

Helping Death-Care Professionals Succeed

How An Unplanned Journey Led to the Perfect Destination



Becoming a specialist in products and services for the death-care industry was never the goal of my agency, Kanet Advertising. But like most journeys in life, the fork in the road often leads to exciting, satisfying destinations, places where you suspect you were meant to be, even though you arrived there by accident.

My journey had an ordinary first step. A leading manufacturer of caskets retained our agency to create a coordinated, multi-faceted campaign to help their customers – funeral home owners and directors – sell effectively when families choose cremation. We immersed ourselves in learning not only about our client’s business but also about their clients’ businesses. We researched, conducted phone interviews with their customers across the country, brainstormed ideas, came up with a plan and implemented it.

Such roll-up-our-sleeves efforts brought a deep understanding not only of the challenges facing our client and their clients, but of those shared throughout the death-care industry. Along the way, I recognized the challenges of a changing industry, an industry faced with:

- Increased competition. Not just from the likely competitors but even big-box stores, membership clubs and the Internet.
- The changing attitude of families who often fail to appreciate and embrace the traditional end-of-life traditions.
- The aggressive growth of cremation’s popularity.
- Narrow profit margins, making the creation of new streams of revenue so important.

My search led me to many places. I participated in programs at the nationally acclaimed Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science and struck up relationships with the professors. I attended trade shows for the death-care industry where I had a chance not only to learn of innovative products but also meet the entrepreneurs behind the products. Before long, a healthy portion of our agency’s accounts were businesses that provide either innovative items for funeral home owners and directors to offer to their families, or services which help those in the funeral industry achieve success.

Kanet Advertising’s position as the ad agency of choice for products for the death-care industry blossomed. Businesses started turning to us for our expertise that focused on bringing

together manufacturers and sellers of products with funeral home owners and directors. It did not hurt that our multi-tiered campaign for our casket-making client not only was a significant success but also that one element of the campaign, the consumer brochure, earned a national award.

Kanet Advertising is a good fit for these clients in many ways. Most of them are small, hardworking businesses with a creative product to sell. Our agency has always respected and appreciated the creativity and pluck of America’s small

business owners and we have worked diligently to create efforts to keep them competitive. Some of these clients had previously engaged the services of large advertising agencies, only to find disappointment in being a small fish in a big pond. Others had attempted to tackle their advertising themselves, but found that a limited knowledge of advertising coupled with too many other tasks to juggle was a formula for ineffective

marketing or, worse yet, no marketing at all. With competition increasing daily, many recognized that professional advice and implementation of advertising is needed.

So our agency was a welcome option: an award-winning full-service agency with a comprehensive understanding of the death-care industry and a commitment to being as careful about

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Through Charlie Kanet’s journey, he learned some fundamental truths about the death-care industry.

- Because profit margins are narrow and competition is increasing, the industry needs to find new products to sell to their clients.
- The death-care industry is becoming an industry that celebrates life.
- Faced with more informed customers, the industry is changing to meet the demands.
- Those who are successful in the industry have learned that families are seeking transparency.
- While change can be uncomfortable, it is necessary, now more than ever.

spending your money as you are. Without the Madison Avenue overhead and endless staff of junior executives, Kanet Advertising turns out creative, effective advertising every day. With more than 30 years in the advertising business, I have developed a network of specialists to turn to as needed. So my clients can be assured of access to some of the best in the business without the cost typically associated with such a high level of skill.

And just as the funeral industry is built on strong relationships and unmatched service, we focus on making the experience of working with us not just productive but easy. Gabe Fikes agrees. He is the owner of Eternal Light, innovative solar-powered cemetery and memorial markers. “When I started dealing with Charlie and the staff at Kanet Advertising it was one of the easiest things that I have done to market my business. I told them my dream scenario and what I wanted to happen, and they went about putting a plan into action,” explains Fikes. “One step always leads to the next. Charlie and his staff think outside the box, which is what I was looking for. They are always up to date on any and all new ideas to market not only my product but my company name as well.”

Our most important measure of a job well done is customer satisfaction, but when industry organizations want to give us a pat on the back, we will gladly accept it. So when a print campaign for international crematory manufacturer Facultatieve won both a Stevie Award and a Hermes Creative Award in 2007, we admit to feeling a sense of pride, probably because it confirms our efforts to create advertising, marketing and public relations that truly work. But the most important endorsement comes from our satisfied clients. “It has been

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a pleasure working with Charlie and his staff at Kanet Advertising,” says Blake Kelley, president and CEO of Timeless Memories, creators of customized Book

of Memories photo albums and Tribute Videos. “They have a real passion for helping me grow my business. Their approach goes beyond creating professional ads; they work to identify best practices for marketing my products.”

Charlie Kanet is president of Kanet Advertising, a Cincinnati-based agency specializing in marketing, advertising and public relations for the death-care industry. He can be contacted at (513) 241-2874 or ckanet@kanetadvertising.com



TEN TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR ADVERTISING EFFORTS

- Update your web site to have a fresh look and be current.
- Include your web address on everything.
- Include a “call to action” in all your ads.
- Select the right photo and/or colors to reflect the appropriate mood and emotional response.
- Keep copy precise and to the point.
- Use readable, clearly understandable fonts for copy and logos.
- Try more current methods of advertising (i.e. press releases, web, email, outdoor signage).
- Remember that people receive as many as 500 messages a day—your message needs to stand out and be noticed.
- Consistency in your materials and message is critical.