



**The Foresight Companies**  
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# 2023 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study

## Insights Summary

Research By



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# Study Overview



# Is The Funeral and Cemetery Profession At A Crossroads?

The profession had largely been dealing with an older generation of consumers who were more “traditional” in their methods. The internet and especially online commerce has ushered in an era where technology and transparency are table stakes for consumers across nearly every aspect of retail buying that the profession had largely been insulated from. However, the global pandemic served as a catalyst to accelerate that trend among older consumers.

This year, The Foresight Companies, with research by SoCal Approach, attempted to understand the gap between consumer attitudes and those views by the profession. What we found was a profession not responding to, and in some case, actively avoiding, how consumers want to do business...a profession too often resisting changes in the marketplace without a long-term strategic plan on how to handle a new, evolving and less “traditional” consumer.

Consumers today are less educated about death (but not for the pandemic) and want access to transparent information, at their convenience and on their own time, to make educated decisions. The profession has not given this to the consumer in a day and age where they can find and purchase literally almost anything else online. This has created the consumer perception that the profession is not transparent or has something to hide—therefore, the profession has a trust and confidence issue.



# Consumer Perception Vs. Profession Perception





# Consumer Perception of the Profession

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS HAS TAKEN A HIT; OUR PROFESSION IS NO DIFFERENT  
Honesty is the foundation for trust in any relationship. If you want to build lasting relationships with families, they need to believe their representative is being up front and forthcoming. Whether the profession itself, or its products or services, we know that consumer perceptions about their individual Funeral Director and Cemetery Advisors are higher than their perception of the profession as a whole.

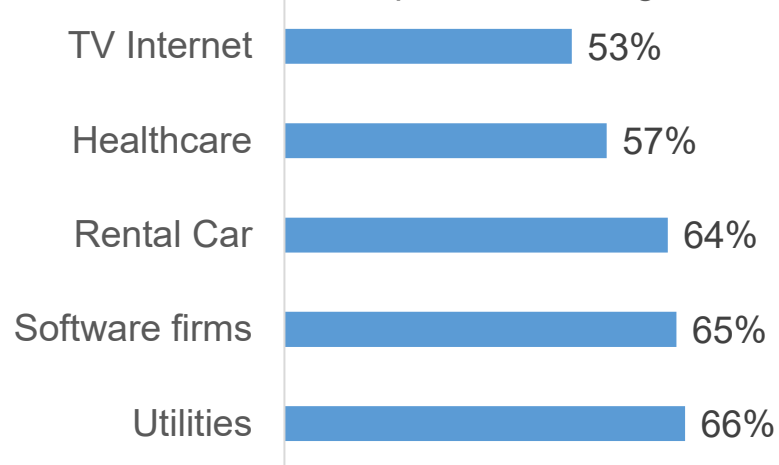




# 95%

Of consumers are satisfied with their primary care physicians

Five Industries with the LOWEST Customer Experience Ratings



## In Comparison To Some Other Industries

Specifically, the profession's challenge is similar to the one we see (and experience) in the medical profession. While an overwhelming majority of consumers (95%) are happy with their primary doctor, the healthcare profession as a whole is the second lowest rated industry, behind only your TV / Internet provider, and just below rental car providers.

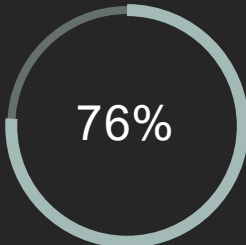


# Profession Perception vs. Consumer Perception

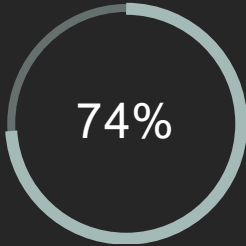
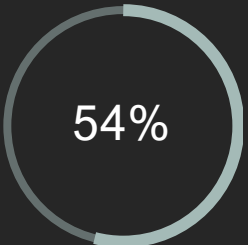
The profession's perception of their honesty is significantly higher than consumer perception. There is also an unfavorable gap in the profession's responsiveness to cultural traditions. The profession demonstrates self-awareness around a less-than-stellar approach to addressing problems.

## Profession Opinion

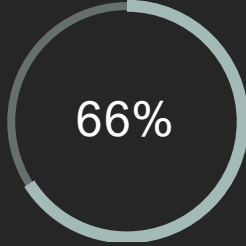
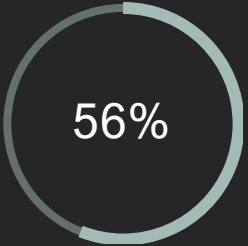
## Customer Opinion



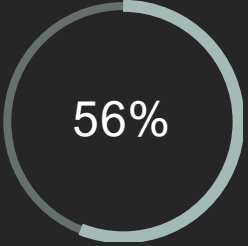
Honesty



Responsiveness to Cultural Traditions



Responsiveness to Problems

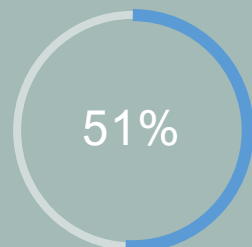
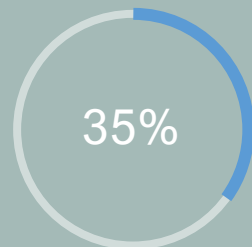
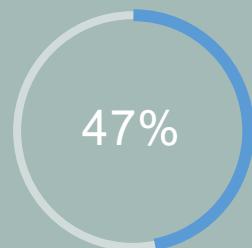




# Consumer Perception of the Profession

However, there are several areas where consumers rate higher than the profession rates themselves, including their ability to provide a modern and contemporary environment, the technology-based products and services provided, and the support available to family and friends after the services.

## Industry Opinion

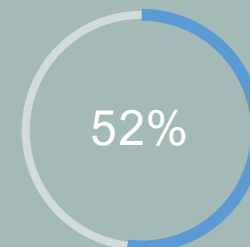
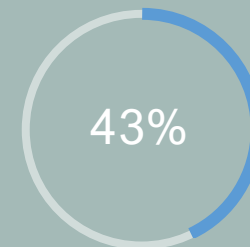
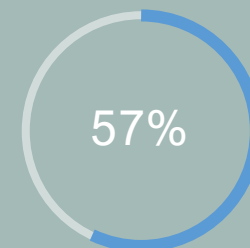


Modern / Contemporary Environment

Technology

Support after Service

## Customer Opinion





# How Does The Profession Overcome?

1. Do not assume that you know best and truly listen to your families and guests. (Transparency)
2. Educate, educate, educate. You have worked hard to become licensed, and there is an absolute value to the noble work you do in providing your services and merchandise—it is time to educate consumers about your professional skills and experience and what value you can bring to their lives. (Transparency)
3. Online pricing. Proactively and strategically present how you are priced and explain why based on your professional skills, service offerings, and amenities. (Transparency)
4. Make a deliberate investment in improving your website to represent your business virtually as well as improve your online ratings, reviews, and presence. (Technology)
5. Leverage your upgraded website to welcome those wanting to educate themselves on their own time and at their own convenience about the profession as a whole but more specifically about how you might serve them. (Transparency/Technology)
6. Make things convenient for your families and online seekers. Consumers today are looking primarily for the value of what they will/may experience, and convenience is an integral part of that consumer experience. Giving consumers all the information they need as well as options to decide and act in one place is now the norm. (Technology)

# EDUCATION





# There is a Massive Knowledge Gap with our Products and Services

	Industry BELIEVES Consumer Awareness is...	ACTUAL Consumer Awareness
Cremation memorialization	93%	43%
Memorial products	89%	57%
Online cremation arrangement	84%	14%
Eco-friendly burial	67%	23%
Home funerals	59%	29%
Tree burial	49%	17%
Human composting	45%	28%
Water cremation	39%	8%
Outer space burial	34%	14%

Consumers Don't Know What We  
Have to Offer...

