#### FUNERAL SERVICES MARKETING INTERFACE TO ENHANCE

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND OVERALL PRODUCTIVITY**

by

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# **Executive Summary**

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal of any business regardless of the industry it resides in; it's the sole driver of a company's productivity levels and overall success within the market. Although numb to most market fluctuations, the funeral industry needs to reinvent their business strategies continuously in order to increase their market share. It's especially important for smaller funeral homes across the world to take this idea to another level in order to stay competitive with the larger, corporate establishments. In the past twenty years, the industry has grown exponentially due to more interest and popularity. The increase in informed customers triggered a demand for more variation of all possible funeral services available; it's imperative that the family-run, smaller companies maintain their aggressiveness to stay cutting edge amongst their rivals. In response to the increased customer knowledge, funeral homes strive to cultivate this market by targeting their motives.

The population naturally wants to know their options when making a decision, and supplying these choices develops a cushion for the assessment, much like a menu works in a restaurant environment. Particularly when the decision effects the final disposition of their closest family and friends, the client demands knowledge of any potential opportunities. By creating a tool to address this urge in the market, the customer satisfaction will increase immensely which will result in a better return of clients and overall productivity levels.

The Habing Family Funeral Home experienced the situation mentioned above which created a need for a customer interface of all the services they supplied. Designing and implementing the tool resulted in a great outcome and provided a generous savings cost

suitable for the current business plan of the funeral home. Ergonomics and human factors were two main disciplines utilized in generating this tool that was suitable for the client profile. This experiment intertwined various topics from the Industrial Engineering curriculum in a very unique industry which illustrates the versatility of this interest of study.

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# Introduction

### **Purpose**

This section discusses the current status of the funeral industry and the problem being addressed and altered by this senior project. The reasons for engaging in such a report within this specific discipline are identified as well. All objectives and deliverables are introduced, along with the steps for the solution approach to allow reader preparation before indulging in more specific and complex concepts further in the report.

Each and every one of us will be affected by the death of a loved one during our lifetime. To most, it can be an upsetting event but to others, it's looked at as a celebration of the person's life. Since the beginning of time, death has been an event that brings people together to say farewell to someone that has passed. All populations across the world have different traditions, but the final product is ultimately the same.

Funerals can range from a simple burial in the ground immediately after the person passes away, all the way to an extravagant three day event that occurs weeks after the death. The large variation in funeral practices is mainly due to both personal preference or religious traditions and the fact that not all funeral homes are able to accommodate different styles of funerals. Because of the wide range in services, it's often overwhelming for people when they first start planning the funeral. After dealing with the initial shock of a death, the funeral planning can be difficult, especially when it's your first time doing it. The options and cost are usually unknown for many people, yet they happen to be the most important part of the

planning process. To ease this lack of awareness and difficulty, an interactive marketing interface will be developed to aide customers in their funeral planning process. The current technology is outdated and not meeting the needs of the current cliental, therefore, the enhancement will be created such that it will initiate better customer service and promote more business.

The goal of improving customer satisfaction and generating a more standardized interface will be achieved if the following three objectives are accomplished:

- increase public awareness and knowledge of how the funeral process works
- distinguish all the funeral options available
- explain the services provided in an easy to understand stand-alone presentation and/or easily understood hardcopy pamphlet

Along with fulfilling these objectives, a few deliverables will be provided:

- an interactive marketing tool for the funeral process
- a hardcopy pamphlet of the expectations in the funeral process

The decision to make this a senior project originated from earlier childhood experiences. With a fourth-generation funeral director and owner of the hometown mortuary as a father, countless days were spent in the funeral home either after school or to work to make some money. Growing up in a setting like this opened a window of the inner workings of such a unique and interesting business. Eventually all the processes of orchestrating a funeral were learned and quickly a missing link was identified: a tool to help new clients understand what they are about to embark on and investigate the options they have for doing it. Typically,

orchestrating arrangements for a loved one isn't quite enjoyable, so making it simpler will be highly beneficial for both the funeral director and the family members.

The approach to solving this problem pulls upon knowledge gained through courses taught in the Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering Department of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. These courses include (Cal Poly, 2009):

### IME 223 Process Improvement Fundamentals (4)

Principles of work simplification and motion analysis. Recording of work flow and methods.

Process improvement through work measurement and standards, time study, synthetic data, predetermined time systems and work sampling. Allowances and performance rating, productivity measures. Introduction to lean manufacturing principles. Client based project

#### IME 239 Industrial Costs and Controls (3)

Estimation of manufacturing costs for production planning, cost analysis, and cost control.

Planning, budgeting and control processes. Costs, accounting data and analysis of variances for managerial control, inventory valuation and decision making. Techniques of forecasting, pricing, cost estimating and cost reduction.

#### **❖ IME 314 Engineering Economics (3)**

Economic analysis of engineering decisions. Determining rates of return on investments. Effects of inflation, depreciation and income taxes. Sensitivity, uncertainty, and risk analysis.

Application of basic principles and tools of analysis using case studies.

#### **❖** IME 319 Human Factors Engineering (3)

Analysis of factors influencing the efficiency of human work. Data on the physical and mental capacities of persons, the physical environment, work organization, and the problem of aging. Design of machines, operations, human computer interface and work environment to match human capacities and limitations, including the handicapped. Multidisciplinary team project.

