

Bridging the Technology Divide: Consumers, Professionals, and The Future of Deathcare

Consumers are increasingly expecting improved technology, but we're often confused as to what that means. Understanding exactly what "technology" means to consumers is critical to delivering a world-class experience to the families we serve.



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INTRODUCTION

We recently released the results of the sixth installment of the annual Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study (FCCBS), our look into the behaviors, attitudes, and expectations of funeral/cemetery consumers and the professionals that serve them. Although a lot has changed in the last six years, there is one study finding that HAS NOT changed: *the profession continues to struggle to meet the technology needs of today's consumer.*

- For the 3rd year in a row, consumers gave the profession itself alarmingly low ratings for providing tech-based products and services (2nd lowest of all 10 ratings).
- For the 2nd year in a row, consumers gave industry professionals alarmingly low ratings for explaining tech-based products and services (lowest rating of all 10 ratings)

In other words, the profession as a whole isn't very good at delivering technology to the consumer, and the professionals who serve the consumer aren't very good at explaining it either.

You may be thinking, what does this mean exactly... "technology" can mean many different things. And you're right, technology is a broad umbrella that covers a lot. So, let's take a deeper dive into the technology challenge facing our profession... and what they need to do about it.

only
49%

of consumers give top marks for the Profession's ability to provide technology-based products

only
53%

of consumers give top marks for our employee's ability to explain technology-based products



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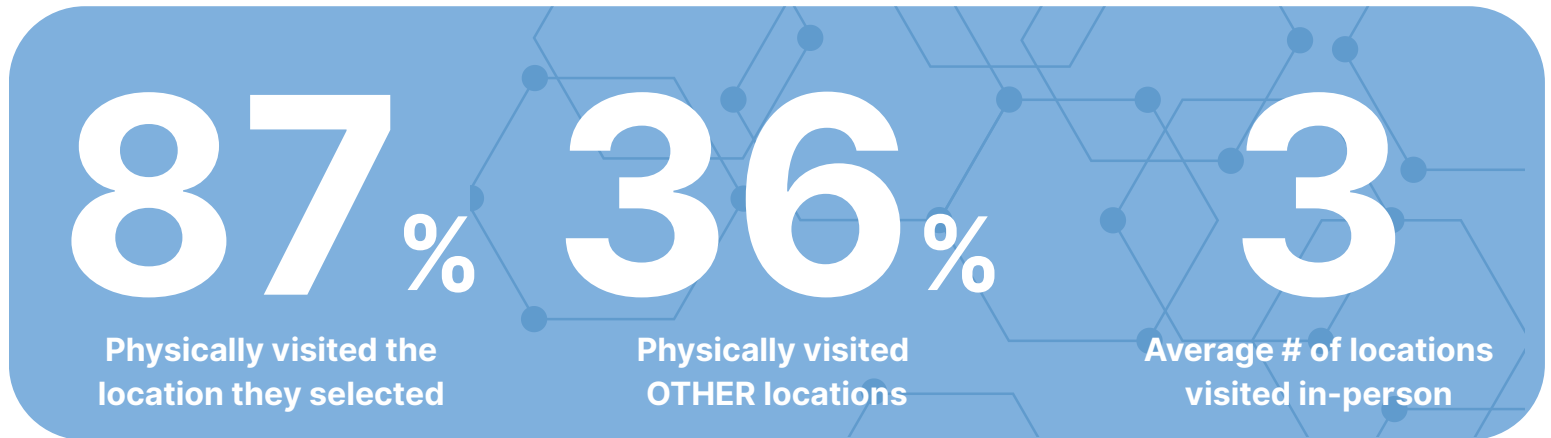


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AT YOUR FACILITY

Perhaps the most obvious “technology” need for many consumers is related to what you offer them online. But that’s only part of the story, because even though consumers increasingly research and shop funerals and cemeteries online, they still visit those locations they are considering.

As you can see below, almost everyone (87%) visits the location they end up choosing. In addition, another one-third visit other locations they are considering, visiting 3 locations on average. While your website is critical, you also need to be ready to meet their technology needs onsite as well.