42%

DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT  
FUNERAL HOME AND CEMETERY  
PRODUCTS AND SERVICES





# Reality of Consumers Today

While 25% of consumers say they would like a traditional remembrance to take place at a funeral home and 31% say they would prefer a remembrance off-site, a larger proportion of consumers:

# 44%

DO NOT KNOW WHERE THEY  
WANT THEIR REMBERANCE TO  
TAKE PLACE



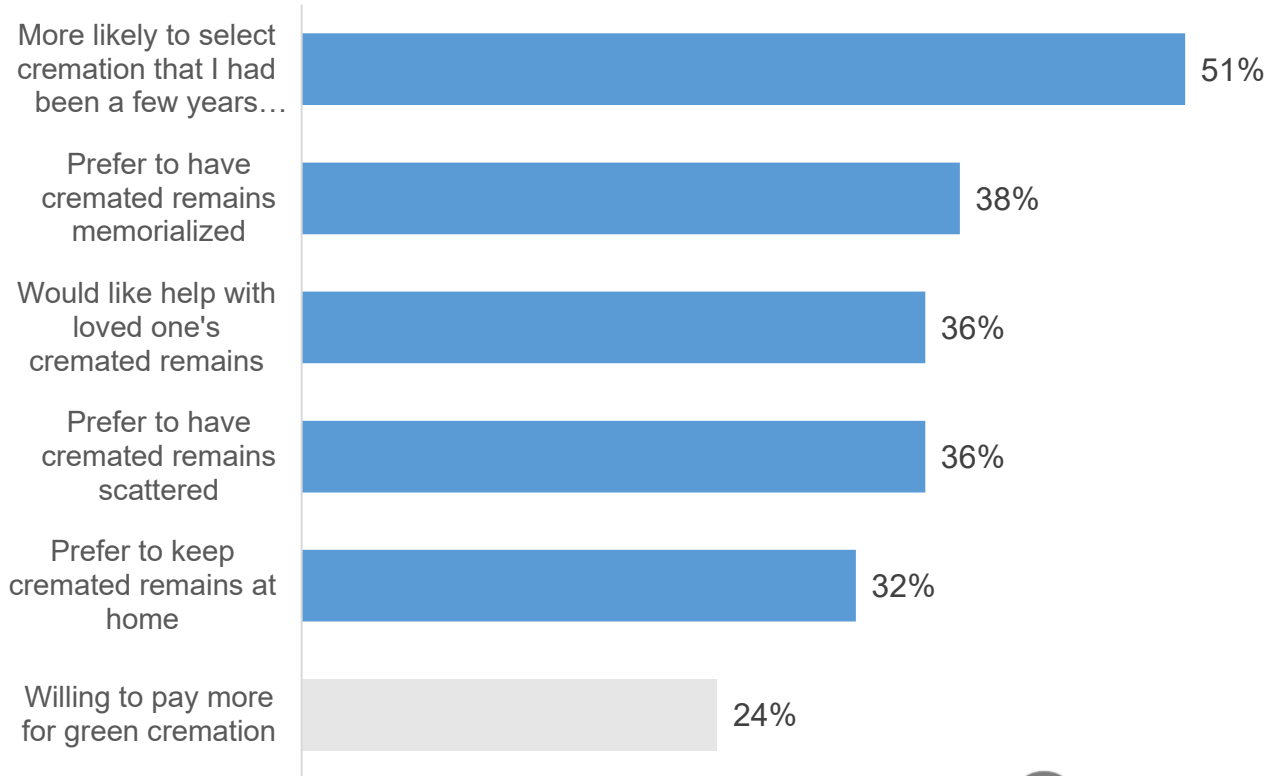
# Cremation is More Than Disposition

WHILE SOME CONSUMERS WOULD LIKE TO KEEP CREMATED REMAINS AT HOME, A MAJORITY HAVE OTHER PLANS—THE FACT IS, A COMBINED 74% OF CONSUMERS PREFER MEMORIALIZATION.