Utilizing concepts learned from the classes above, and intense research performed, the solution approach will consist of a few main steps:

- ❖ Gain a perfected understanding of all processes performed by funeral homes
- ❖ Investigate the current services provided by the Habing Family Funeral Home
- Generate an interactive tool with all potential options granted to cliental
- Design a pamphlet and PDF format version of the interactive tool
- Research and recommend some best practices to the company
- ❖ Develop a cost analysis to quantify all improvements made

The following report is structured according to the guidelines provided by the Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering Department at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. To start, a background is provided establishing the context for this project along with a comprehensive review of current literature relevant to the design process. Next, the design process is fully covered for funeral homes as a whole and more specifically, the Habing Family Funeral Home. Then, the methods utilized to measure and determine the tool's effectiveness, followed by a report of the data within the results section. Lastly, all significant implications and lessons learned are summarized in the conclusion.

# **Background**

### **Purpose**

This section provides the context of the project by describing any information needed before a clear understanding of the methodology and implementation can take place. It is important that the reader understands this portion of the report before digging any further.

The funeral business is one of uniqueness and extreme challenge. It has all the components of any other company; however it also forces a higher level of personal matters. With this being said, a funeral home has customers that have a demand to be met by their services; this can also be said for your average grocery store. The difference lies in the personal aspect of dealing with families during the loss of their family member. The transaction period is more than just a quick exchange of money for services; people need counseling and help to prepare for such a life altering event. In fact, people often wonder why one chooses to go into the funeral

Unfortunately, this personal level is gradually becoming more dissolved. Many small family-owned companies are being taken over by corporations across the country and this takes a huge toll on the services they are able to provide to their customers. This type of business isn't suited for the corporate atmosphere even though our current economy certainly caters towards it. Because of this, the smaller mortuaries are challenged to compete with these companies to offer the same services. As the daughter of a funeral director, the understanding

business because it such an emotional draining profession.

of the importance of maintaining a family-owned funeral home and the benefits it will ultimately generate for the company are very prevalent.

The most important part of the services provided is the initial transaction period that I mentioned earlier. The customers come because they have to, not out of desire like you would when going to most other businesses. A funeral is also typically unplanned and can be very abrupt which makes the preparation for this kind of occurrence a challenge. Making big decisions on funeral plans is not the preferred way to spend your time of mourning. People that are grieving a loss would rather be in the comfort of their own home with their family members. Because of this, giving people the opportunity to know their options before meeting with a funeral director will be very helpful in their overall experience.

The options being referred to are the logistics of how they want their funeral ceremony. Besides choosing the type of the casket and setting a date, there are far more decisions to be made. Burial is often the traditional way, but more recently cremation and entombment have become more popular. The market for these is growing and is projected to increase in the next decade. More decisions that also need to be made include: location of the service, number of pallbearers, floral arrangements, number of cars, obituaries, clergy, clothing, music, pictures, final location of the body, method of payment, etc. This is all very overwhelming when you aren't ready for it. By creating both a pamphlet and a document accessible online, many questions can be resolved and the overall customer experience will be enhanced.

# **Literature Review**

### **Purpose**

A literature review is developed to orchestrate all the background research needed before embarking deeper into the project itself. A bold understanding of your project field is crucial to creating a robust approach and strategic reasoning. Knowing what has been addressed, potential relationships within the topic and gathering various other perspectives feeds ammunition for establishing a well-developed project.

# The Funeral Industry

Similar to any other industry in the United States, all funeral home activities are regulated under the Funeral Industry Practices Rule of the Federal Trade Commission. (Kopp & Kemp, 2007) This is partially due to the prominence and occurrence of death, but also because of the high costs involved. It was actually reported that "the purchase of a funeral and its related merchandise will comprise the third-largest expenditure consumers will make in their lifetime, following the purchase of a house and an automobile." (Kopp & Kemp, 2007) The average funeral in 2010 is estimated to be around \$7,320, which generates approximately \$12 billion in revenue each year and a significant economic impact on America's cities, and towns. (National Funeral Directors Association)

With data like this, the country has to mandate certain practices and rules to the funeral home market to ensure positive outcomes and productive business. Both federal and state levels are involved in regulation, but there are some variations due to state overrule. The

federal component of this is within the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) called the Funeral Industry Practices Rule, also known as the 'Funeral Rule.' The assumption made on these rules is as follows: "that careful, informed purchase decisions in this expensive product category are difficult for consumers because of emotional stress, time pressure, and lack of familiarity with the available goods and services. Based on these assumptions, the Funeral Rule prohibits funeral homes from certain practices and compels them to perform others." (Kopp & Kemp, 2007) Clearly, the preparation period of funerals is extremely emotionally challenging and takes a toll on all parties involved. Provided below are the two exhibits included in the same consumer report:

#### EXHIBIT 1

Specifically, the Funeral Rule prohibits:

- Misrepresenting that embalming is legally required or necessary (when it is not).
- Misrepresenting that a casket is required for direct cremation.
- Misrepresenting that any funeral goods or services have protective or preservative abilities (when they do not).
- Embalming without consent.
- Subjecting consumers to "tying" arrangements, which require purchase of any funeral good or service as a condition of purchasing any other good or service.

