



The Foresight Companies
Consulting with Insight. That's Foresight.

2021 FUNERAL AND CEMETERY Consumer Behavior Study *Insights Summary*

Research by



ABOUT THIS STUDY

» Respondents were contacted via online survey invitation and were asked to provide their insight and understanding into individual attitudes and perceptions about the funeral and cemetery profession. Areas included awareness and perceived consideration of funeral and cemetery products and services. For the second consecutive year, The Foresight Companies partnered with SOCAL Approach Marketing and Consulting to conduct the research.

5

Days in field from
3/26/21 - 3/31/21

4.1K

4,147 US respondents to the
online survey, representing a
national sample

45

Minimum respondent
age; data is reflective
of the population

95%

Confidence
level; margin of
error +/- 2%

2

Time periods: during
and after pandemic

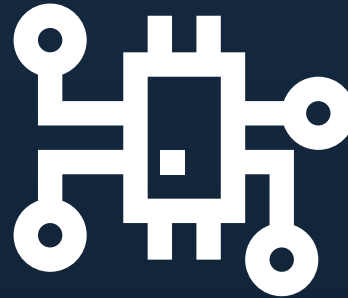
WHAT WE LEARNED IN 2020

A REIMAGINED ROLE OF THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR



In a post-pandemic world, the role of the Funeral Director has shifted from primarily in-person and retail-focused toward a more consultative role that will include a mix of on-site, off-site, and online commerce.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY TRENDS



Consumers expect the profession to behave like other industries; offering technologies that make shopping, paying, and participating without leaving the comfort of their home.

EVOLVING CONSUMER ATTITUDES



In addition to advanced technology expectations, pre-need planning has an elevated awareness in the mind of the public. Consumers are more open to having a conversation than any time in recent history.

THE 2021 STUDY FINDINGS VALIDATE THESE CHANGES. THE DATA INDICATES THAT THESE DRAMATIC SHIFTS IN ROLE, TECHNOLOGY, AND ATTITUDES ARE LIKELY PERMANENT.



CONSUMER ATTITUDES ARE CHANGING

“ I find myself increasingly open to doing things virtually. I’ve had telehealth sessions since the pandemic started and also participated in a Zoom funeral. You’re going to see these virtual funerals and virtual planning become more and more the norm. ”

-- Mike K., San Francisco, California



» Across the board, consumers are making changes to their brand preferences, more than perhaps any other time in modern history.

Consider the last time you changed your brand of peanut butter or deodorant. As a result of lack of availability, value, convenience, and consumer ratings, we're seeing a disruption in consumer attitudes around loyalty.



28%

OF CONSUMERS MADE
PERMANENT CHANGES
TO BRAND PREFERENCES
DUE TO PANDEMIC

CONSUMERS, ESPECIALLY OLDER ONES, HAVE CHANGED BASED ON NEW EXPERIENCES.

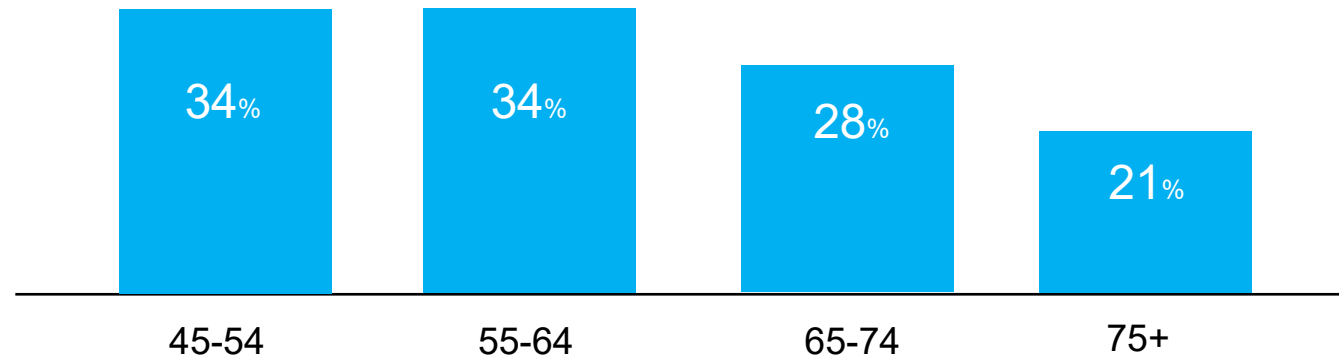


Overall, 32% of respondents said they have changed their attitudes and opinions as a result of trying new things. The oldest survey respondents demonstrated the largest YOY shift.

