

Understanding Today's Funeral Consumer

New data spells out what consumers want from funeral service, but are practitioners listening?

Every year, The Foresight Companies takes a hard look at how consumer attitudes and behaviors have evolved regarding funeral service. Unfailingly, we uncover both new insights and repeat challenges.

Foresight's 2025 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study is no different. The data is rich. The insights are clear. The message is urgent: The consumer is changing, but are funeral service practitioners?

This year's study gathered feedback from more than 5,000 consumers and nearly 500 funeral service professionals. This gives us a 90% degree of confidence in the information we gathered, straight from the mouths of consumers and funeral service professionals. The data tells a story of a profession somewhat stuck in neutral while the world around it continues to shift. Consumers are more digital, price-conscious and demanding of transparency and service, but often, they're far less informed than we realize. If you're not adapting – actively and intentionally – you're at risk.

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PEOPLE OVER PROFESSION

Based on the Foresight study, there is a significant gap between how consumers view the funeral service profession versus how they view its practitioners. Consumers rated the profession at 61% overall, which is flat compared to last year's results. Professionals scored higher, at 70%.

From the standpoint of the practitioner, this is encouraging but also humbling. Consumers view

your professionalism, compassion and ability to comfort as your greatest strengths. Conversely, they see honesty and your ability to provide a modern environment with tech-based products and services as your greatest challenges. They essentially said that the profession needs a makeover and has a credibility problem. Fortunately, this creates the opportunity for you to show consumers you're different.

ONLINE ISN'T OPTIONAL

Online expectations of the funeral service profession will explode in the near future. Recently, 60% of customers conducted research on funeral and cemetery providers online. In 2025, the number of consumers who will conduct online research is 78%. The “digital avalanche,” as we call it, has arrived.

Despite this, many firms are still unprepared. Only 63% of firms prompt families for reviews, and nearly 40% don't make pricing easily accessible online. These are reminders as to why it's critical to have a well-crafted website and solid search engine optimization (SEO) to ensure your business maintains a strong digital presence.

When asked what consumers wanted but couldn't find online, they mentioned detailed pricing, virtual facility tours, scheduling tools and visual resources. These are not unreasonable requests but rather features that consumers receive on most other business websites.

Funeral home owners must stop thinking of their website and online tools as supplemental. Today, they form the “virtual front door” of your business, acting as both the first impression and potential deciding factor in whether a consumer reaches out to you. Investing in a strong website, SEO and online arrangement tools isn't just a tech upgrade – it's a strategic imperative.



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Soxman Funeral Homes, Ltd.
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A group of 15 people, including men and women of various ages, are posed for a group photo on a green lawn in front of a white building with a porch. Three people are seated in the front row on wooden chairs, while the rest stand behind them. A yellow Labrador retriever is sitting on the grass in the lower-left foreground. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

PRICING, PLEASE

One of the loudest messages from the The Foresight Companies study was “Tell us what it costs!” Nearly a third of consumers said pricing transparency is critical to building trust, and 27% said offering options that are more affordable would improve their experience.

Unfortunately, funeral service continues to lag here. Most online pricing is buried in PDFs or static documents. Other firms still exclusively provide this basic information over the phone or in person. The current reality is that consumers demand online pricing information, and if you don’t provide it, you risk losing their business. Consumers want clear, digestible pricing, and they want it accessible online without pressure.

The latest Foresight study also showed that when consumers see positive reviews on trusted third-party sites such as Google or Yelp, their trust increases significantly. That trust evaporates, however, when those reviews are cherry-picked or hidden.

For consumers, it’s not just about your firm’s affordability – it’s also about your company’s *perceived* honesty. When funeral service professionals hide their prices and dodge direct answers, they undermine the goodwill they’ve worked so hard to acquire.

NOT-SO-COMMON KNOWLEDGE

One of the most staggering findings in the latest Foresight study is that only 37% of consumers feel they have been educated about their options. That might seem surprising because the study found that professionals attempted to educate consumers 76% of the time. Regardless of the reason for the discrepancy, it presents opportunities to improve customer service and generate incremental revenue.