The Funeral Rule asserts that:

 Consumers have the right (with some exceptions) to choose the funeral goods and services they want. • Funeral providers must state this right in writing on the general price list. If state or local law requires the purchase of any particular item, the funeral provider must disclose it on the price list, with a reference to the specific law. (Kopp & Kemp, 2007)

Clearly, the funeral directors cannot stray too far from the common service he is there to provide, but he also cannot force his customers into purchasing any promising "deals" or "specials" in order to promote better business. This cuts out slight intensities when it comes to competition amongst other funeral homes, yet it still happens on occasion.

#### **EXHIBIT 2**

Itemization of Prices Required by the Funeral Rule

- Forwarding remains to another funeral home
- Receiving remains from another funeral home
- Transferring remains to the funeral home
- Direct cremation
- Immediate burial
- Embalming
- Other preparation of the body
- Hearse/limousine
- Use of facility and staff for viewing
- Use of facility and staff for funeral ceremony
- Use of facility and staff for memorial service
- Use of equipment and staff for graveside ceremony
- Individual casket prices or their price range

- Individual outer burial container prices or their range
- Basic services of funeral director and staff and overhead (Kopp & Kemp, 2007)

When mortuaries provide price lists, it's important they include all prices and they are delegated appropriately. Without that, customers might get confused depending on the service options they choose to go through with for the funeral. An important concept to remember here is that funerals can range from only 4 or 5 of the bullets listed above to everyone on the list, but the mortician needs to prepared for any of them at all times. Another provision on pricing of funerals is that they need to accessible both in person and over the phone at the minimum. Creating the interactive tool, pamphlet and allowing access to it online will merely emphasize this mandate and build on it to ensure the best possible customer service.

### The Mortician

From the beginning of time, funeral directors have collectively gained a poor reputation mainly due to the industry they work in. People are usually afraid of the unknown, and since death has often been out of the spot light, it has typically held that perspective. However, times are changing and the population is becoming more tolerant, and even interested, in death itself. "Another barometer of American interest in death, of course, is the reappearance of the undertaker in public culture." (Laderman, 2003) Movies and books are providing a much more optimistic approach to death and people are becoming much more tolerant of it. This awareness translates directly to a higher interest in funeral options when they ultimately need to partake in such an event. For the funeral industry, this is good; a more knowledgeable customer is the desired type.

Schooling to be a funeral director ranges depending on the state, but it's typically similar to that of any other trade. However, because you are dealing with human bodies, and the responsibility that goes along with that, the licensing can be slightly more intense. "All States require funeral directors to be licensed. Licensing laws vary by State, but most require applicants to be 21 years old, have 2 years of formal education that includes studies in mortuary science, serve a 1-year apprenticeship, and pass a qualifying examination." (United States Department of Labor)

The schooling they engage in is strictly the learning they need to strictly prepare the body accordingly and direct a funeral. However, the interworkings of the business are the most important and, yet, they hardly get taught in mortuary schools across the nation. It's extremely unfortunate because the funeral business is one of a much higher personal level and the need to consol and comfort your customer is maximized. Unlike some other transactions made, the funeral business needs a high sense of trust, security and personal respect. "...it is nevertheless true that the funeral transaction is generally influenced by a combination of circumstances which bear upon the buyer as in no other business dealing: the orientation caused by bereavement, the lack of standards by which to judge the value of the commodity offered by the seller, the need to make an on-the-spot decision, general ignorance of the law as its affects disposal of the dead, the ready availability of insurance money to finance the transaction.

These factors predetermine to a large extent of the outcome of the transaction." (Mitford, 1998) Justifiably, this transaction period is a bottleneck for the whole funeral home arrangement process, and would undoubtedly benefit from an enhanced interface.

Not only is a higher level of business apparent, the religious underlining can also play a large factor in the transaction period of a funeral service. "The roots of American funeral customs and procedures extend back through Western civilization into early Judaeo-Christian beliefs concerning the nature of God, man and the hereafter." (Habenstein & Lamers, 1963)

This puts a twist on the approach of each funeral that gets processed. Generalizations about the demographic of the area a funeral home is located can help with this difficulty, but it's still a challenge to be able to cater to everyone's religious or non-religious demands.

### **Dissolving Family Ownership**

The evolution of the funeral industry in the United Kingdom is much the same as in the United States. Brian Parson's article written for Morality periodical discussed the lifecycle of funeral practices and traditions. The change in market for traditional funerals is mainly driven by the interference of corporate mortuaries, and like any other product, the demands of the consumer. Although funeral home shouldn't be run in the typical, supermarket- style, they are very much like any other type of business. Because of this, the corporate style of running a business has naturally been adapted into the funeral industry unfortunately. "For a service industry with high fixed costs and characteristically unpredictable demands, the opportunity existed to utilize surplus capacity to an optimum level.... The advantages of this 'modulus operandi' were the economies of scale from bulk purchase of coffins, etc in addition to the cost-effective utilization of fixed overheads, such as vehicles and staff." (Parsons, 1999)

Not only are larger funeral homes gradually gaining more and more market share, the smaller family-owned-and-operated ones are slowly becoming scarce; this is due to succession and awareness of the changing trading environment. Traditionally, the newest offspring of the

family would be expected to take over the business as soon as the time was right. However, in this generation it's becoming more and more rare. "Possible reasons (for this) include the social stigma attached to occupations that deal with the dead, the commitment of providing a 24 hour service, the responsibility of managing a small business and increasing opportunities of intra-generational social mobility." (Parsons, 1999) This exact circumstance is happening for the Habing Family Funeral Home; the fourth generation is scrambling to produce the next qualified mortician to take over the family business. Sadly, "the survival rate of family-owned businesses decreases significantly with each generation — only 30% of family-owned businesses survive into the second generation, and just 12% carry on into the third generation." (Thogmartin, 2010) A fourth generation funeral director is a rare occurrence.