In 2020, 12% of respondents reported a change in attitude based on new experiences.

In 2021, that number **nearly doubled**.

ATTITUDES CHANGED FROM NEW EXPERIENCES





» DID YOU TURN ANY FAMILY AWAY?

Just know that those who turned away customers at their time of need, for whatever reason, are likely to lose future calls. Those who found solutions and adapted to challenging environments will be the businesses to realize future gains. And those who employ win-back strategies can recover with the right approach.

18%

Funeral Home

29%

Cemetery

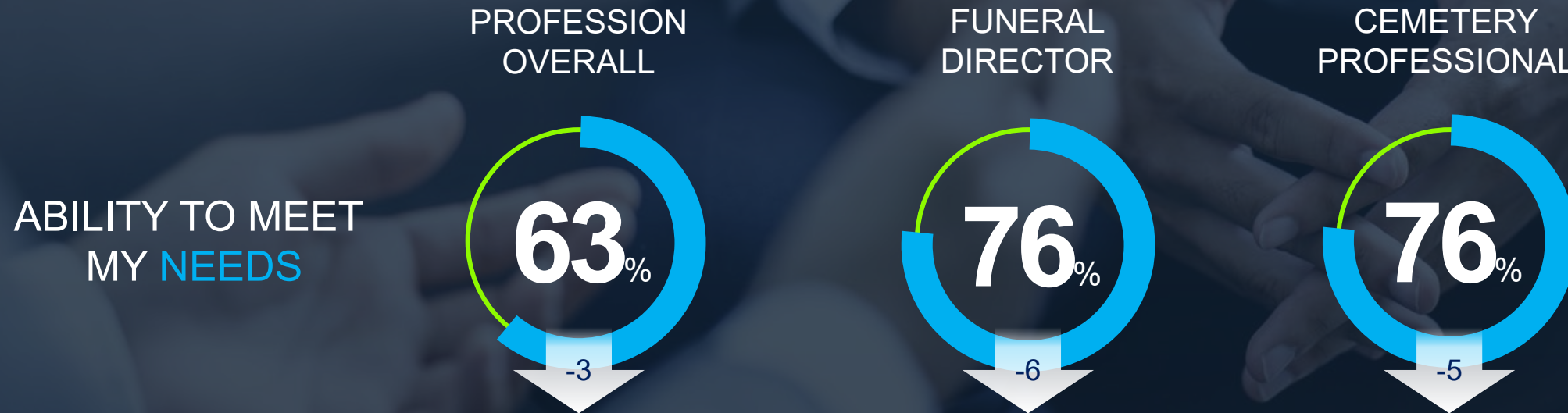
% WON'T
RETURN IF THEY
WERE **TURNU**
AWAY...



CONSUMERS DON'T THINK YOU'RE ADJUSTING



» This is a harsh reality. Despite an overall positive impression of the profession, a combination of changing consumer expectations and rapidly changing requirements finds consumers reporting that the overall profession simply hasn't responded as well as they had last year in meeting their needs. Unusually high call volumes may be to blame, but this needs to be transparent to consumers, who are understanding...to a point.





» CONSUMERS ARE LOOKING FOR AND FINDING NON-TRADITIONAL LOCATIONS TO CELEBRATE THEIR LOVED ONES.

Hispanic, Asian communities, younger and higher income consumers are **more** likely to seek a venue other than the funeral home; Those who **experienced new things** are also more likely to consider another location. Locations need to rethink how they're marketing their facilities. Funeral Directors who take a consultative, white-glove approach in the celebration process and who have their pricing dialed in will earn new business.



1/2

Will Go **Elsewhere**
For Their Celebration (49%)



More than 4-in-10 respondents experienced a death in the last 12 months, and most of those consumers were deprived of an opportunity to grieve in a traditional way.

With restrictions around large gatherings loosening nationwide, consumers are expected to revisit and resume celebrations.

World-class locations are taking an opportunity to reach out and offer their services.

43%

Of Consumers
Experienced
A Death

66%

Couldn't See
Loved One

75%

Didn't Get to
Say Goodbye



» THE WAY PEOPLE WISH TO CONNECT IS DIFFERENT TODAY THAN IT WAS BEFORE.

Even older consumers, especially as a result of the pandemic, are using advanced technologies. World-class operators are adapting to the ways consumers want to connect – they are meeting the consumers where they want to interact.