36%

WOULD LIKE **HELP** TO FIGURE  
OUT WHAT TO DO WITH LOVED  
ONE'S CREMATED REMAINS

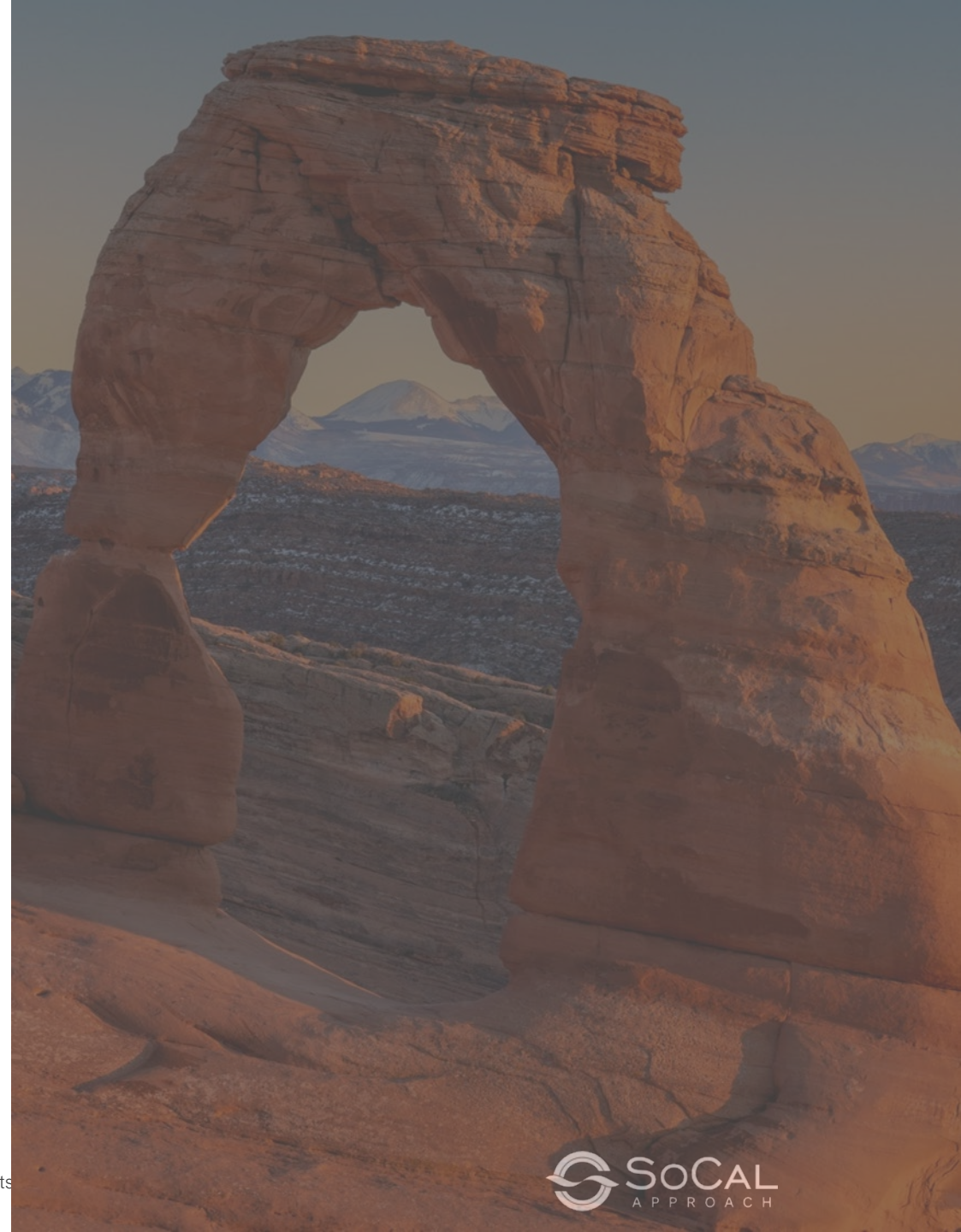
Cremation Preferences





# Cremation is No Longer Exclusively a Low-Cost Offering

- 57% percent of consumers stated a strong preference for cremation, in line with industry norms.
- That preference is forecast to rise to 64% by the 2026, reaching 70% by 2031.
- Roughly one-half of industry insiders do not help facilitate celebrations or catering for cremation families.
- Those who prefer cremation expect their cremation to cost to be \$5,674
- 36% of cremation customers say they want a religious component to their service, only 23% percent say they want no services whatsoever representing a huge opportunity for cremation memorialization



# What Do Cremation Customers Value?

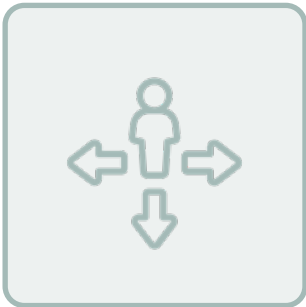
They value transparency in pricing, options, affordability (value not necessarily a low price), and personalization of services, including assistance with memorialization.