It's extremely unfortunate to witness the trend of going corporate in the sensitive industry of funerals. The customer service that this industry has to produce compared to others is much more personal. Dealing with your client's deceased loved one is truly one of the toughest services out there to produce. When a company gets bought out by a larger corporate firm, the magnitude of personal touch is quickly dissolved. The former director of the Great Southern Group commented on this and said, "arguably the quality of service is reduced when a paid member of staff replaces the owner whose income is directly related to the success of the business, for he always gives a little bit more and, indeed, this will always be the case and, therefore, one will never see the demise of the traditional family funeral director... The larger firm absorbs smaller businesses, cuts out competition; rationalizes staff, service and assets; increases the cost of funerals to cope with mounting overheads; injects a greater element of impersonality; message gets around to the public that this or that small

funeral director gives a much nicer funeral; future clients revert to small family business and the number of their funerals grows; more of the experienced managers, retirees and their offspring set up new small businesses to meet the demand and so drain away or draw custom from the larger groups. Result: large groups diversify to survive." (Saunders, 1991)

### The American Tradition

In the last twenty years, the interest in cremation has increased dramatically. In fact, cremation was the method of disposition for 36.02 percent of deaths in 2008, compared 23.75 percent in 1998. (Cremation Association of North America) People are far more interested in cremation than ever before and this takes its toll on the way a funeral home is run. Instead of partaking in multiple-day service and burial, people can cremate and be done. "Essentially this gave funeral directors the opportunity to increase the quantity of work to be completed in one day." (Parsons, 1999) The takt time was decreased and thus, production could be increased. This worked in both smaller and corporate funeral homes.

However, even though the product itself may take less time to manufacture, the work and logic behind it takes quite awhile. Most recently people are much more worried about 'doing the right thing' when their loved one has passed and that "requires funeral directors to spend a greater amount of time discussing arrangements and in the execution of the funeral." (Parsons, 1999)

# **Moving Forward**

People are getting more involved in the funeral services and preparation, but until recently most of the work has been solely done by the funeral director. Home funerals are growing and becoming a suitable tradition around many parts of the country. Granted, six of the states

require most of the work still orchestrated by the professional, but this has yet to hinder the popularity of this alternative of funeral services. People are accepting of it because in some ways, "a home funeral is a noncommercial response to death." (Stevens, 2009) It's comforting to families to take part in more of the funeral preparations and if it's legal, a funeral home should have the ability to offer such a service.

Pre-need arrangements have slowly been increasing due to the higher costs in the services and the desire to orchestrate one's own funeral. Taking this a step further, the new trend of "Fun Funerals" is beginning to blossom. "These 'creative ceremonies,' styled 'fun funerals' by the *Wall Street Journal*, are chosen by 'a small but growing number of people... By planning their own send-offs, the forward-looking folks insure a memorable goodbye to loved one." (Smith, 1996) The population is more interested in leaving their mark once they have passed on, and this drives the industry of funerals into the most creative realm that is has ever accomplished. This rise in pre-need plans with an inventive twist will surely motivate much more draw to the business as a whole and the services they provide.

Along the thread of increasing creativity, a company called Columbiad Launch Services, is offering the final burial of a lifetime. For a reasonable fee they will launch cremated remains into the space, past the earth's ozone layer to ensure the remains will stay within space and never be returned back to earth. They currently offer two choices of services: the "Starburst Memorials Launch Service which will launch your *full* cremated remains (up to 3kg) into space where they will scatter and drift back down to Earth," or the" Wayfarer Memorials Launch Package is an economy service and will launch and scatter in space, a 100 gram symbolic portion." (Graf) People are interested in this because of the obscurity of it; it's new and

different so people go for it. The future holds many new and interesting ways of celebrating
the life of someone besides just the typical funeral.

# Design

### **Purpose**

The design portion of this report includes the requirements, constraints or user specifications, and explains the initial concept for the design solution and any alternative concepts. This is where the main details of the project are presented and discussed.

# **Project Definition**

## **Opportunity**

The need for implementation of a new interactive marketing interface is triggered because the current technology is outdated and not meeting the needs of the current cliental. The enhancement will be created such that it will generate better customer service and promote more business.

# **Objectives**

The project will improve customer satisfaction and generate a more standardized interface.