90%

Of Text Messages are
Read Within Three Minutes
of Sending Them

*Tatango via Mobilesquared
research, 2020





NEW TECHNOLOGIES ARE HERE TO STAY

“ I thought this was a great way I could still be part of the service but not actually be at the church itself. And I thought it was still just as meaningful for me. It really kind of took the place of attending the funeral, especially since it was such a limited capacity. ”

-- Carol W., St. Paul, Minnesota

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES



The pandemic brought a surge in adoption of Internet-based services in 2020 to communicate, interact and stay connected across society and among all age, income, and demographic segments.

Travel Daily News, April 23, 2021 [Guest Expect Keyless Entry](#)



700%

Increase in Telehealth visits

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» This past year saw an increase in those who feel they could demonstrate how much they care about the deceased and family by participating in a webcast service – at 49%, compared with just 43% a year earlier.

However, the 2021 rate represents a near doubling of the pre-pandemic rate of just 25%. Clearly, we have witnessed significant changes in people’s perceptions and attitudes about what is acceptable behavior in a traditionally static profession.



Attending Via Livestream
Demonstrates
How Much I Care





44%
↑ 10%
YOY

Expect Webcasting to be a
Permanent Offering

» Almost half (44%) expect webcasting of services to be available as a permanent feature going forward – up from 41% last year. This is a prime example of the type of product that can help improve people’s overall experience, and one that is increasingly seen as a must-have, not a nice-to-have. Its omission in the future would be akin to omitting power windows in an automobile lineup – 79% of consumers expect webcasting of services to be included at no additional charge.

WINNING BEHAVIORS

- 1 Seamlessly integrate livestreaming and webcasting
- 2 Train your employees to deliver them effortlessly
- 3 Realize these new technologies are minimum expectations

“ I think it’s a service that – whether you like it or not, and I don’t prefer it – it’s going to be a part of our future. ”

-- Jeff K., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



“New technologies and experiences are opening consumers eyes to new possibilities, and these experiences have fundamentally changed the way consumers mourn the loss of their loved ones.”

-- Chris Cruger, Chief Executive Officer of The Foresight Companies



CONVENIENCE IS CHANGING INDUSTRIES

“ Given the choice between Director A and Director B... Director B has all these things to make it easy for you. They’ve got arrangements with local florists, local banquet halls, counselors they can put you in touch with, videographers. I might pay... 25% more just to talk to Director B, because Director B is the guy who’s got it all together. ”

-- Deana M., Mount Pleasant, Michigan



Shoppers have been conditioned, as a result of the pandemic, that almost anything they need or want can be ordered from the comfort of their homes. See the \$2.1B YOY increase in online grocery use.

In our industry, **one-in-five (21%)** would be willing to pay MORE for funeral and cemetery services that make things convenient for people through using technology.

While this is effectively unchanged from last year's rate, we see clear indications that a white-glove, concierge-style approach could net significant benefits to overwhelmed consumers at their time of need.



Will Pay More
For Convenience

Grocery Dive March 2021



» Three-quarters (74%) of all respondents agreed that they would expect to see both funeral homes, as well as cemeteries, offer pricing online, and almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) expect to be able to review available products and services online (rates which are effectively consistent with last year's data).

The convenience of clear pricing – not a data dump of costs to “comply with federal regulations” – is key. If it's not easily findable on your website, it might as well not exist at all.



74%

Expect to View
Pricing Online



65%

Expect to View
Products Online

» While there was a temporary shift toward planning arrangements virtually, a returned desire for in-person planning post-pandemic is a sign of consumers' need to return to normalcy after a year of lockdowns and quarantine.

72% of consumers feel it will be important to meet in person with a funeral director post-pandemic, and 67% with a cemetery counselor, when someone passes. However, we continue to see a higher-than-expected percentage of consumers who like the convenience of handling arrangements virtually.

15% of respondents even mentioned that they would expect a "house call."

FLEXIBILITY AND A
"HAVE IT YOUR
WAY" MENTALITY
WILL DRIVE
CONSUMER
LOYALTY



Pre-Pandemic



2020

Mid-Pandemic



2021

Post-Pandemic





47%



Will **only** do business with companies that provide greater convenience

When respondents were asked how much they would pay for added convenience, two-thirds (66%) said they'd pay only slightly more (up to 10% more), while 13% said they'd pay considerably more. In short, the value-added benefit isn't the addition of webcasting or other such expected features – though this is critical to the profession's future success. Rather, these services must be integrated into an appealing overall customer experience to generate long-term return on investment.