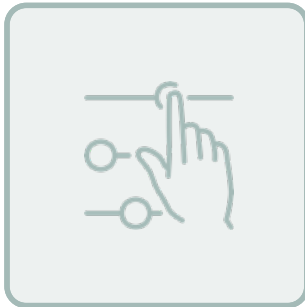
Price  
Transparency



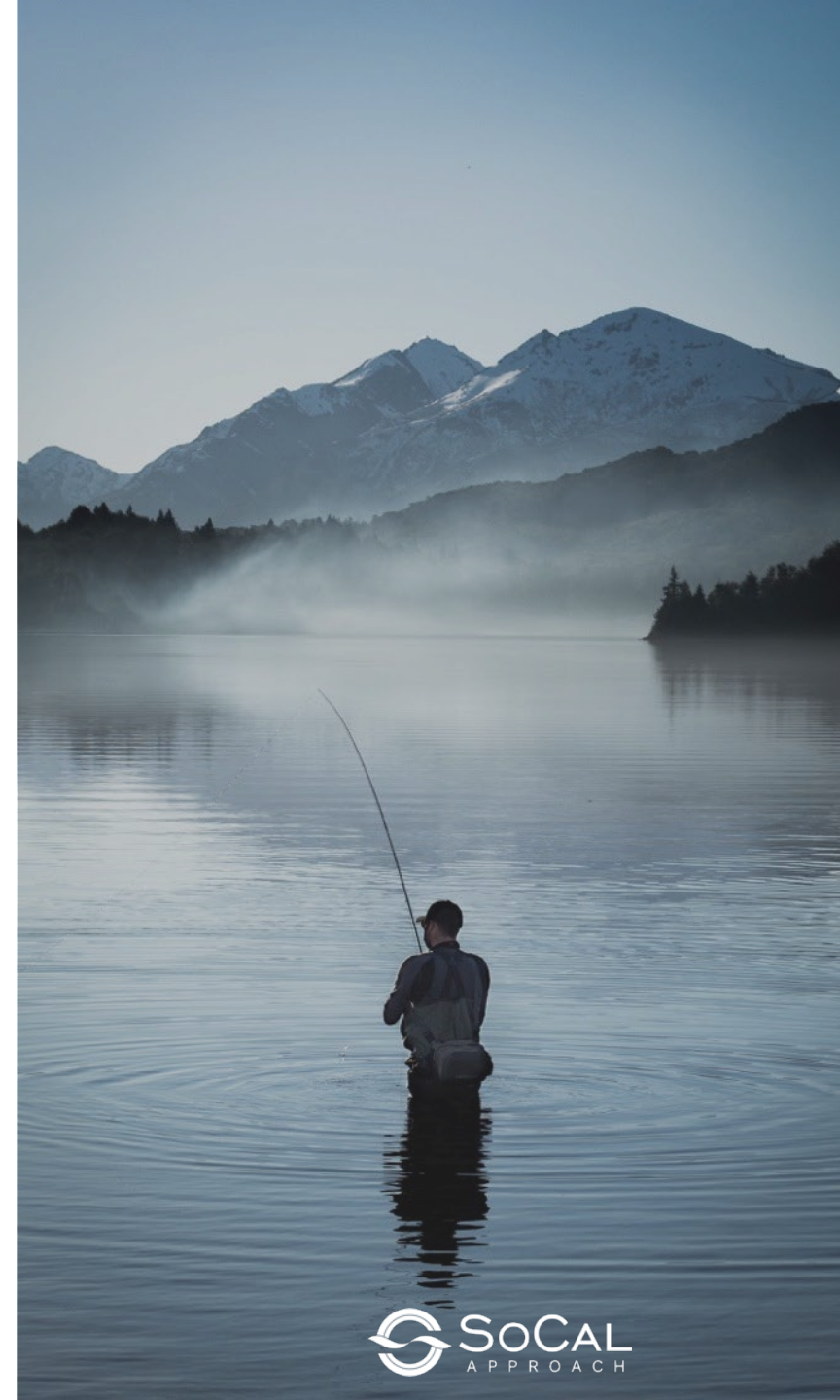
Affordability



Options



Personalization



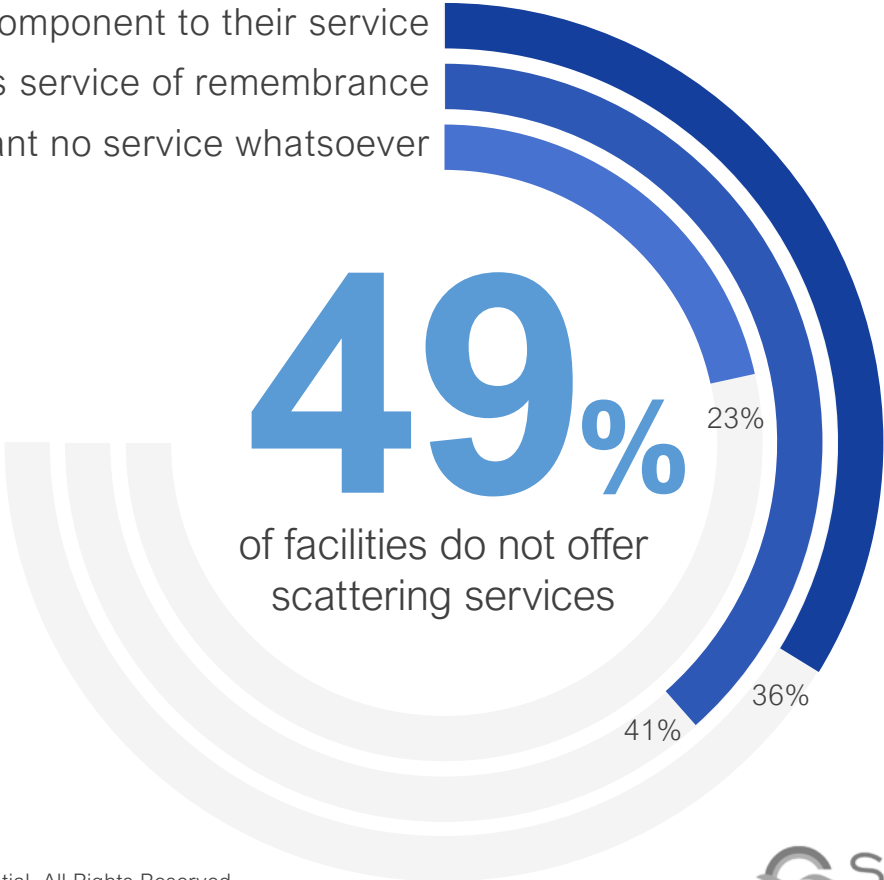




# Cremation Opportunity

77% of consumers tell us that they would like some type of service of remembrance if and when they are cremated. This revelation is in stark contrast to traditional cremation families. However, nearly half of industry respondents say they do not offer scattering services, which means we're missing opportunities to service these customers.

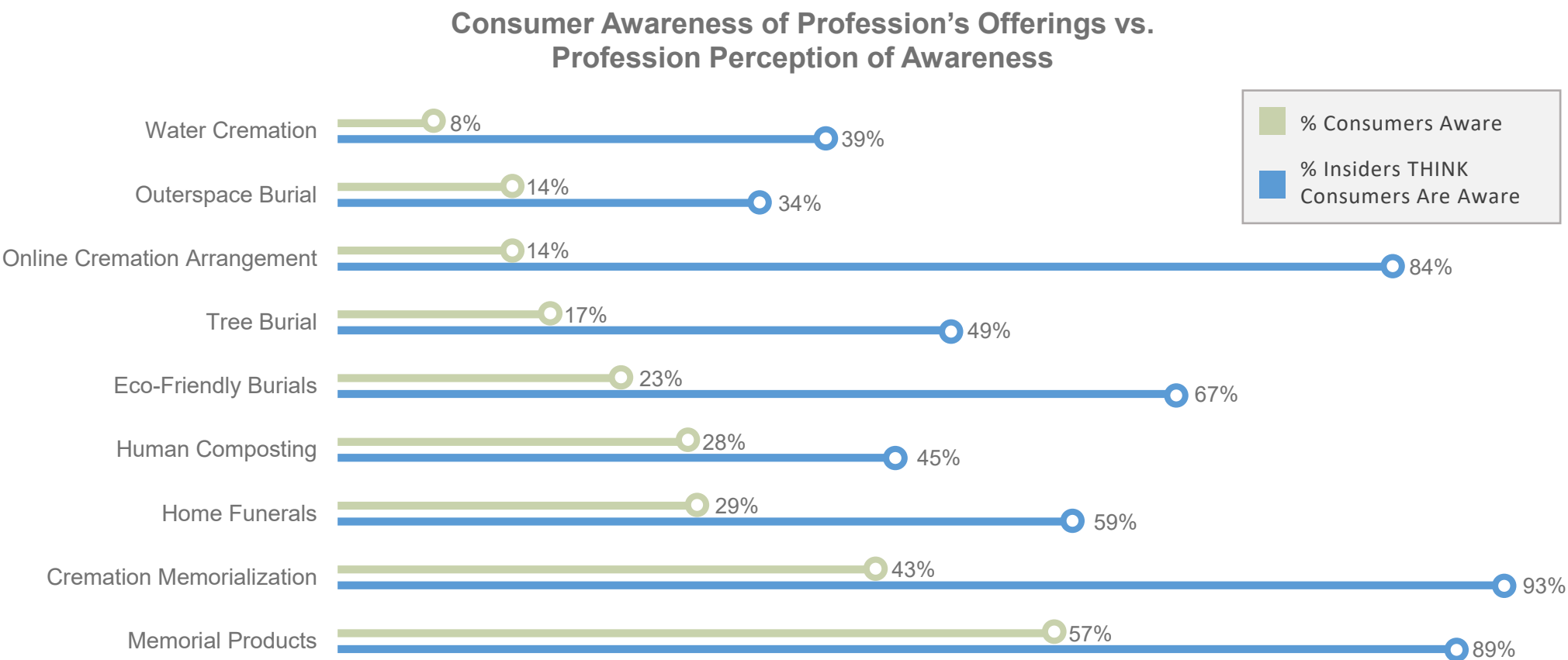
- Want a religious component to their service
- Want a non-religious service of remembrance
- Want no service whatsoever



# Profession Overestimates Consumer Awareness

## PROFESSION INCORRECTLY ASSUMES THAT CONSUMERS KNOW MORE

Similar to the false assumption that it is always about price or low cost whenever a family mentions cremation, the profession continues to miss opportunities to truly listen and educate families on every option, every time.