This goal will be achieved if the following three objectives are achieved:

- increase public awareness and knowledge of how the funeral process is achieved
- distinguish all the funeral options available
- explain the services provided in an easy to understand stand-alone presentation and/or easily understood hardcopy pamphlet

## **Key Stakeholders**

A stakeholder is anyone who has an interest in the project. Project stakeholders are individuals and organizations that are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be affected as a result of project execution or project completion. See below for all the stakeholders for this project:

Name/Entity	Title	Project Role
Jim Habing	Company owner	Decision-maker
Customers		Influencer, end-user
Services		Influencer
Lee McFarland	Technical Advisor	Influencer
Sema Alptekin	Academic Advisor	Influencer
Reza Pouraghabagher	Academic Advisor	Influencer
Company employees		End-user

### **Theory**

For all companies, the drive to generate a supply of their product comes mostly from the demand of the customers, along with other environmental and unplanned motives. Without adequate supply and demand, a company becomes hindered and unable to achieve full efficiency or ideal production levels. Accommodating the customer with the best possible product and services ensures high quality business and customer referrals; this turnover generates more clients and a higher throughput. In the industry of mortuaries, it is crucial that the customer feel safe and comfortable because the reasons for business aren't typically the

most desirable and extremely emotional. Reaching out to the cliental and making their options more visibly available is a strategy to guarantee satisfied customers and an overall better business transaction.

The roots of this project developed from the initial opportunity of improving the customer experience of making funeral arrangements. The concept of creating this tool evolved into a few different directions to cater to all types of cliental and potential users. First the idea of just an electronic copy available on the company website seemed to be the easiest and most accessible route of distribution. However, some clients don't have the internet or know how to use it properly, and because of this, a CD electronic copy would also be made available in the front office of the funeral home. Also, in response to older customers not having the technology or capability of accessing any form of electronic version, a hard copy pamphlet will also be distributed if necessary at the funeral home.

In order to reconfirm this idea of an interactive tool to provide customer options and enhance their overall satisfaction, qualitative and quantitative measurements were made.

Many observations and time studies were made over a time period of two months. From these, a material and worker flow process chart of the current process were created and analyzed.

Each individual process chart can be found in the appendix, and the summary chart of savings is located below.

Event	Present	Proposed	Savings
Operations			
(minutes)	3210	2900	310
Transport			
(minutes)	690	690	0
Delay			
(minutes)	630	555	75
Inspection			
(minutes)	360	300	60
Storage			
(minutes)	0	0	0
Time			
(minutes)	4890	4445	445
Time (hours)	81.5	74.1	7.4
Cost (\$)	\$4,075.00	\$3,704.17	\$370.83

The chart above briefly quantifies the savings found in the process from start to finish of each case, or diseased person. The opportunities of improvement were found in many of operations and could be addressed with the interactive tool and/or pamphlet. These operations included: appointment setting, arrangement conference, follow-up calls, obituary planning and submitting, form completion, data entry, filing, and phone questions. All of these could be enhanced or almost completely eliminated with the use of the planning and information tool. With this, at approximately 7.4 hours per case at the rate of \$50 per hour, there is almost a \$400.00 savings for every diseased person they process.

### **Product**

Customers like to know what their options are and how much they have to pay to obtain those options. To supply such assistance to them, the easy-to-use and human factors friendly tool

was built in Microsoft PowerPoint. The decision to use this software was made due to its high compatibility levels among almost any kind of computer whether or not the actual program has been installed. The link from the internet will automate a version of the tool in "slideshow" mode so the user cannot alter any of formatting or information. Also, having the program open in this setting allows the computer to simply play the slideshow without identifying the entire program on the computer first. The computer is essentially the viewer and nothing more. To navigate around the PowerPoint tool, the user will simply click their mouse on identified locations to get to their next area of interest. The links that branch off of the slideshow itself, however, will be in PDF format, a universal document form that is very computer friendly. The customer will simply print it, fill out the appropriate spaces and return it directly to the funeral home. The first few pages of the tool are located below in Figures 1 through 3:



Figure 1 - Title Page

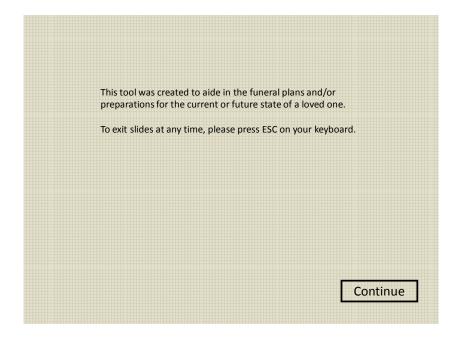


Figure 2 - Introduction Page

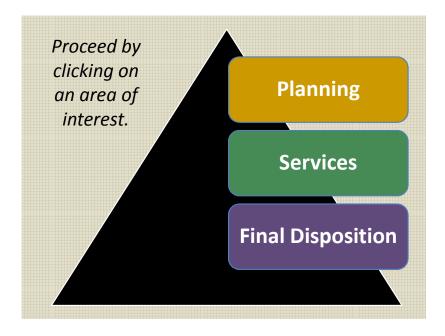


Figure 3 - Interface Start Page

### **Estimated Cost**

The main tangible cost came from the hours saved by utilizing the planning tool. The time spent making arrangements or addressing simple follow-up questions with customers is either eliminated or minimized with the information provided before any or little personal interaction takes place. With nearly 40 hours saved per week, that's enough to cut overall labor by an entire employee. In most circumstances, this would be the ideal case and the company would be recommended to lay off an employee if it's feasible for their business to generate the potential savings listed in the chart below. However, the current owners of the Habing Family Funeral Home are in the process of slowly retiring over the next 5-10 years, and this would allow them to easily do so. In this situation, the savings would be the a little more than \$100,000. With a savings like that, the company has ability to use that money in various ways such as investments to gain return over a number of years, purchase equipment or assets for the company, give some back to their employees to build culture, possible hire another employee once the retirement process has taken place, etc. Either way, there will be a savings cost of at least \$20,000. Please refer to Figure 4 for more details.

