



# *Mise en place*



*Customize Your  
Brand Recipe's  
Ingredients for  
a Perfect Fit*

by Nicole Vullo



# *à la* Deathcare Marketing

**M**ISE EN PLACE is a French culinary phrase that means “everything in its place.” It refers to the setup required before cooking, and is often used in professional kitchens to refer to organizing and arranging the ingredients.

A mentor of mine once told me that “your brand is equal parts of your reputation and your visibility.” This is something that always has stuck with me throughout my career. Having a strong reputation and high visibility solidifies who you are and what you do. It is only after you have your vision that you can begin to craft the elements of your brand, such as your colors, a well-designed logo, business tagline, and appropriate imagery. While it is acceptable to be aware of your competitors, do not let that influence what you do. It is best to stick to what works for you and your brand.

By the time you are reading this article, Thanksgiving and the start of the holiday season will be upon us. If you are anything like me, you already will have started to prepare your menu and begun to browse through your recipe box for those side dishes! While I am not allowed to share any of the Vullo family recipes (those are under lock and key), what I can share with you is the recipe needed to cook up a successful brand.

## **Your *Mise en place***

As with any recipe, your first step is prep—or your “*Mise en place*.” Quite frankly, in order to have a successful brand, you need to have your vision and components set in advance. One of the most important components of branding is to establish and maintain consistency. Brand consistency builds confidence in your brand. Now let’s tackle the ingredients that serve as the basis for your brand recipe.

## **Social Media**

Now that the prep is done, let’s focus on ingredient number one—social media. Social media can be an impactful extension of your brand. Social media is the main method for how you interact with your audience. It is vital to the success of your brand to be active on social media. At a time where transparency is valued by most consumers, you need to be your most authentic self, or you run the



high risk of losing both current and future clients.

When using social media for your business, it is important to remember that your digital identity is an exact replica of your physical character. This means that how you speak online needs to sound identical to how you speak to your client families as if they were sitting across from you.

Just remember, there is always that chance of a prospective client having already scanned your Facebook or LinkedIn page before doing business with you. One thing that I want to stress to you is that you need to know your audience and know the times. A phrase to always remember in both digital and physical life: “read the room.” A good rule of thumb to follow is sometimes less is more. Know your audience and know your times. If something inside you is saying that this post feels inappropriate, it probably is, and it probably should not be used. Often, minimalism and subtlety will do you more favors in the long run.

Your social media approach for your business needs to have a combination that is equal parts business promotion and thought leadership that will inspire your audience to interact with you. Trust me when I tell you that using your platform to display your goodwill and dedication to this profession will never be “off-brand.”

To maintain the consistency that I mentioned about your brand, it is beneficial to cross-post so and maximize on your reach and engagement.

### A Functional Website

The second ingredient to factor into your brand recipe is your website. It is essential to have a functioning website that is updated and features impactful content.

This allows your audience to discover who you are and how you can help them at their time of need.

If I were a betting woman, I would say that nine times out of 10 after a client sees you on social media, the next step is to visit your website. A successful website is one that is easy to navigate and is updated regularly. Think of the things your clients want to quickly see, such as your contact information. This needs to be easily located in the top navigation of your website.

When designing and working on your website, one thing you should consider including is your pricing. The pandemic and the results of our Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study have taught us that 75% of consumers want access to pricing online.

In addition, 65% expect to view your products online. It is important to note that half of those consumers may only

do business with you if your pricing is provided online. If you do not provide access to pricing online, they might choose to go elsewhere when the option presents itself.

Consider displaying your pricing to make it more convenient for the consumers and easier to understand. If your pricing is clearly stated on your website, just imagine how smooth your first conversation with your clients can be.

When talking about your website and your brand, two things are key: communication and transparency. We are engaging with families who have suffered a loss and are extremely vulnerable. It is our obligation when promoting ourselves and our businesses to convey all the essential information to our families in a clear and honest fashion. We need to support them from the moment we first interact and up until the last moment

they leave our care. If you do this, the trust a consumer will have in your brand will be stronger than ever.

### Your Pre-Need Program

The third and perhaps “secret ingredient” in your brand recipe is pre-need. Establishing an effective pre-need program is a great way to strengthen your brand’s awareness. A pre-need program has the potential to define the success of your business. Offering pre-need for your future clients will lead to an increase in your brand awareness and in your market share.

Having pre-need as part of your business model gives you the chance to develop a relationship with your community. Remember when I mentioned that your brand is

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your reputation and your visibility? Pre-need is your chance to build upon and strengthen that brand.

Among many things, the pandemic has caused us all to evaluate our own mortality at levels higher than ever before. That awareness has created a huge opportunity for pre-need sales. In fact, pre-need sales have hit levels we have never seen before.

When talking to consumers, 75% have a desire to pre-plan their funeral and cemetery arrangements in 2021. Prior to the pandemic, this percentage was 58%—that equates to a 30% increase year-over-year. Also, if someone has experienced a death, the demand to pre-plan is even higher at 80%. We have seen that those who are pre-planning their arrangements are also spending more money at over 10%.

To stay ahead of these changing times and to strengthen your brand, you need to accept and embrace the pre-planning trend. To do this, listen and be flexible with your client families. Your success will be measured in how you are able to adjust your business model to fit into the customer-centric mindset.

If you do not embrace this, then you are missing out on a huge opportunity. If you do not have the time or the resources, please look for help. We know it is not easy, but it is important to note that there are some incredible tools out there for you, such as third-party marketing and association resources. Implement

pre-need now and do whatever you can—because this present opportunity will be significant in both the short term and the long term.

### Be True to Your Brand

Your brand is your most valuable asset. It helps to accelerate your growth, profitability, and your long-term value. It is something that must be properly understood and carefully managed.

It is my hope that the impact of brand building does not frighten you. It needs to be viewed as an opening and a catalyst for you to transform your business.

My only parting advice is no matter how you brand your business and yourself, always remain true to you, your core values, and your purpose. 📧

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BY A BIG CORPORATION,  
WE ARE WORKING WITH  
PEOPLE LIKE US.”

## MARC & JANICE BRUSIE

BRUSIE FUNERAL HOMES  
AND CEMETERIES

We almost sold our business a few years ago, but the process was a struggle and the deal fell through at the last minute. In hindsight, it was the best thing that could have happened for us. Once we started working with Foundation Partners, it was an entirely different experience since their values and mission closely aligned with our own. They genuinely cared about what was important to us – the continuation of our legacy and ensuring our staff will be well taken care of and provided opportunities to grow. We didn't sell to someone who is only interested in our business for a profit. We sold to someone like us – funeral home owners who care about families and the communities they serve.



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