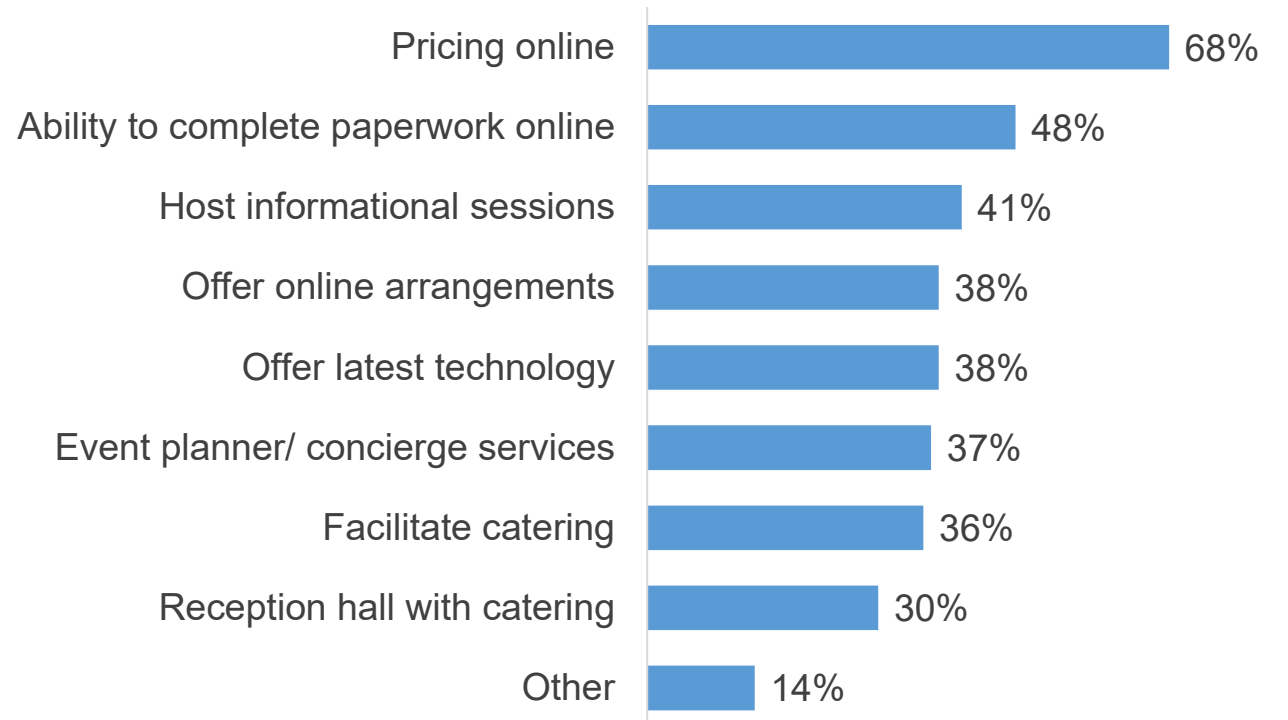




# What Consumers Do Know That They Want

Consumers may not know what it is you do or what value you bring, but they do know the things that they want to see. So, listen to what they say.

How Important is it that the industry offer the following products and services...?



# TRANSPARENCY





# Price Transparency = Price Confidence = Trust

When you do not disclose your pricing online in a clear manner for consumers to understand, they think that you have something to hide. Even with older consumers, as they continue to gain regular exposure to online shopping, the lack of access to easily explained online pricing is glaring in its absence.

70%

OF CONSUMERS AGREE THAT  
TRUST DECREASES IF THEY  
DON'T SEE PRICES CLEARLY  
ONLINE

## Consumer Perceptions

Trust decreases if prices are not  
online

70%

Don't understand why companies  
don't have all products, services  
and prices online

65%

Don't purchase products from  
companies that don't have good  
online reviews

53%

# Customers are Lost When Prices Aren't Online

*Your customers are clear about how they want to do business, in last year's study, almost 7 out of 10 said they would not do business with companies that did not provide pricing online.*

71%

Funeral Home

68%

Cemetery



# Proportion Of The Profession Who Say That They Are Prepared For New FTC Mandate

33%

As a profession, we are woefully unprepared for what is to come. This FTC Mandate appears to have acceptance and support from consumers: **68%** of funeral customers and **67%** of cemetery customers want pricing online.



# Transparency With Online Pricing Is Not Going Away

Building trust is directly related to transparency. The profession has been reluctant to provide pricing online which greatly hinders confidence from consumers. However, even with the GROWING EXPECTATION OF PRICING ONLINE, THERE IS RESISTANCE TO PROVIDE IT. THIS WILL CONTINUE TO NEGATIVELY IMPACT HOW CONSUMERS PERCEIVE THE PROFESSION.

51%  
↑ 14%  
YOY

OF CONSUMERS WILLING TO PAY FOR  
CONVENIENCE SAY CLEARLY LISTING  
PRICING ONLINE IS A TOP PRIORITY





# The Value of Trust and Transparency

Consumers who believe the profession is being transparent are 35% more satisfied with their experience, and that aligns with an increased spend. Consumers who believe they are being treated fairly are willing to spend 16% more on average than others.

16%

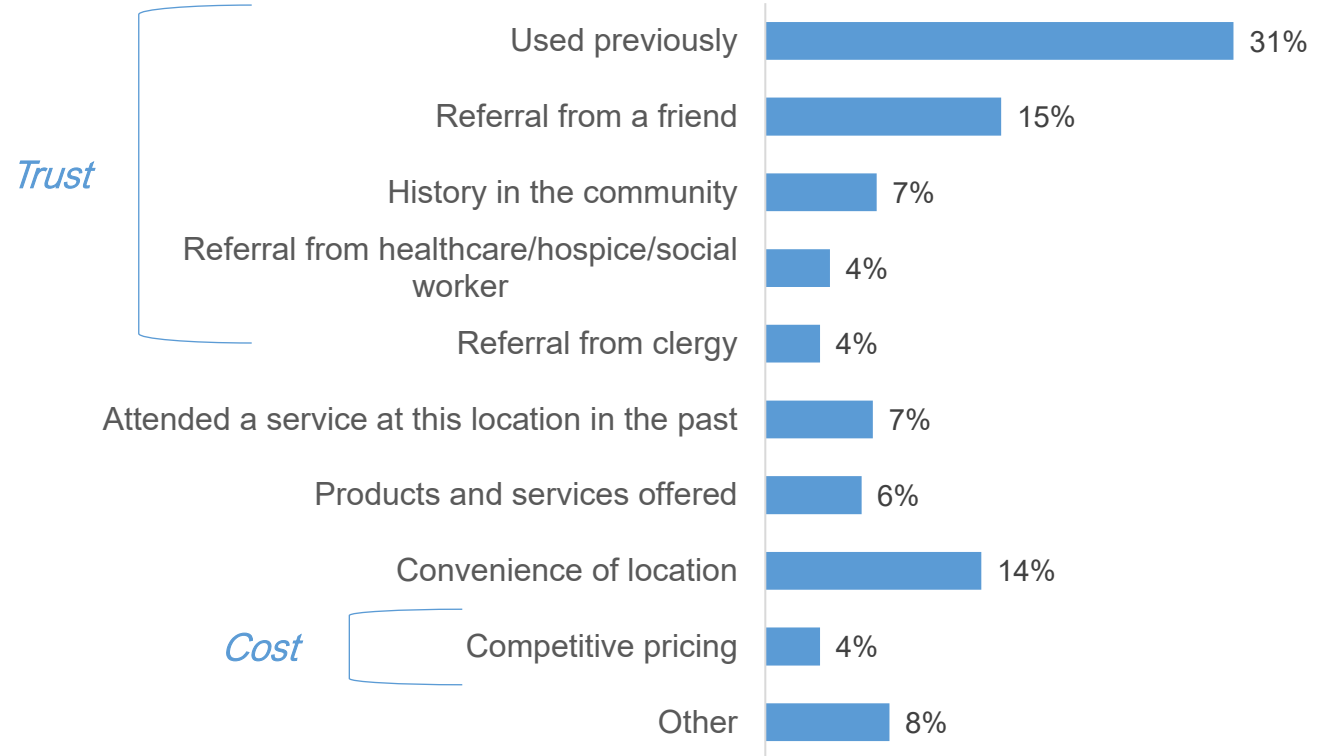
INCREASE IN SPEND BY CONSUMERS  
WHO BELIEVE THE PROFESSION IS  
BEING TRANSPARENT



