



FROM THE 2012 WIDE WORLD OF SALES CONFERENCE SESSION ON “ONE-MINUTE IDEAS”

Idea #1

Recommendations

- Ask for recommendations at beginning of session
- Use a blank business card & personalize a card when handing one out
- Network, network, network!
- Be clear on what we do and that ‘we can help’
- Ask several times for referrals – beginning, middle, end
- Anticipate, assume & expect referrals
- Focus all your attention on pre-arrangement

Idea #2

Cremation Disposition & Scattering Options

Signoff form

- Every family meets with advisor, hears all options, and they have to sign off on it.
- We have been able to retain 67% of our cremations in our cemetery

Idea #3

Make sure you **Embrace, Not Disgrace** a family who chooses cremation and take home.

- Funeral homes can make sure families realize they can come back at a later date for a memorial service – a lot of people don’t know that.
- Cemeteries should let them know that while they choose to take the urn home, let us go ahead and show you all the options for the urn being placed in the cemetery so that at a later date, if they choose to place their loved one in our care, they will know the options to discuss with their loved ones.
- Also, create a tracking system to follow up with these families within 90 days and ask if they have questions.

Idea #4

Cemetery Avoid Losing Markers to Outside Vendor

- Use a temporary granite memorial 3” x 12 x 14 that is produced and delivered within 48 hours
- Laser etched simple design
- Applied towards permanent memorial
- Families allowed to make payments up to 24 months if necessary
- Has a byline on Bottom Row of text “Provided by ... name of cemetery.”

Idea #5

Offer a disposition Choice for Cremation

This idea came from Jim Lamar at Greenlawn in Bakersfield, CA. He developed an area at the cemetery that was formerly an old concrete pond – an eyesore. They cleaned the area up, removed the pond and constructed hexagon niches for urns. They included plaques with memorials and offered a package special price to people who chose cremation & purchased the niche. They gained 250 spaces (niches) from unused area in the cemetery which alleviated space issues and helped them to offer a better value with packages that include cremation and the niche with memorial so families will stop walking out with the cremains.

Idea #6

Adding Value for Shoppers

Creating the experience for their family when they come in

When your family arrives take them on the tour of your facility:

Arrangement room

Family gathering room for family to receive support from friends

Funeral chapel – where your final celebrations will occur. Show the sound systems and features available for the event

Family Room for the family, maybe the grandchildren to rest or maybe play

Fellowship Room – your family will gather here for food, fellowship & support

Create the experience of what they will get.

Idea #7

Adding Value

Educating & increasing community awareness

Partnering with professionals to provide group presentations to educate possible customers

Embracing technology for marketing education

Aftercare – one of us had a wonderful Valentines Day program for widows and widowers

Idea #8

Philosophical tips

Important to talk to people as we would like to be talked to. Don't treat your families as clients. Answer their questions honestly. It is OK to answer a question with an honest "I don't know" and a promise to find out.

We are doing our jobs because we believe in what we do as a service to others.

Idea #9

On the topic of Cremation: **Educate, educate, educate**

- Constantly and consistently educate the consumer. It all starts with the advance planning conference.
- Upon discovering that cremation is the choice of disposition, ask right away, "What is your choice as your final resting place?" Be sure then to explain all options – don't assume they know.
- Go into, "Did you know there are many options for glass front niches, indoor niches, outdoor niches?"
- Most importantly, if you haven't explained all of the options with cremation, you haven't done your job.

Idea #10

Engaging Customers Outside of Funeral Arrangements

Last year Michigan Memorial Park started a walking club. They created 3 map cards for 1, 2 or 3 mile courses leading the walkers past park features that they wanted them to view. They had 80 club members by the end of their April 1st through Oct. 31st season. The walkers logged in their miles with the FH/memorial park on an honor system. They awarded T shirts with "Michigan Memorial Park Walking Club" on them. They grew to be on a first name basis with staff and groundskeepers. At the year-end, more than 4,500 miles were logged and the winner (with 555 miles) was awarded with her tennis shoes

imprinted on the cement path with her name alongside in bronze! And the funeral home has 80 phone numbers, email addresses and friends!

Idea #11

Get Ahead of the Curve with a Caregiver Group

Set up a listening/caring group for people caring for family members with terminal illness to address anticipatory grief and provide support.

- caring easier
- anticipatory grief
- positive – uplifting
- get a chairperson supported by local funeral home/cemeteries

Idea #12

It is extremely important that the **funeral staff work together in coordinating the preneed sale.** The fewer gaps in the process, the more professional and smooth the experience for the consumer. Someone needs to coordinate it.

Be willing to experiment with the different promotions you do to bring in preneed prospects. But keep meticulous track of sales and marketing results so you know your true return on investment.

To make direct mail more effective, you have to convert leads into another lead. Referrals are your most powerful leads. Direct mail is expensive – get the most out of it.

Idea #13

Our table's focus was on ways to **get people in the door to get to know us.**

Our advance planning office hosted a "**Funeral School.**" The seminar was in June and all of the advertising was school-themed. This was a great opportunity for the students to learn about making arrangements and what pre-planning is all about: to relieve their burden for their loved ones.

The class was held in the reception center and light refreshments were provided. At the end of class, we had a drawing for a "recess"-themed gift basket that had travel games, movie tickets and other fun items. Most important the students all graduated and received a diploma and a coupon towards their prearrangement. The event was fun, casual and well-attended.