1 STREAMING

The FCCBS Study was launched during the challenging days of the COVID Pandemic, an event that forced everyone to lean more heavily on technologies that allowed life to be lived remotely. One of the most obvious impacts on our profession was the need to allow memorial services to be attended virtually. Funeral homes and cemeteries suddenly needed to be able to use applications like Zoom to meet this new consumer need.

While the need to live life remotely has dissipated since the pandemic, many consumers still expect this technology to be offered. As recently as 2022, over 40% of consumers said they expected their funeral home or cemetery to offer streaming services, often at no additional cost.

So, even though streaming a service may be less common today than it was immediately after the pandemic, you must be ready-and-able to provide it when the need arises. Better yet, simply include streaming with every service as a means to distinguish yourself from your competition.

2 ON-SITE AV SUPPORT

Another technology requirement of today's consumer is easy-to-use, and high-quality, Audio/Visual support. In today's world, consumers can easily create their own videos, slides shows, soundtracks, etc. You need to be able to help them share this content as part of the memorial service.

Too often, this is not what happens. One of our own staff experienced this frustration first-hand recently with the memorial service held for one of his parents. This staff member had spent considerable effort building a wonderful slide show with backing music to be shown at the service. He had confirmed with his counselor that his plan to plug his computer into the location's projection system would work... it did not. Instead, he was forced to work with the funeral home staff to troubleshoot the system. Luckily, this particular staff member is a bit of a tech expert and musician and was able to solve the problem, but only after 15-20 stressful minutes that could, and should, have been avoided.

And it could have been much worse. If our staff member had not been so technically savvy and the issue was left to the onsite staff, there would have been no slideshow.

Consumers expect to be able to seamlessly connect with the sound and video systems at your location. Your people must be ready to respond by allowing them to use your video and sounds systems in a variety of ways, such as:

- Connecting their device via HDMI, USB, or other cable formats.
- Streaming directly from their device via a Bluetooth or WiFi connection.
- Emailing the file directly to your location, where someone at the facility will need to host and manage the video or slide show.
- Integrating their content into the live stream of the service so those viewing remotely can see and hear it.



more than
40%
of consumers expect
webcasting / live-streaming
services to be offered