# How Important is Trust? Far More Important Than Cost.

61%

CONSUMERS CHOOSE  
A LOCATION BASED ON  
FACTORS RELATED TO TRUST



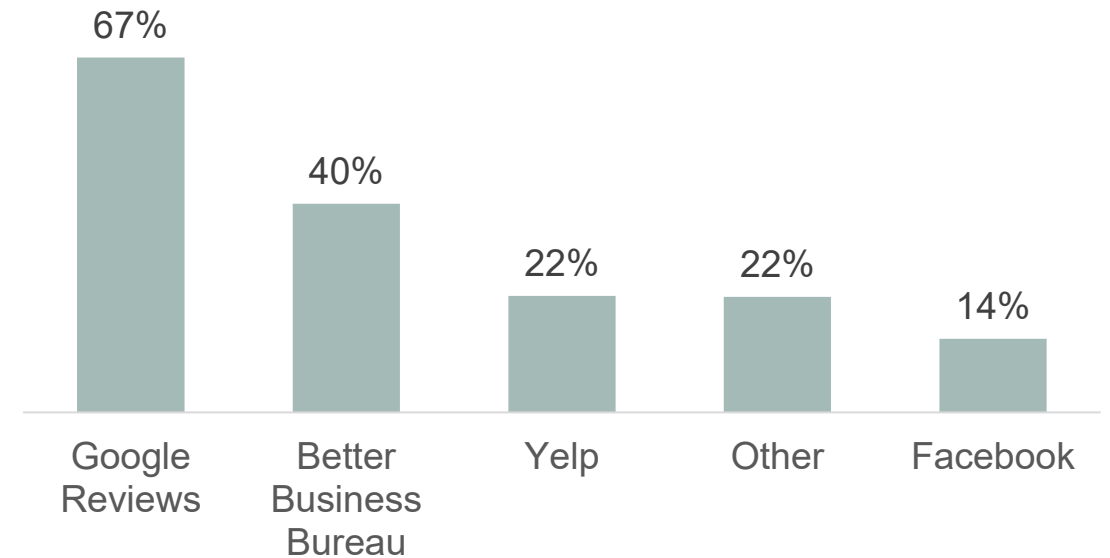
# ELEVATE YOUR DIGITAL PRESENCE

# Your Online Reputation Has Never Mattered More

76%

CONSUMERS SAY THAT ONLINE  
REVIEWS AND RATINGS ARE  
IMPORTANT

What Online Reviews and Ratings  
Websites Did You Visit?