	Α	В	С	D	E
Hours Saved Per Case	7	7	7	7	7
Average Cost Per Hour	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$50.00
Total Cost Savings Per Case	\$70.00	\$140.00	\$210.00	\$280.00	\$350.00
Average Number of Cases Per					
Year	300	300	300	300	300
TOTAL ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	\$21,000.00	\$42,000.00	\$63,000.00	\$84,000.00	\$105,000.00

Figure 4 - Cost Analysis

# Methodology

# **Purpose**

This section explains how the design or project was tested. Also, the set up and technique of utilization will be addressed in the following sections.

#### **Human Factors**

Strategy for designing the tool to ensure that it's suitable for all users was a highly important. The visual interface required high emphasis on human factors to provide a useful, well-understood tool and/or pamphlet to all customers. Colors, spacing, layout and format were all considered during the design portion of this project. If the customer can't read and understand how to use the product appropriately, the creator has essentially failed. After researching color proper color schemes and page formatting, the tool has distinct appearance to abide by all major aspects of human factors.

### **Distribution**

Creating and designing the planning tool was one obstacle, but making sure the consumer has easy accessibility to it, is another. Different generations have various levels of technical knowledge and this was a major consideration when brainstorming distribution. Naturally, the world is going in the direction of more and more "green" practices, but you cannot expect your clients to automatically to live that lifestyle. Many older people don't follow this trend out of tradition or pure ignorance so strictly allowing people to access the tool online or computer is asking a lot. Ideally, customers should be able to find the company website, click on a link and start using the tool in the privacy of their own home. However, that may not work out if they

either don't have internet, a computer or just the mere knowledge of operating a computer.

This was the reason behind the decision to still create a basic paper pamphlet. Seems outdated

and a slightly out of practice, but when you're customers can people of all ages and conditions,

it's important to keep all scenarios in mind.

# Results

## **Purpose**

This section discusses any findings or outcomes of the experiment performed. These may be numerical or subjective observations.

The results found in this project were as expected, and worked out well for the company. Because the project was catered strictly to their specific needs and criteria, the project results were exceptional. The theory of creating this tool to increase the knowledge of the customers and ultimately improve the overall productivity of the company held up to all standards. The interface design was heavily weighted on the targeted customer profile and the appropriate ergonomic principles needed to allow them to use it appropriately. Because of this, the cost savings was ended up being higher than initially expected, and the productivity estimates were completely on track.

During the progression of the project, very few issues presented themselves. However, using the appropriate software to create the interface was a bit of a challenge. Finding the right program that would be simple enough for a wide range of users, but still completely informative, was slightly difficult. Also, ensuring the updates of the system weren't too time consuming and very straightforward for the employees of the funeral home was a hard task as well. As soon as this was figured though, the rest of the project ran smoothly.

Implementation of all versions of the interface will occur within the next month.

Currently, there have not been any problems with training the employees how to use the program and the future of this project looks extremely promising.

# Conclusion

### **Purpose**

In this portion of the report a few final statements addressing the project outcome is included.

Possible future applications or enhancements are mentioned here as well.

The creation of a tool with all the offered services of the company presented in an intuitive manner based on the cliental profile highly contributes to a decrease in total time per client and labor costs. The technique of product distribution, through internet, CD form and hard copy pamphlet form, played a large role in the overall outcome of the experiment.

Learning more about the funeral industry and the sole drivers of its increased demand helped to fulfill all reasoning behind implementing the product and its final outcome on the business. To dive into the layers of the project even further, it would be interesting to implement a similar tool into a corporate setting and compare the results. The final outcome could align completely or vary quite a bit. This would a great subject to research in the future.

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# **Appendix**

# Information and Planning Tool

# Product of the Habing Family Funeral Home Effective May 2010

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# **Initial Planning**

# **Immediate Arrangements**

If you need immediate arrangements for someone that recently passed away, we offer two different techniques to make this transition as smooth as possible.

**In-Person Arrangements** 

Making arrangements in person takes places at our funeral home and typically can take anywhere from 2-4 hours depending on the situation. If you are interested, please call (408) 847-4040 and we can schedule such arrangements as soon as possible.

Online Arrangements

If you would prefer to fill out most of the paperwork at home to safe time, we offer this program on our website or you can download the paperwork here.

# **Pre-Planning**

Why Pre-Plan?

Peace of Mind

Many who have undergone the emotional strain of arranging a funeral within hours of losing a loved one have made the choice to pre-plan their own funeral. Doing so lifts the burden from their loved ones by relieving decision-making pressure at a time of grief and emotional stress.

Personal Choice

Funeral arrangements are a deeply personal choice. Pre-planning provides you with the time needed to make practical, detailed decisions that reflect your standards, lifestyle, taste and budget. And we assure you and your family that the choices you make will be carried out as planned.