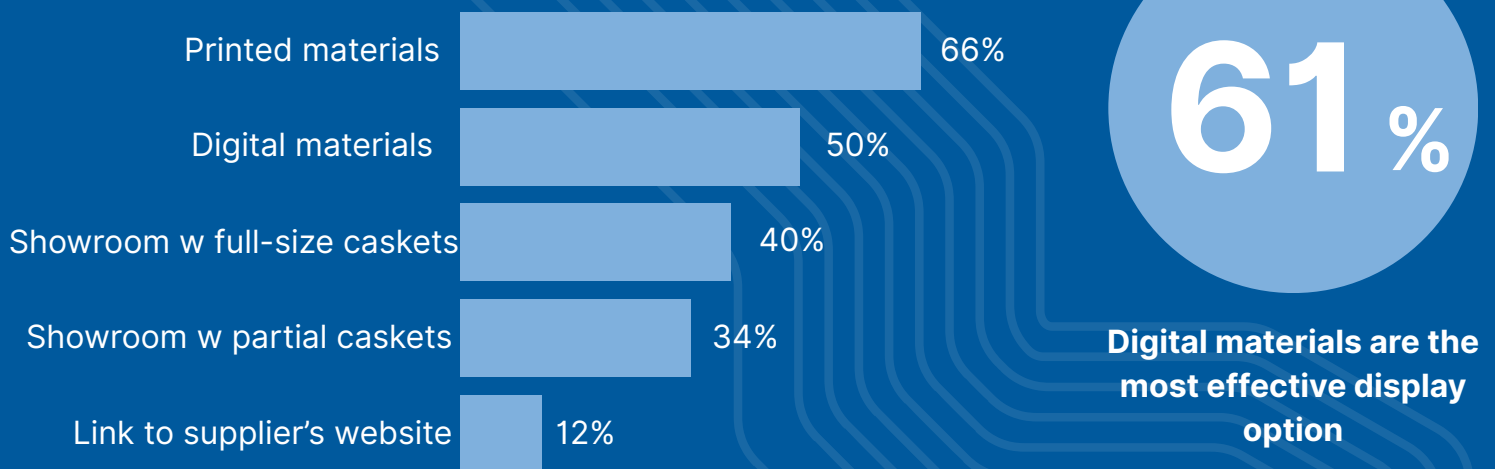


3 DIGITAL MERCHANDISING

Your use of audio and visual technologies should go beyond being able to support a slide show or video. There are a variety of digital merchandising tools that allow your onsite customers to learn more about their options. The profession seems to recognize that these solutions work, but may be too cautious with implementing them:

- According to the 2025 CANA Cremation Arrangement Benchmark Study, Digital Materials are rated as most effective, tied with traditional Print Materials.
- However, the use of these Digital Materials still trails Printed Materials.

Which of the following ways does your company present casket or container options?



Beyond simply being effective, these tools are force multipliers: they not only improve both the customer experience and customer education, they often do so without demanding a lot of time and effort from a professional.

For these reasons, locations should strongly consider things like:

1. Digital displays (TVs, tablets, etc.) that allow customers to take a self-guided tour of all the products and services you offer.
2. Digital showrooms that offer a rich mix of video, sound, and images of an extensive range of products without requiring dedicated floor space.
3. QR codes that customers can use to directly access web-based information from their phones, either when onsite at our location or at their convenience later on.

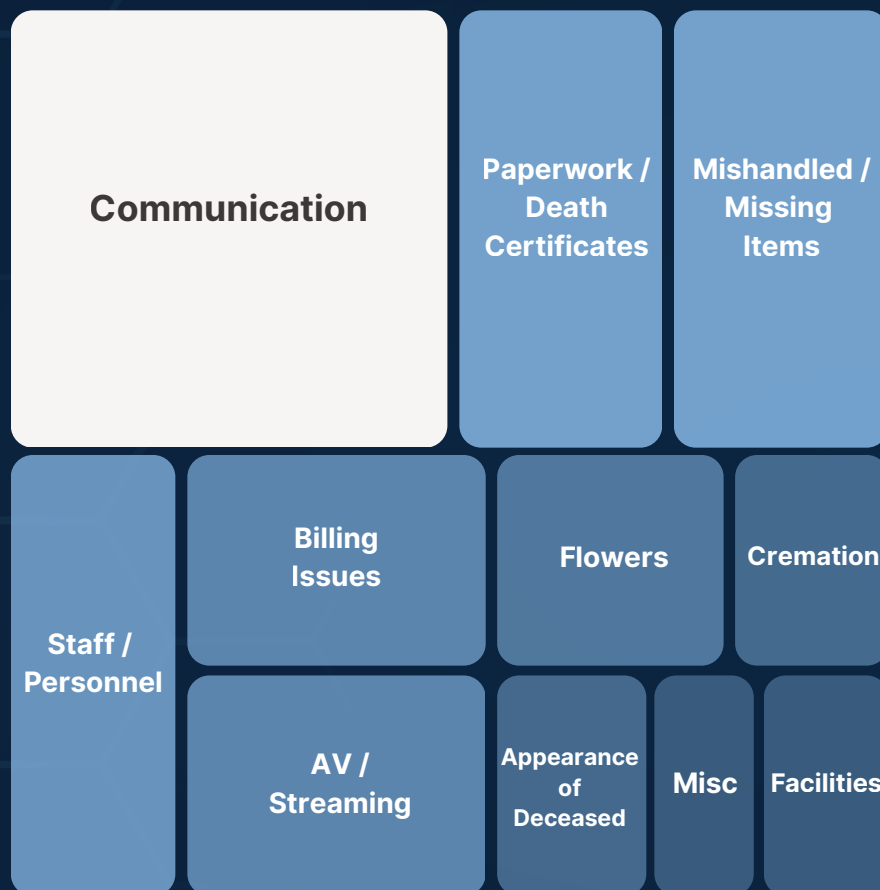
4 ONGOING COMMUNICATION

In general, funeral and cemetery customers do not report a lot of problems. According to Fortitude Research and Marketing's customer tracking program (CXP), less than 10% of all customers have experienced a problem so far in 2025.