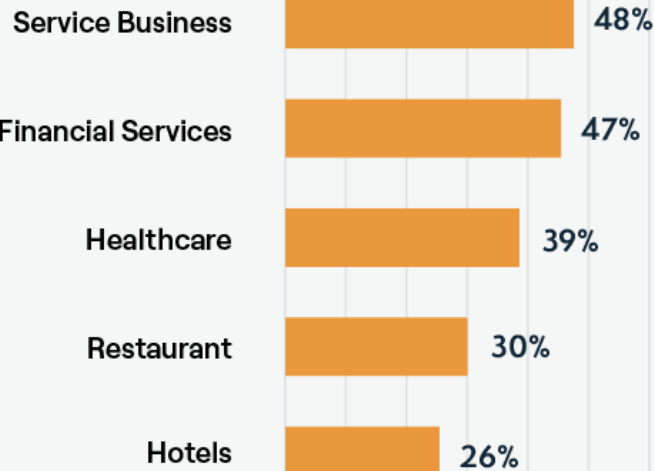


# Sharing Economy - Technology & Transparency among Peers

## 95% of Consumers Read Online Reviews

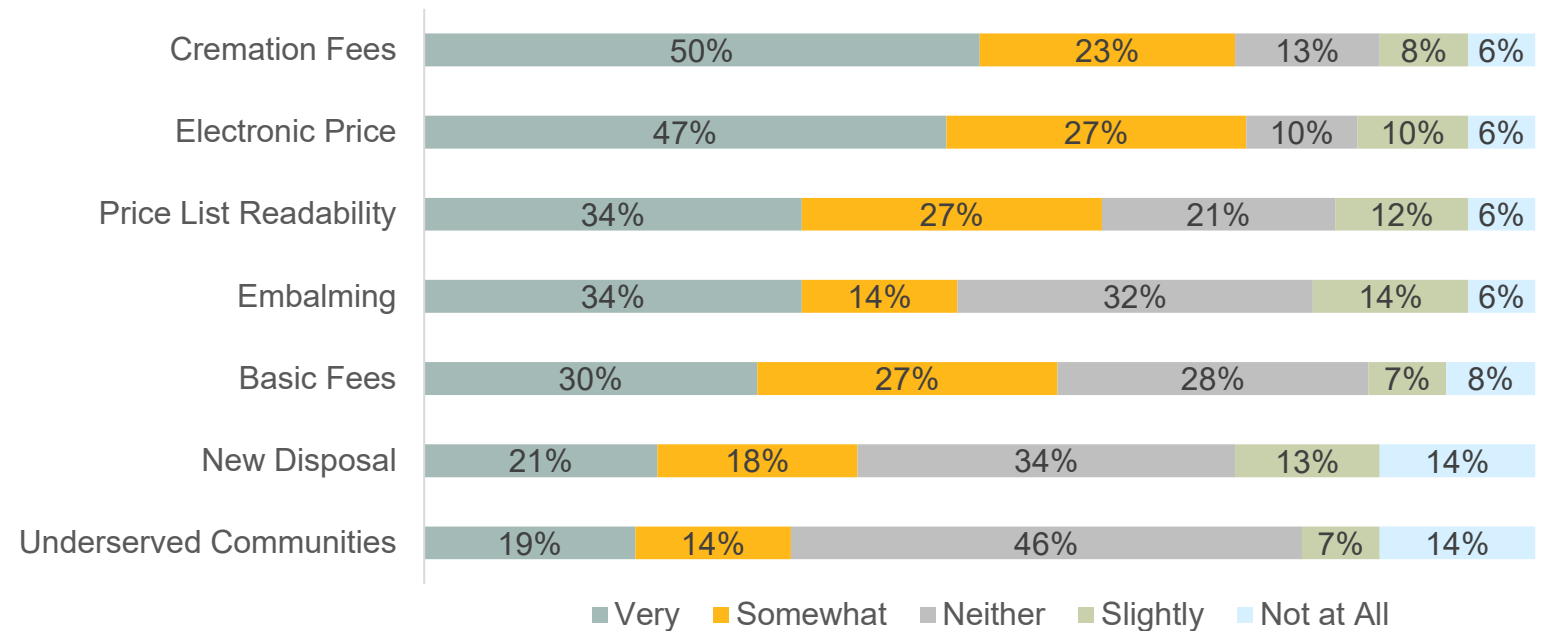


## % of consumers that consider reputation important



# The Profession is NOT Prepared For the Funeral Rule

How Prepared are You for the Potential FTC Changes

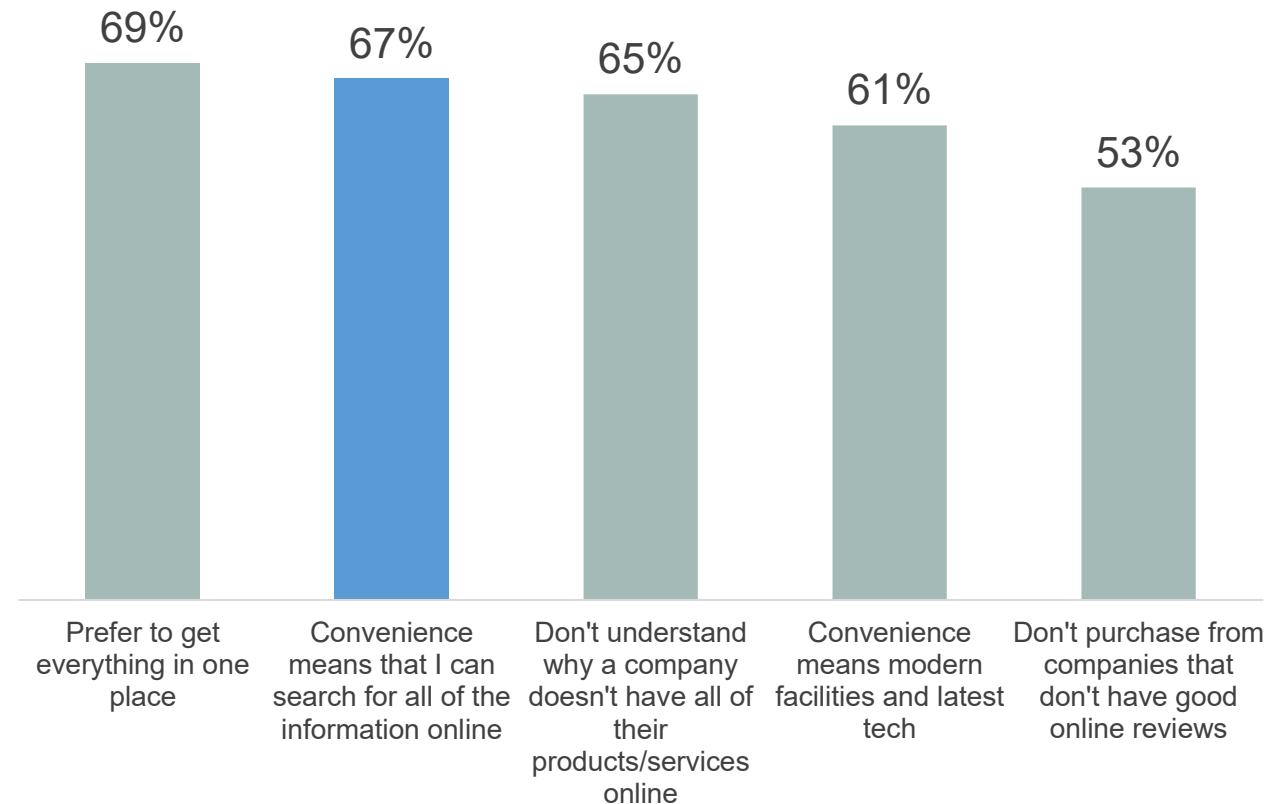


# The Impact of a Convenience Economy

With the rise of the convenience economy, many consumers are looking for ways to simplify and expedite everything in their life. Understanding how consumers are defining convenience is critical to understanding and addressing their needs.

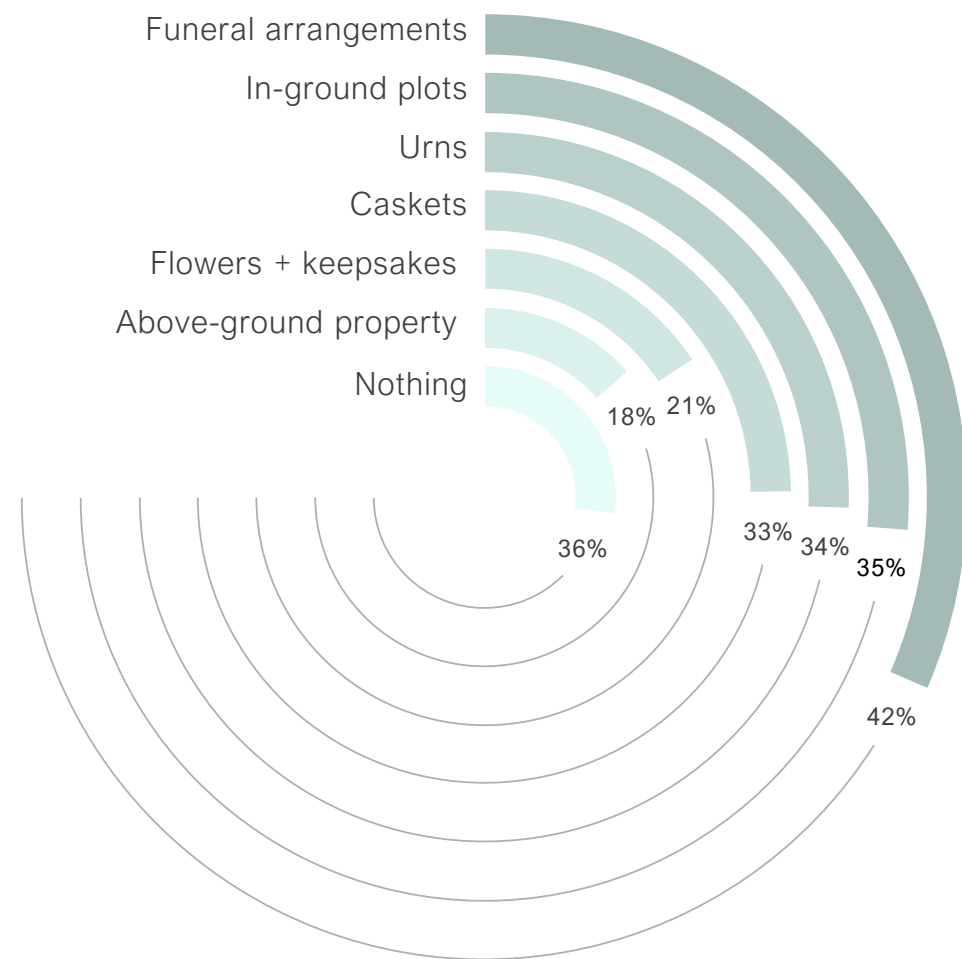
67%

Define convenience as being able to find everything online





# Which Products will Consumers Buy Online?



Armed with the ability to now purchase nearly anything they need online, consumer interest in purchasing our services through the web is consistent from 2022. The interest in purchasing items online cuts across both large and small purchases.

42%

ARE WILLING TO  
PURCHASE FUNERAL  
ARRANGEMENTS ONLINE

# Summary and Final Thoughts



# Consumers Get Candid with their Wishes

## Consumer Sentiment is Clear

At almost no other time, have consumers provided such a clear roadmap to how to serve them. Making the EXPERIENCE better is more than just starting the service on time and error free. Transparency and service delivery provide a foundation to a customer engaged, providing positive reviews and advocating for your business when asked for referrals by others.



## What can the Profession do to Deliver a Better Experience?

- Making funerals more celebratory and creating good memories for the family of the deceased.
- Encouraging transparency and fair business practices throughout the profession with online pricing.
- Provide greater information about what the profession does, including information and explanation on options for services and merchandise.
- Making things easier and more convenient for the consumer as part of their entire experience.