### **Contact Information**

Mailing Address & Office Location:

Habing Family Funeral Home 129 4<sup>th</sup> Street Gilroy, CA 95020

Telephone Number (available 24 hours a day)

(408)847-4040

**Cemetery Locations:** 

Gavilan Hills Memorial Park

Mount Hope Memorial Park 250 Spring Avenue Morgan Hill, CA 95037 1000 First Street Gilroy, CA 95020

Online Location:

www.HabingFamily.com

# **Services**

# **Preparation**

The steps for preparing a body are as follows:

### **Embalming**

The reason for embalming is to temporarily preserve human remains to forestall any decomposition and to make them suitable for public display at a funeral. The four goals of embalming are sanitization, conservation, presentation and preservation (or restoration) of a corpse to achieve this effect.

Embalming is not required by law except in a few special cases. It may be necessary, however, if you want certain funeral arrangements, such as a funeral with viewing. If you prefer not to proceed with embalming, typically you have the right to choose an arrangement that does not require you to pay for it; these would include direct cremation or immediate burial.

Price: \$515.00

### **Refrigeration**

Not only mandated by the government, but a customary technique of preserving the body, we require refrigeration for all of our clients. This is a crucial part of the preparation process and cannot be altered due to enforced laws. Because of this, we have a standard price for each day of necessary refrigeration.

Price: \$325 per day

# **Washing & Dressing**

Preparing the body for final viewing and/or final disposition is a crucial task that is needed to be performed. Below are the standard components of this procedure and their according prices. However, if these do fulfill the expectations you have and feel there is a procedure you would prefer instead, please make arrangements with our professional staff.

Washing Price: \$163.00

Dressing, Casketing & Cosmetics Price: \$282.00

### **Transportation**

Moving the body to and from the funeral home will be taken care of with our professional vehicles. This includes all transportation before or during the funeral services and until the final disposition of the body has taken place.

As a service of the funeral home, we hold all responsibility of transporting and/or receiving the body after all prior procedures have happened following the death. If the body is within driving distance, we will travel to the location of death (ie. a house, hospital, coroner's office, etc.). Depending on the mileage, the price may vary accordingly.

However, if the body is coming internationally or out of state, the funeral home is not responsible for any miscellaneous fees (i.e.. flight cost, shipping fees, prior charges made by the previous funeral home, etc). Persons of the armed forces may qualify for some waived fees by the government, and those will be handled appropriately.

Both the forwarding and receiving costs below include: basic services of funeral director and staff; a proportionate share of overhead costs; removal or care of remains; and any necessary local transportation. However, the forwarding cost also includes embalming, any other preparations of the body and local delivery; the receiving cost includes transportation to the funeral home and cemetery or crematory.

Any transportation during the service itself may include any or all of the cars listed below. Please refer to their prices accordingly. If you have other preferred means of transportation, please verify it with our personnel prior to the day of the services.

**Funeral Service Options:** 

Limo \$375.00 Family Car \$195.00 Casket Coach \$456.00 Private escort \$250.00 Transporting Before/After Service:
Initial Transfer/Removal \$456.00
Receive from other mortuary \$2,388.00
Forward to other mortuary \$2,150.00

#### Other

Other accommodations may include the items listed below. However, these are not required and may be altered or expanded upon with approval of our personnel.

Acknowledgement cards (unlimited) \$18.00 Visitors Registry \$35.00 Prayer cards (150 cards) \$103.00 Pallbearer gloves (12 pairs) \$42.00

# **Final Disposition**

### **Basic Options**

Gladly we offer the basic services of a Funeral Director and our staff. These services include: conducting the arrangements conference; planning the funeral; consulting with family and clergy; shelter of remains; preparing and filing of necessary notices; obtaining the necessary authorizations and permits; coordinating with the cemetery, crematory, or other third parties. In addition, this fee includes a proportionate share of our basic overhead costs.

Please note this fee for our basic services and overhead will be added to the total cost of the funeral arrangements you select. However, it is already included in our charges for direct cremations, immediate burials, and forwarding or receiving remains.

Price: \$1,958.00

<u>Use of Facilities, Staff and Equipment for Services Conducted at Our Facility</u> Funeral Ceremony \$1,377.00 Directing of Graveside Services only \$388.00

# **Direct Options**

The option of direct cremation or immediate burial, without a ceremony, is available. The charge for these procedures includes: basic services of funeral director and staff; a proportionate share of overhead costs; removal of remains; transportation to crematory or cemetery and any necessary authorizations if relevant.

Please note: If you want to arrange a direct cremation, you can use an alternative container. Alternative containers encase the body and can be made of materials like fiberboard or composition materials (with or without an outside covering).

Direct Cremation Price: \$1,749.00 Immediate Burial Price: \$2,488.00

### **Bundled Services**

Funeral Service all options (2 days) (non-package price 5437.00)

This package includes basic services of the funeral director and staff; embalming; dressing. casketing, cosmetics; funeral ceremony (at the Funeral Home); casket coach; family car; transfer of remains to the funeral home; acknowledgement cards; visitors register; prayer cards; and pallbearer gloves.

Price: \$4,990.00

# Funeral Services no options (2 days) (non-package price 5109.00)

This package includes basic services of the funeral director and staff; embalming; dressing. casketing, cosmetics; washing and disinfecting unembalmed remains; refrigeration (per day); funeral ceremony (at the Funeral Home); casket coach; and transfer of remains to the funeral home.