However, when customers do report problems, Communication issues are the most common culprit... things like miscommunication, unreturned calls, and difficulty reaching their counselor. Technology solutions can be a key element in addressing such problems.

More than 10% of consumers report that they experienced some kind of problem with their funeral or cemetery service.

By far, the most common issue is related to communication with their chosen location.



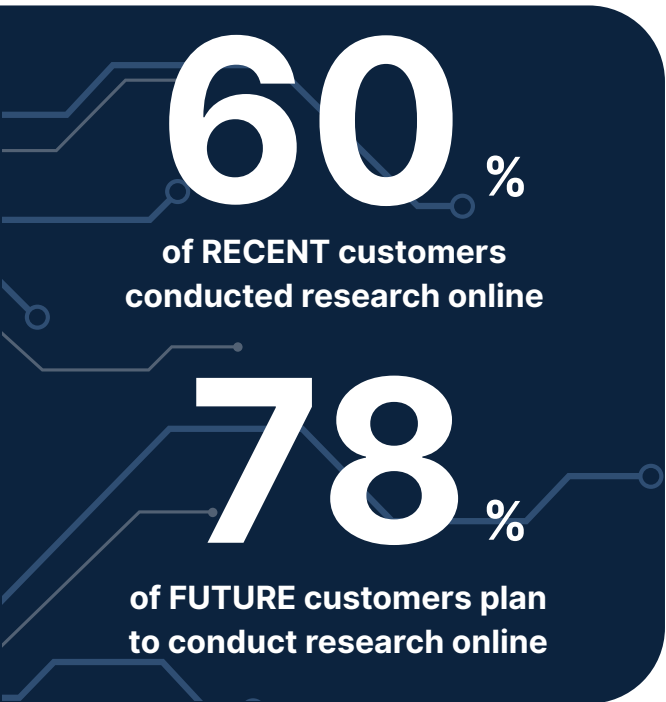
Funeral homes and cemeteries should look beyond telephone calls and voice mails. For example:

- Email and texting platforms that track and document ongoing communications can reduce any confusion about what has been said and/or promised.
- Automated internal alerts and pre-programmed responses can help ensure that customers aren't left hanging.
- AI systems can even help provide answers to simple customer questions without the need for a counselor to respond directly.

ON YOUR WEBSITE

Another consistent theme in 6-years of FCCBS results is the consumer’s desire to do more-and-more online. While the funeral and cemetery profession may be a bit behind other industries in moving its business online, recent and future customers are demanding that it catch up. Consider the following:

- In 2025, 60% of recent arrangers (those who arranged within the last two years) conducted online research while finalizing their arrangements, up significantly from results from past studies.
- This number will only increase in the future. When we asked consumers who have not yet made arrangements if they plan to conduct online research when the need arises in their lives, almost 80% said yes, they would.