# What Consumers Say They Want

We further categorized those 2,951 open-ended responses into six themes, three of which are focused on the improving processes, and the other three focused on improving products:

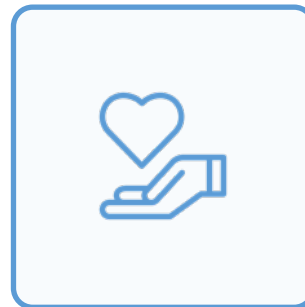
## Improve the Process



## Arrangement



## Execution

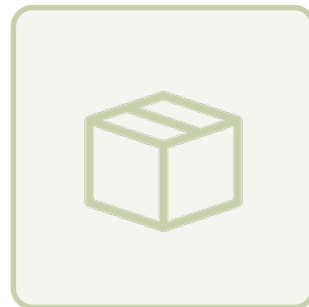


## Support

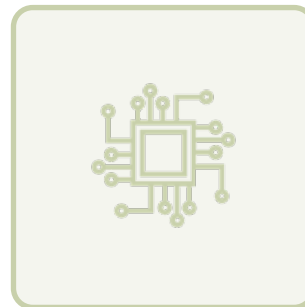
## Improve the Product



## Cultural



## Offerings



## Technology



# The Profession Gets Candid with its Concerns

## The Opportunity is There if You Take It

We demonstrated that consumers trust their funeral directors and cemetery professionals – they just don't trust the industry overall.

We believe the winners will take the position that building relevance with consumers and providing options that they need is paramount. Using e-commerce and other tools that demonstrate a professional, adaptable, modern experience is paramount, ignore it at your own peril.



## How do we remain relevant with consumers?

- Education/ promotion
- Modernization / personalization
- Quality / compassion
- Professionalism
- Adaptability / transparency

## What can we do to address consumer needs?

- Personalized, flexible options for memorialization
- Updated and modern facilities and services
- Educating consumers
- Open and transparency about services and prices
- Partnering with local planners/ facilities for meaningful celebrations
- Memorialization – modern technology tools

# The Profession Gets Candid with its Concerns

According to our industry insiders, these are the profession's biggest concerns in the short-term (1 - 3 years) and the longer term (3 - 5 years). Additionally, we asked which is the most immediate threat.

## 1 – 3 Years

- Better technology offerings
- Green funeral and burial options
- Home funerals

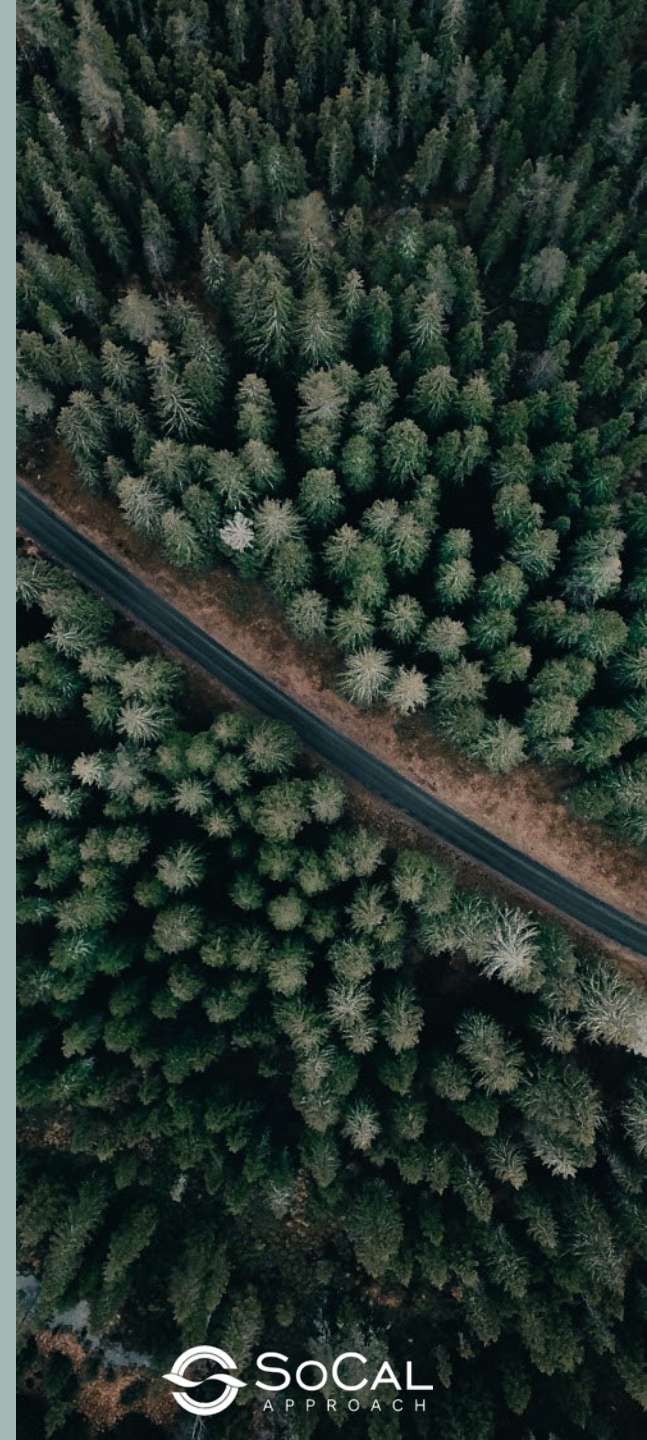
- Financing + estate planning
- Other – Personalization, simplicity, convenience, celebration, aftercare

## 3 – 5 Years

- Rise in cremation rates
- Consumer education and expectations
- Staffing shortages

## The Single Largest Threat Facing the Profession

- Lowering standards of entry into the profession
- Memorial services outside the funeral home
- Lack of consumer education





# Consumer Feedback Compared to Profession Insider Feedback

- Profession insiders identified the most critical areas that need to be addressed as cremation, consumer education and staffing. This differs from the most critical pain points uncovered in consumer's feedback which is making the experience better.
- In large part, the profession is unprepared, and in some cases, unwilling, to meet or address the changes the FTC is recommending.
- Not surprisingly, there is a difference in perceptions between older, more tenured professionals compared to younger, less experienced members of the profession. However, both groups agree on the need to teach directors how to deal with non-ceremonial cremation requests by families and to maintain relevance and adapt to changes in the industry.



# Closing Thoughts

The global pandemic served as a catalyst to accelerate the trend in accepting new ways of doing things among older consumers.

The profession has been slow to adapt to changes in technology and grudgingly accepted some of the trends within the industry even while holding on to some of the vestiges of a past process.

Even the largely older generation of consumers is being co-opted to new ways of seeking services and coming out of the pandemic, they won't return to old way.

Baby Boomers, shouldn't be misread just because they may be "traditional" in their desired services. They are still interested in online shopping, information gathering, using online reviews – and then selecting service providers – or the influencer or family member helping them is.

The internet and especially online commerce has ushered in an era where technology and transparency are table-stakes for consumers across nearly every aspect of retail buying.

Today we find an industry not responding to, and in some case, actively avoiding, how consumers want to do business...an industry too often resisting changes in the marketplace without a long-term strategic plan on how to handle a new, less traditional consumer

Consumers who want trust, they want transparency and they want to be empowered. Give them what they want: access to the information they need to make educated decisions and an industry confident enough to trust them to make these decisions as the new normal in deathcare.

# About Us



The Foresight Companies, a consulting firm 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 profession.

For more information visit:  
[www.theforesightcompanies.com](http://www.theforesightcompanies.com)



SoCal Approach Marketing and Consulting was founded to measure, identify and execute insights-driven marketing solutions that businesses can use to better understand and reach their target audiences.

For more information visit:  
[www.socalapproach.com](http://www.socalapproach.com)