensatory relationship with any product or service listed here.)

1. Funeral Home Software

These solutions are designed to meet the specific needs of businesses in the death-care industry. Often cloud-based, they let you keep clientele (and *potential* clientele) lists in safe, easy-to-access software alongside bookkeeping data, forms libraries and completed documents.

Other features common to funeral home software include planning resources, options for setting up clientele portals so families can collaborate with you on care for a lost loved one, memorialization pages, and options for video streaming funeral services for friends and family.

You can usually integrate other solutions with death-care software, including email and calendar functions, to save time and ensure your staff are all on the same page. That all adds up to improved customer service, leaving families satisfied and more likely to write a good review or engage in positive word of mouth.

If you're not currently using funeral home software, consider reviewing

your options. You can find solutions that are designed for small businesses, work with certain mobile devices, or offer features specific to your needs.

Options for funeral homes include Halcyon Death Care Management, Memcare, Osiris, Passare and Parting Pro.

2. A Tablet with a Stylus

What funeral software does for your business and staff, a good tablet and stylus can do for you as a professional. They help you stay organized, work from any location, and keep up with communication and tasks.

Tablets offer some benefits that laptops and smartphones don't. They are lighter and more portable than laptops, making it easier to take your work with you if needed without carrying a large laptop bag. That's a great benefit for on-call funeral directors, who can discreetly carry a tablet for work needs during social events or family outings.

At the same time, tablets do have bigger screens and can be stored in

folios with built-in keyboards. That makes them easier to work on than your small smartphone screen. Add in a stylus, and you can quickly tap out commands, swipe between apps, and write freehand notes for yourself.

Tablets come in a variety of options ranging from pricier iPads and Samsung Galaxy Tabs to budget-friendly Lenovo and Amazon Fire models. To choose the best tablet for your work needs, make a list of top things you want to be able to do on your device and look for models with those specs to make that happen.

3. Evernote

This is a notetaking and productivity app that you can customize to meet numerous professional organizational needs. Pair it with a tablet and stylus or use it on your phone and computer.

You create digital “notebooks” that you can fill with various types of notes. Notes can include typed information, attachments (documents and images), sketches and handwriting you enter with a stylus or your finger on a touch screen, and even audio. No matter where you are, jot down notes about potential clientele or business tasks or record voice messages to yourself about work needed for an upcoming memorial.

However, Evernote is more than a notetaking tool. You can also use it to create and manage a task list. Create notebooks for your funeral home work, family obligations, and personal hobbies. Then you can add tasks to various notes, including due dates and times, helping you track your duties and manage your work/life balance.

4. Hootsuite, Later or Buffer

About 60% of American workers say the balance between work and personal life is difficult to maintain today and that boundaries are all but nonexistent. For funeral professionals who may deal with emotional situations at work or be on call for at-need families, those boundaries can be even more difficult to set and protect.

Add in the seemingly all-the-time demands of social media, and you

might be kissing work/life balance goodbye. However, if you’re tasked with creating or publishing content for your funeral home, you *can* set and forget social media during your off hours.

Do so by using a *scheduled posting app* such as Hootsuite, Later or Buffer. These solutions let you brainstorm and write posts during preplanned business hours and schedule them for publishing to the right platforms at the best times for engagement.

Consider creating a week’s or month’s worth of posts at a time and scheduling them. Then set aside 30 minutes a week or a few minutes a day to go in and respond to comments and share a post or two from others. Just make sure those are *office* minutes.

5. Calendly

This app makes scheduling meetings with business partners, employees, or even potential clientele easy. Instead of emailing or calling back and forth to find times that work for everyone, Calendly presents people with the hours you have free and lets them pick what works for them.

This isn’t the only calendar-management app available, but it is a popular one. You can consider other options, such as Setmore, TimeSync or Simplybook.me to find a solution that works best for your funeral home. You might also check for integrations with or options in your funeral home software so you can easily track meetings with potential clientele and mark off times you aren’t available.

6. Time Doctor

This is a time-tracking app for employers and employees. You can use it to keep an eye on your own productivity and identify time wasters and opportunities for improved efficiency or work/life balance.

Tracking your time lets you get valuable insights. For example, you might discover that no matter what you do after meeting with an at-need family, you’re much slower than you are at any other time. By implementing a habit of taking 5-10 minutes to regroup, you might actually save yourself time over the course of the whole day.

Or you might look at a week’s

worth of time tracking and realize you spend too much time on emails or lose a couple of hours to social media or other apps every week. Those facts can help you work toward habits and boundaries for better time management and productivity.

The same can be true of your staff. Time Doctor has options for teams that include tracking time worked, including use of apps and web pages. You can also use the app to automate time captures for payroll or understand how many hours are spent on certain services to ensure profitability.

7. Smartwatches

This is another tool that can make it easier to balance work with the rest of your life. You can sync many a smartwatch with your smartphone, receiving notifications about texts, emails, and calls right on your wrist.

For on-call funeral home staff, the ability to discreetly read messages can help you screen information while you’re out with friends or family. That way, you only need to step away to take a call or handle a message when it’s actually from an at-need family or relevant to another type of professional emergency.

Other helpful features of smartwatches include organizational and health tools. Sync your calendar with your phone so it vibrates or buzzes to remind you of upcoming appointments or to handle important work tasks.

You might also track your steps as you work around the funeral home daily to ensure you’re hitting a good number. Doctors consider people who take fewer than 5,000 steps a day to be sedentary and at greater risk of issues such as heart disease, obesity, and other health issues. If your job keeps you mostly behind a desk, a smartwatch can remind you to move a bit each hour to increase your average step count.

Funeral directors and other staff can’t use technology to cast a magical spell of success over their careers, businesses, or lives. However, as you can see from this short list, technology can help you increase efficiency, manage work/life balance, and better attend to the health of your body, career, and business. •