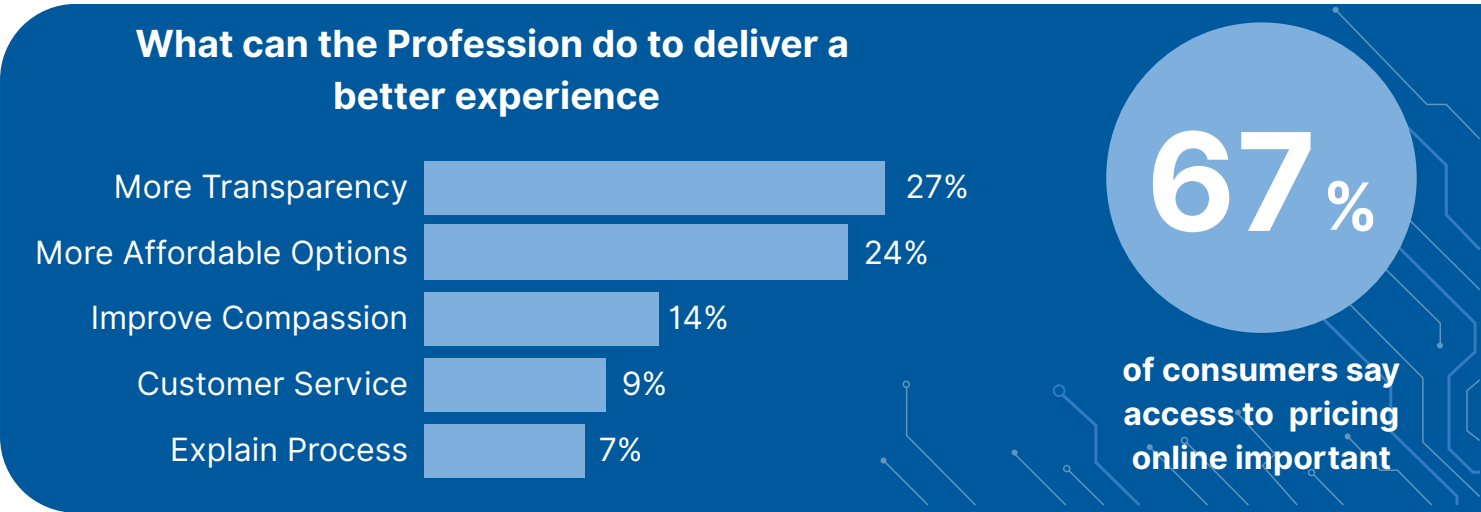
When consumers visit your website, as they will in increasing numbers, they will expect certain foundational functionalities. Making sure your website includes these foundational elements should be your first priority. Here are some other short-term priorities that are easily addressable:

1 ACCESSIBLE AND TRANSPARENT PRICING

When consumers are asked WHAT their first priority is when using your website to research their options, access to transparent pricing information continues to be their most common response.

This information should not be hard to find or difficult to decipher. It should also be more than a simple PDF of your general price list. Ideally, the pricing information

should be seamlessly combined with product and service descriptions to make it easier for users to understand the cost impact of their decisions.



2 PRODUCT AND SERVICE INFORMATION

Another consistent theme in research into consumer attitudes and behaviors is their relative lack of knowledge of just what their options are when it comes to end-of-life decisions. They simply do not know as much as you think they know.



76%
of PROFESSIONALS say
education was offered

37%
of CONSUMERS say
education was received.

Your website represents a tremendous opportunity to provide this much-needed education. Accurate descriptions of products and services, combined with high-quality visuals (pictures and video) should be treated as price-of-entry content for your website. And as noted above, transparent pricing information should be woven throughout the product/service information.

3 ONLINE HELP AND CHAT

Online help and chat tools can also go a long way to answering consumer questions and concerns. Too many consumers don't feel like they know enough about funeral/cemetery products and services.

Just as cleverly presented product/service information can help alleviate unease, so too can well-executed Help tools. A prominent Search tool and robust FAQs are just two examples of simple-but-powerful website functions your site should have.

Online chat should also be on the short-term roadmap for your website's functionality. Whether you choose to resource this solution in-house, with a technology partner familiar with the Profession, or through another third-party, there has never been more consumer-friendly technology available to solve this challenge.

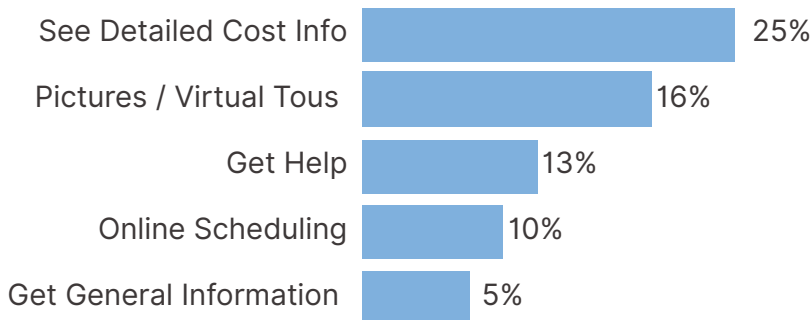
We often get asked questions about AI's role in our Profession. This is one very clear area where an AI-backed solution can create value for many locations. Consumers are using AI-driven chat bots on a daily basis. While adding these online chat features won't eliminate the need for human interaction, it will certainly answer questions for a segment of consumers who aren't interested in speaking with a representative.

