

IS YOUR CEMETERY PREPARED FOR THE RADICAL CHANGES THAT ARE HAPPENING TODAY?

By Charlie Kanet

Important decisions are facing cemeteries if they want to remain viable business entities in the future. In many cases changes need to be made. Business models need to be analyzed. Currently, 61% of all deaths in the United States result in cremation, an option that has seen a steady increase over the years. It is an option that needs to be embraced, and cremation on the premises is an option cemeteries should consider as part of an updated business model. Upgrades such as expanding and renovating niche facilities and an expansion into the area of green burials are popular trends that should be given greater consideration.

Your cemetery needs to do more than just inviting people in twice a year; it needs to open its gates and become a place where members of the public are welcome. It needs to look at its own locale and see how it can promote and make the community aware that the grounds are not only beautiful, but they are also available to the public. Activities that include all of your families can be planned. Inviting families to your chapel or mausoleum at Christmastime to share their grief for the loss of loved ones and reflect on happy memories is a way for the cemetery to create binding ties with its families.

Networking with local business organizations by joining your local chamber of commerce, along with becoming an active member of the VFW, is important for cemetarians to position themselves as an integral part of the community. Serving on school boards and volunteering their services for worthwhile endeavors are also ways for cemetarians to increase their cemetery's presence in the community. Forming marketing alliances with neighboring cemeteries to share information and expertise, and become partners with local businesses, such as funeral homes are other avenues to explore.

Publication of press releases and interesting articles can highlight the improvements being made to serve your families in an ever-changing world. Enhancing print collateral at your cemetery to keep your branding relevant in today's market needs to be considered. Outdoor advertising and bus signage have proven to be very effective tools for the cemetery market. Technology has become so sophisticated that specific areas and demographics can be targeted for direct mail campaigns and cable television. Technology is driving all industries. Cemetarians are naïve in thinking their cemeteries are excluded from this phenomenon.

Cemetery personnel also need to keep their website updated and make sure that it is collecting analytical tracking data to allow for interaction with interested parties. A cemetery that is prepared for the future needs to market itself as any business must, and in today's market, that means having a presence on social media, i.e. twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. In this age of social media, is your cemetery utilizing this critical communication highway the best it can?

In conclusion, change is necessary to improve and maintain the hallowed grounds of the cemetery. Cemeteries are no longer a part of the community that is hidden and obscure; they are front and center, and can be a valuable link within the community.

What can you do today to prepare your cemetery for tomorrow?

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