Convenience includes transparency. About half the population will only do business with companies that provide greater convenience. This demonstrates the importance of listening to the customer and trying to make their experience as pleasant and stress-free as possible.

WINNING BEHAVIORS

- 1 Center processes around customer needs
- 2 Simple-to-use website, including pricing and products
- 3 Focus on trust and transparency
- 4 Train and hire customer-centric people



2021 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study



AN INCREASED NEED FOR PRE-NEED

“Pre-plan your funeral so you are not making these rash decisions, not to mention the fact that I think it causes all kinds of family stress – you know, brothers and sisters arguing with each other... if pre-planning takes place long before that need arises, it makes an awful lot of sense.”

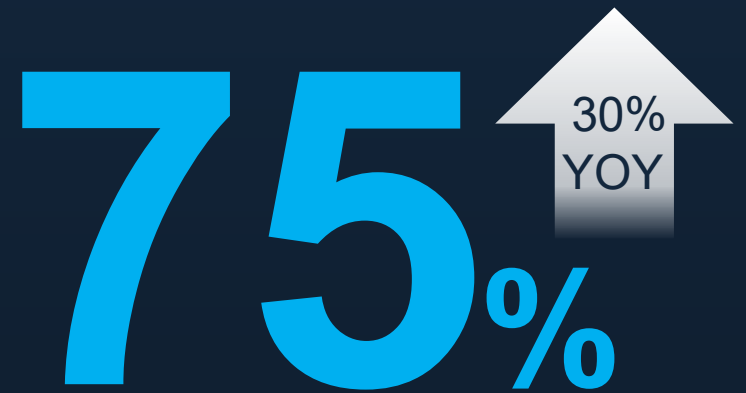
-- Barry M., Farmington, Michigan



Consumers are evaluating their own mortality at levels far higher than ever before. The awareness of the mortality has created a huge opportunity. Demand for pre-planning has increased 30% YOY to 75%.

And in communities such as the Hispanic, African American, Jewish, and Catholics, there is an even higher propensity to pre-plan. That number rises to 80% if the respondent experienced a death during the last year.

**THIS OPPORTUNITY IS REAL –
MORE SO NOW THAN AT ANY TIME IN RECENT HISTORY.**



2021



➤ It's also interesting to note that those who experienced a death last year expect to spend 10% more on average than those who didn't experience a death in the last year.

If you're passively waiting for walk-in customers and not using all the resources you can muster to market to them, you're missing a significant opportunity.

10% +

2021



WINNING BEHAVIORS

- 1 Embrace the pre-planning trend
- 2 Listen and be flexible
- 3 Adjust to a customer-centric mindset

“When the time came, the uncertainty of the pandemic and how it will continue to impact us really has made me think about taking that step and encouraging my wife to do the same.”

-- Dave M. Lagrange, Georgia



IN SUMMARY

“ The celebrations of life that I’ve been to are almost a party-like atmosphere. A funeral home isn’t exactly designed to feel like a celebration hall. It has a very defined purpose – it’s a place where you go to view dead people... that’s not exactly a celebration venue to me. ”

-- Todd H., Olathe, Kansas

WHO **WON** IN 2020?



LAST
RESPONDERS



EMBRACED
TECHNOLOGY



CUSTOMER-CENTRIC
EXPERIENCE



FOCUS ON
PRE-NEED

» WHO IS TAKING A LEADERSHIP POSITION?

Organizations that embrace their role as the “last responders” and deliver a customer-centric experience that incorporates transparency and technology with compassion and care. Those organizations exploring marketing options to unearth new leads for pre-need and pre-planning services are setting themselves up for business success.

» THE UPHEAVAL IN OUR INDUSTRY HAS BEEN A CHALLENGE, BUT THOSE CHALLENGES HAVE PRESENTED OPPORTUNITIES.

Those businesses which are adaptable and flexible and make the consumer experience seamless from an arrangement and technology perspective are poised for growth. Marketing-savvy organizations that are talking about pre-planning and repositioning the role of the funeral director to that of a “last responder” will gain a significant edge over the competition.



PREPARE FOR
FLEXIBILITY



SEAMLESS ARRANGEMENTS
EXPERIENCE



SEAMLESS TECHNOLOGY
EXPERIENCE



EMPHASIS ON
PRE-PLANNING



EMERGENCE OF THE
LAST RESPONDER

ABOUT US



The Foresight Companies
Consulting with Insight. That's Foresight.

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



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THANK YOU

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