4 PICTURES AND VIDEO

Consumers also express a desire to be able to use your website to experience both your location and your people. Your website should feature a combination of high-quality images AND videos of your location. Virtual Tours can also be incredibly useful for website visitors.

Finally, consider adding short videos of your key people where they can introduce themselves and share a few key parts of their background and story. Your customers will feel more comfortable dealing with someone in-person if they have already “met” them virtually on your website.

Was there anything you wanted to do online but were unable to do?



5 LONGER-TERM PRIORITIES

Ultimately, your website will need to go beyond the foundational functionalities outlined above. Fully discussing all the options available for your website goes beyond this article, but here is a list of longer-term priorities you should be considering:

- Dynamic Pricing Tools
- Online Scheduling Tools
- Online Arrangements
- E-commerce Capabilities

WHEN TECHNOLOGY GOES RIGHT

Despite the fact that we’ve highlighted areas to improve, our own Gabe Ngo recently shared a personal experience about a use of technology that was incredibly meaningful to his family. And, incredibly, it’s so simple, a teenager could do it – and in this case, DID IT.

You can find the [full story here](#) (or on the Foresight website), but in summary, Gabe’s nephew used AI to “honor of his mother with a five-minute video, where he had taken selected photos that had already been shared with the funeral home and was included in the funeral home provided Tribute video that had been on-display during Visitation, and he used AI to animate every photo that he had hand-selected, playing to a backdrop of Journey’s Faithfully.”

Gabe asks the poignant question, “Would it not be great if your funeral business could be out in front of the curve? Lead the pack? Surprise your families with this amount of value in leveraging AI?”

A simple, appropriate example of how locations can leverage existing technology to create a “wow” moment and exceed families’ expectations.



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IN SUMMARY

As we noted previously, “Technology” is a broad umbrella of services and capabilities that your locations can provide. Technology also represents a target-rich environment for improving customer service in general, whether it be better communications processes, more effective consumer education, and improved implementation.

Regardless of what our Profession has traditionally done, technology isn’t going away. Consumer expectations are only increasing. Even the older generations are regularly using technology, and they largely expect our practices to reflect those they experience every day.

Historically, our profession has relied on face-to-face relationships to meet our customer’s needs. The importance of those in-person relationships has reduced the importance, and sometimes used as a crutch, for not investing in technology solutions. As a result, we are often behind many other consumer-facing industries when it comes to using technology to meet consumer needs. While that may have worked for a time, that proverbial bill has come due.

LEARN MORE

ABOUT FORESIGHT

At **The Foresight Companies**, we are passionate about the funeral and cemetery profession. As funeral home and cemetery consultants, we have one singular focus: our client’s success. Our mission is to deliver exceptional solutions for the funeral and cemetery profession. We strive to exceed expectations, build meaningful relationships, and create value for every client we serve.

Our formula includes the knowledge gained from our Partners who have over 100 years of combined experience. We have the insight and experience to make a difference for you.

Chris Cruger, CEO, The Foresight Companies www.theforesightcompanies.com

ABOUT FORTITUDE

Fortitude Research and Marketing is dedicated to supporting the Profession with data-driven solutions that create measurable results. From a team steeped in both funeral and cemetery service and understanding the voice of the customer, our Customer Experience Platform (**CXP**) and Cremation Qualified Leads (**CQL**) programs are built to measure consumer feedback and drive pre-need revenue. Fortitude partners with The Foresight Companies each year to publish the Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study (**FCCBS**), tracking and forecasting attitudes, opinions, and behaviors about the funeral and cemetery profession.

George Owens, President, Fortitude Research and Marketing www.fortitudeinsights.com



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