Idea #14

Edification

When the family comes in, the first person they see says 3 really nice things about the next person coming in.

Then, when that person come in, the new person says 3 nice things about the person who just left.

This creates a very positive impression of the staff in the customer's mind.

Creates a picture in customers' mind that this business has got a good thing going on, that everyone gets along and highly respects each other.

Idea #15

Veterans

When you think of veterans, first in your mind you think WW2, and second Korean War. But remember that over 300 Vietnam vets die each day. Due to Agent Orange, the Vietnam veterans will be gone before the last Korean veterans pass away.

Do several Vietnam seminars a year.

Design a Veterans Program – sell them free space preneed.

Be specific on inviting families of Vietnam veterans.

Idea #16

Freeze-Dried Flowers

Our follow-up program calls for taking a few of the funeral flowers and freeze-drying them. We put them into a flower dome and present them to the family. Sometimes it actually brings tears to their eyes, and builds an incredible rapport.

Idea #17

Retention of Good Sales People (For Managers)

1. Invest in someone for four weeks after they are employed.
2. During that timeframe monitor your new hire. Inspect what you expect – teach them, then show them.
3. Find a way out – be willing to let a hire go if it doesn't work out.
4. Get people comfortable with the uncomfortable. Successful people must be willing to do that which most people are unwilling to do.
5. Develop a good relationship with your people. Listen and adapt! A lot of people leave because they don't like their manager.

6. Respect – be willing to agree to disagree.

Idea #18

Retention

It is important to note that we all had best practices that we were proud of and passionate about. Our commonality in our group was the importance and value of your employees/team. We believe when your team is treated like a family, that same caring and concern is provided to the families they serve. Also, it is critical that your team believes and has confidence that they are providing the BEST service available. Once you are confident that you are providing the best service, it is easy to sell your confidence in preneed to the family.

Idea #19

In Santiago, Chile, they have less than 5% cremations. They hired a **professional visitor**—a product presenter who visits with local funeral homes, pastors, priests, hospice workers on a regular but non-selling basis.

Idea #20

Appointment Alignment

Problem: families prior to an at-need or preneed conference will go online to research and prepare themselves with competitive options, including prices. That's when they develop those loaded questions.

Solution: Confirm appointment by email. Personalize it by including the counselor's picture, email, and contact info. Include the agenda (collection of vitals, service options, plans & pricing) and provide links to that area of site that allows them to begin the process. Some of us have a site called Meet the Director.

Idea #21

Senior movie event

Get together with a movie house and rent the theater. Have a 9 or 10 a.m. senior movie event during the week. Run an ad in paper and get RSVPs. At the door, have a sign-in registration sheet. As people come in and get seated, have your own video ad running. This would be not a tribute video, but an electronic billboard. You can use it later on at your facility, or on your website. It could have trivia questions about your business. We

get 100 or 200 people at these things. You could find a local partner to help defray costs. This generates good quality leads.

Idea #22

Planting

White Chapel Cemetery planted over 40,000 tulips over the decades. The cemetery now runs an annual tulip photo contest. We invited the public to come in and take pictures of all our beautiful tulips, with their families or just the tulips themselves. We had great media coverage and community support. Photo judging was by the public online.

Idea #23

Button/Website

In an effort to better educate and serve families who call in for cremation information. Regardless if they are a first call or in a preneed situation, most families have no idea what is available. Set the appointment, and then direct them to your website and have a separate button that will open to a page that shows all the different cremation memorialization options so they come in a little bit better educated. They can quickly see what options are available before coming in for the appointment.

Idea #24

Extraordinary service to staff topped our tip list, because our staff is so important

- making maintenance staff breakfast
- listening to & nurturing sales staff
- thanking employees at the end of day.

Our customers feel how our staff loves their work.

Cremation tips included

- having a special service room set up where all cremains are picked up – candles and flowers using the cremation arc.

A good question for families considering a cremation memorial service is, “Would you rather have one service or 75?”

Idea #24

Cost Effective Marketing

Mailing surveys: 2 of 5 at table are doing this. Average return is 1-2% return. How to do it without increasing costs? (Or, my owner doesn't want to spend any more money!)

- Produce survey in house
- Include two surveys in existing mailings with a note to provide one to your neighbor to fill out.
- Place them in notifications, billings, thank you letters and notes.
- Will provide your firm "word of mouth" advertising.
- Online/email also a possibility.

Idea #25

Value

- Prepare value
- Practice value
- Persisting serving your community
- Increasing cremations because we are running out of space
- Reflection ponds
- Ecological urns that will become part of the forest
- Cenotaph

See the following PowerPoint presentation

The Autumn Path



Why to have The Autumn Path?

- Because:
- The desire to transform into live again
- The environmental responsibility
- We are run out of space
- Let the future generations a little lung into the city
- To retain cremations in the cemetery



- We built a native trees forest thru the park (about 27.000 square feet)
- It has several reflection points so the families can get near to their dear ones.
- Every tree in The Autumn Path custodies the memories of the ones that aren't here.



- We use ecological urns (100% biodegradable) to be buried into The Autumn Path, so the ashes become part of the forest.
- To remember the people who's ashes were buried, we use a stone carved cenotaph, through the path.









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