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Pandemic Has Materially Changed Consumer Attitudes about Technology, Physical Presence, and Price Transparency relating to the Funeral and Cemetery Business

New survey measures transformations to a historically unchanged industry with lasting implications on buying, celebrations, practices, and physical infrastructure

May 27, 2020, Phoenix, Arizona – The pandemic has significantly altered consumer attitudes and behaviors in three key areas of the funeral and cemetery business – the buying and shopping process, the necessity of physical presence to support loved ones in their time of need, and the influence of technology on both. This according to *The Foresight Companies 2020 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study*.

The pandemic has necessitated consumer use of technology to adapt their behaviors to a business steeped in tradition, and the survey makes clear that these behavior changes are here to stay. For example, 75% of consumers now want pricing online – a practice virtually unheard of today, and many consumers will not do business with providers who do not deliver transparency. In addition to shopping, the use of technology has increased acceptance of livestreaming funerals as a regular practice. The study finds 43% of consumers believe that attending a funeral via livestream “demonstrates how much I care,” a 72% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels.

“We’re experiencing a sea of change in consumer behaviors with long-term implications for technology and physical infrastructure as well as the deployment of human resources for the funeral and cemetery professions,” said Chris Cruger, Partner and Chief Operating Officer at The Foresight Companies. “Webcasts and online pricing have gone from nice-to-haves to minimum expectations overnight. You can’t put that genie back in the bottle.”

About Live Streaming and Physical Attendance

- 40% of consumers expect livestreaming of services will be available permanently.
- Only 21% are willing to pay for this additional service.
- 26% feel strongly that it is important to attend the funeral in person – down from 42%.

About Planning and Price Transparency

- 46% of consumers say they will handle funeral arrangements virtually, an activity that has historically ONLY occurred in-person with a funeral director.
- 52% say they will ONLY do business with companies that provide online pricing options.
- 73% say it’s important to have pre-planned funeral arrangements, up from 58%.
- Only 19% plan to exceed the current average spend of a funeral -- about \$8,000.
- Attitudes around cremation – an industry hot button, remain virtually unchanged,



While analysts have widely speculated about behaviors changing in the death care services business, this first-of-its-kind study puts metrics and measurement around the behaviors and degree of change. A \$20B industry, more than 2.4 million funerals take place in the US annually and employs more than 100,000 Americans serving families in their time of need. Notably, these shifts in consumer attitudes and behaviors take place across demographic and religious spectrums.

“The resulting business implications the study points to are colossal – especially for a sector largely unchanged for decades,” Cruger added. “How owners staff their business, how they use their physical space, their investment in technology – these core operations have shifted in the last 60 days. We’re not implying that the funeral business will now be entirely virtual; however, the study clearly indicates that the pandemic has forever changed how consumers plan for, buy, and participate in funerals. And those businesses that adapt quickly will win the day.”

The Foresight Companies 2020 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study, conducted by Los Angeles-based SoCal Approach Marketing and Consulting Group, was designed to understand consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors about the funeral and cemetery industry during three separate periods: prior to, during, and after the pandemic has passed. The study is based to 2,548 respondents drawn from a nationally representative panel sample of U.S. residents.

ABOUT THE FORESIGHT COMPANIES

The Foresight Companies, one of the largest consulting firms serving the funeral and cemetery business, is dedicated to leveraging its expertise in operations, finance, mergers and acquisitions and other key areas necessary to drive success in the space. For more information visit: www.theforesightcompanies.com.

ABOUT SOCAL APPROACH MARKETING AND CONSULTING GROUP

SoCal Approach Marketing and Consulting Group was founded to measure and deliver data driven market insights businesses can use to understand and reach their target audiences. For additional information on SoCal Approach, visit www.socalapproach.com.