

It's Not What But How We Sell

Unique memorial ideas to further interest families choosing cremation.

Dear OG,

I call you OG cause my pops and grandpops have always told me about you. You've been around 4ever! You are Old Guard. I am a player in the New Guard! I am also the newbie in the fam biz. I know you might need to go low to get high, but I don't want to go low when it comes to cremation. My heritage been doing that, thinking it's all about price. But, you know, I'm the new dog and they don't listen to me. I want to make peace with my OG, but there won't be any big bucks for me at the rate they're going. Help, OG, I need to know what I can do to keep our profit real!

Rockin' Cremation Profits in Princeton

Dear Little Digger,

As an OG, I can dig the respect you're showing, so I will lay it out for you as clear as I can. That way, you can make the fam biz be well until you are top dog.

Sometimes you can't get more oranges, so you gotta get more juice from the crop. There are three options. You can set your prices, adjust your overhead or find alternative products to couple with each cremation. From what you spill about the fam attitude, ain't no way to set prices, and I would guess that changing overhead is not an option either. So, one choice remains, and that is selling more stuff.

What kind of stuff, you wonder? Fool, it starts with an urn! We think we sell urns just because we have them displayed around the crib. Word? No way! It's about *how* we sell. Selling is a verb, not an expectation. If we ask a family, "You want an urn?" they say, "Well, what do the cremated remains come back to us in?" You reply, "A temporary urn" and shrug your shoulders. That don't sell urns.

First, what is a "temporary" urn? Does it expire like Cinderella's carriage at midnight? I don't think so. That plastic box, if left alone in the Arizona desert, would still be there 50 years from now, when you are ready to retire!

The correct answer would be, "You need to select a vessel of your choice for the cremated remains to chill in." Hmmm. Then do that thing with the first finger and pinkie of each hand extended, pushing them forward, with a slight grunt to make your point. (Of course, this wouldn't be in real life while you're serving a real family!)

You have two choices for urns:

1. You have a wide supply of manufactured urns available

to select from manufacturers' catalogs. Learn about the dearly departed. Consider what would best represent him or her.

2. You can manufacture an urn from scratch. This is way old school.

Let me testify to five examples. If the dearly departed had a fav shirt, turn that into an urn pillow. I bet you know a seamstress who could take that shirt and form it into the shape of a pillow. You can insert a plastic liner to keep the remains contained.

Suppose the deceased loved football. How about getting a football? I'll bet that same seamstress could open it up, place the cremated remains inside in a plastic liner and seal up the football.

Many motorcyclists want to use part of their bike as a cremation receptacle, and that is now a pre-built offering! The same could said for farmers, who may want to have some part of their favorite tractor or even the tractor seat as their eternal holding place.

I had a friend who was real old-school, a former catcher for a baseball team. When he died, I suggested to his widow that she let me get someone to rebuild his old catcher's mitt to be his depository. Then the kids all signed it. We placed a baseball inside (which is funny because he didn't catch a ball with that thing for 30 years) and voilà, instant urn.

Any of these created urns can be priceless, and no one can say they're too expensive because they are one of a kind. And they can bring in pots of money.

So, newbie, don't assume that selling the urn is a given. Cremation families are not facing the same time problem burial families face in choosing a casket. Truth! You need to keep them focused in your area code to make these choices now. So practice. Get your pops and pops' pops to role-play with you and work on the scripting. What you say is as important as how you say it. Have examples. Have pictures. Get your hands in the air, Little Digger!

Another tactic to employ is to promote added services. The real OG knows you keep selling every option, every family, every time. Regardless of your area code, one thing is undeniable, reliable and something try-able – DNA. We are only at the outskirts of understanding what DNA is going to tell us in the future, and the more points of DNA we have access to, the better we will be able to see the future. Include in a package DNA gathering and processing and get copies of the results to every family member.

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NEWBIE, SELLING AN URN IS NOT A GIVEN. FAMILIES THAT CHOOSE CREMATION DON'T FACE THE SAME TIME CONSTRAINTS AS BURIAL FAMILIES.

If you find a reputable DNA service you want to use, mark up the service fee 100%. A \$500 service fee to you is \$1,000. If 100 families a year do this, that's an additional \$50,000! That's a lot of Benjis!

Most cremation families don't see a visitation as worth the money, but if you offer a reception rather than a visita-

tion, they may be happy to spend without hesitation! A funeral is about coming together. It is about keeping people together. Food keeps them together longer. If the cops won't hassle you, turn your crib into a kitchen so families can chill together.

The typical restaurant marks up food 200% over cost to cover staff, equipment, space and PROFIT. I capitalize PROFIT out of respect, what I expect, what I get, expectations met. Do you feel me? If you can't do it because of your state law, then find a place that is out of the ordinary and work out an "exclusive" to promote their casa for funeral gatherings. You don't

want to come up with a million-dollar idea and have someone start selling it against you.

Take all of these ideas and revisit your preneeds and talk to them as if they were at-needs. People can add a \$2,000 reception to a preneed for as little as \$40 a month in most cases.

One last shout-out to my peeps! Make sure you heard. Don't fly off like a bird. Expand your market. Face the fact that we live in an assimilated culture. The funeral service OG has always relied on self-segregation to keep market share in line. Start looking at the people who attend your visitations!

Well, it's time for me to wrap it up. My words are true, LD, and now it's up to you. My hands are washed. Don't believe it? Just watch! Talk the talk, walk the walk and hike up them saggars. The families you serve will do the rest. I ain't tripping, just ripping a livin'! Live in the 602, Isard out!

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