Of perhaps even greater concern is the gap between what funeral service professionals think consumers know about available services and what consumers actually know. Here is a short list demonstrating the disparity between the education that practitioners claim to have offered versus the education that consumers claim to have (or have not) received:

- *Preplanned arrangements: 88% offered versus 31% received (57% gap)*
- *Cremated-remains options: 79% offered versus 32% received (47% gap)*
- *Latest technology: 71% offered versus 25% received (~47% gap)*

- *Urn options: 83% offered versus 36% received (47% gap)*

- *Variety of keepsakes and memorial products: 79% offered versus 36% received (43% gap)*

With these statistics, funeral service professionals’ assumption that families know more than they do becomes apparent. Practitioners assume brochures or brief conversations are enough, but they’re not. Without adequate education, consumers become confused. And when consumers feel confused, they delay, defer or disengage entirely. So, about what topics do they need education? The answer is most aspects of funeral service, including:

- *Cremation services*
- *Permanent memorialization options*
- *“Green” and eco-friendly alternatives*
- *Differences between preplanning and preneed*
- *Keepsakes*
- *Concierge services*
- *Celebration-of-life customization*

This isn’t just about better service – it’s a business opportunity. The more a consumer understands, the more value they perceive and the more they’re willing to invest.

Funeral service professionals need to prioritize education not just in person but also across every touchpoint, including websites, social media and community events.

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CONCERNING CREMATION

Cremation rates continue to rise as people increasingly choose this form of disposition for themselves and their loved ones. That said, one in four consumers, for example, doesn’t know what they want done with cremated remains. Many express interest in keeping cremated remains (36%) or scattering them (34%) without understanding the emotional or logistical consequences.

Meanwhile, consumer awareness of cremation memorialization options is alarmingly low. Fu-

neral service professionals believe that as many as 90% of consumers are aware of these offerings, but in reality, the number is less than 50%.

More notably, only 67% of consumers are aware that cremation as a form of final disposition can be combined with a funeral or memorial service. This disconnect is costing you – not just in terms of lost revenue but also missed opportunities to create meaningful, healing experiences for families.

Funeral directors must convey that though cremation is the more affordable option, it can be part of a personalized, lasting tribute, too. Again, this entails education and clear communication with consumers, both online and in person.

THE TECH CRISIS

Consumers want more tech, but they believe funeral service can't deliver it. In the Foresight study, technology-related competencies proved the lowest-rated traits for both the profession and its professionals.

Although some funeral homes have made impressive strides technologically, many lag. The absence of digital scheduling tools, mobile-optimized websites and even simple online forms sends a clear message to consumers: "We're not ready to meet your expectations." The result is missed calls, missed revenue and a missed opportunity to build trust. To improve the situation of

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your firm, start with the essentials:

- Allow families to schedule appointments online
- Digitize paperwork
- Post virtual tours of your facility
- Provide a positive user experience on both the computer and phone
- Offer and streamline online payment

Understand that these tools don't replace the in-person services you provide, they enhance them. The bottom line is that the funeral service must stop using tradition as a shield against innovation. Technology should support, not replace, the compassionate service for which you're known.

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MOVING FORWARD

Here's a truth that funeral providers can't ignore: Consumers are evolving faster than the profession is. Other service industries, such as healthcare, legal and financial, are modernizing aggressively by embracing digital tools and customer-first models. Funeral professionals cannot afford to view these trends as optional. This is not a fear-based call to panic but a responsibility-based call to lead. The data is clear, and the opportunity is there. But change won't happen unless funeral professionals make it happen.

If you're waiting for the "right time" to modernize or rethink how you convey value, it's *now*. Potential customers are already forming opinions of your firm based on what they find – or don't find – online. With the findings of the Foresight study in mind, here are five action items:

- 1. Audit your digital presence.** *Is your website modern and mobile- and SEO-friendly? Can a consumer find everything they need without calling you?*
- 2. Show your pricing.** *Publish it clearly, simply and honestly. Don't bury it or make it confusing. Trust is built through transparency.*
- 3. Make education a cornerstone.** *Every team member should be trained in how to best educate families. Develop short explainer videos, FAQ*

pages and take-home guides. Host seminars or open houses in your community.

- 4. Modernize the customer experience.** *Start with review requests, online payments and digital paperwork. If you're already there, great; if not, this is your starting point.*

- 5. Close the awareness gap.** *Don't assume the families you serve know what you offer. Show them every product and service. Make the options visible, accessible and easy to understand.*

To those who've already embraced change, you're leading the way. To those who are unsure where to begin, start small with the above ideas.

There has never been a better time to be in funeral service – if you're willing to evolve. The opportunity to improve, to serve better and to grow is right in front of you. Meet the moment with action, not just intention.

Your profession is one of the most honorable callings there is. Funeral directors serve people during their most vulnerable moments, and they do so with grace and empathy. That part doesn't need to change, but how you deliver your services must. If you want to protect the future of funeral service, you can't just honor tradition – you must evolve it.

Fortunately, you don't need to do it all at once. You just need to get started.

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