Price: \$4,657.00

#### Funeral Services (1 day) or Graveside Service with visitation

This package includes basic services of the funeral director and staff; embalming; dressing. casketing, cosmetics; washing and disinfecting unembalmed remains; refrigeration (per day); funeral ceremony (at the Funeral Home); casket coach; and transfer of remains to the funeral home.

Price: \$4,348.00

#### **Graveside Services**

This package includes basic services of the funeral director and staff; dressing, casketing, cosmetics; washing and disinfecting unembalmed remains; refrigeration (per day); directing of graveside services only; and transfer of remains to the funeral home.

Price: \$3,760.00

### Casket & Urns

Casket and urn costs come in a huge range of prices which typically correlates to the type of material they are made from. See below for the price range of each, and please note that these may be altered.

Caskets

Wood: \$1,900 - \$8,000 Bronze: \$10,300 - \$12,300 Copper: \$6,900 - \$7,200

Stainless Steel: \$4,300 - \$4,100

Steel: \$1,300 - \$3,900

Urns\*

Marble: \$230 - \$260 Sheet Steel: \$380 - \$340 Hardwood: \$76 - \$890 Cloisonné: \$360 - \$380

## **Cemetery Options**

Our funeral home offers burial options for both the Gavilan Hills Memorial Park and the Mount Hope Memorial Park. For non-cremated remains we offer space in our mausoleums, (*crypt*) or space for a ground burial (*grave*). Cremated remains can be taken care of in a similar manner in either a mausoleum (*niche*) or directly in the ground (*plot*). Prices of each vary accordingly to the size (single or double) and the space location in the cemetery.

<sup>\*</sup>We also offer a wide array of memento pieces and statuary art urns. Please contact us for specifications on this.

### **Crypts**

Non-Cremated Remains Buried in the Mausoleum

#### GAVILAN HILLS MEMORIAL PARK: Cypress Chapel Mausoleum

• Single Crypts: \$6,930.00 - \$10,180.00\*

Double Crypts: \$12,380.00 - \$18,070.00\*

\*Prices ranges vary according to whether the crypt is located on the interior or exterior of the mausoleum and which tier (1-5) it's on.

#### Other Fees:

Internment (Labor): \$595.00

Recording: \$195.00CA State Fee: \$8.50Endowment Care

1<sup>st</sup>: \$300.00 2<sup>nd</sup>: \$200.00

Memorial Inscription (Includes Bronze Flower Vase): \$525.00

• 2<sup>nd</sup> Name Inscription: \$12 per letter (\$75 Minimum

### **Graves**

Non-Cremated Remains Buried in the Ground

#### **Liner Prices**

Concrete Liner Non-Seal (minimum requirement)				Stainless Steel (Sealed)	Copper Triune (Sealed)
\$887.00	\$1,487.88	\$1,913.95	\$2,678.70	\$3,814.90	\$5,409.00

<sup>\*</sup>Vault liners are required for this burial option. Please note this in these prices in the table above.

#### **Grave Prices**

	Granite Flat Marker		Lawn Flat Marker		Lawn/Granite	
	Single Gavilan Hills Only	Double Gavilan Hills Only	Single Gavilan Hills Only	Double	Single Gavilan Hills Only	Double
Grave	\$1,785.00	\$2,672.00	\$2,560.00	\$3,835.00	\$3,060.00	\$4,585.00
Endowment Care	\$300.00	\$600.00	\$300.00	\$600.00	\$300.00	\$600.00

Interment Labor	\$890.00	\$890.00	\$890.00	\$890.00	\$890.00	\$890.00
Recording Fees	\$195.00	\$195.00	\$195.00	\$195.00	\$195.00	\$195.00
(CA State Fees)	\$8.50	\$8.50	\$8.50	\$8.50	\$8.50	\$8.50
TOTAL		\$4,365.50		\$5,528.50		\$6,278.50
without	\$3,178.50	Add (2) Liner/Vault	\$3,953.50	Add (2) Liner/Vault		Add (2) Liner/Vault

## **Niches**

Cremated Remains Buried in a Mausoleum

### **Gavilan Hills Memorial Park Sungarden Niches: Singles Only**

Level	Raw Cost	<b>Total Cost</b>	
1	\$1,555.00	\$2,703.50	
2	\$1,555.00	\$2,703.50	Inscription for all levels is
3	\$1,685.00	\$2,833.50	\$450.00 which is not
4	\$1,855.00	\$3,003.50	included in the total cost
5	\$1,855.00	\$3,003.50	listed.
6	\$1,855.00	\$3,003.50	
7	\$1,755.00	\$2,903.50	

### Mt. Hope Memorial Park Romanesque Niches:

All Levels	Raw Cost	Total	Inscription (not included in Total)
Single:	\$1,975.00	\$2,998.50	\$325.00
Double:	\$2,975.00	\$4,048.50	First: \$375.00
			Second: \$175.00

### Other Costs\*

<sup>\*</sup>Already included in the "total" prices see above.

	Endowment Care	\$200.00
- 1		

Interment	\$295.00
Recording	\$195.00
CA State Fee	\$8.50

# **Plots**

Cremated Remains Buried in the Ground

All prices apply to Sungarden in Gavilan Hills & Romanesque in Mt. Hope

### Urn Vaults \*

Triple H	\$195.00
Vantage 18	\$295.00
Universal	\$399.00
Monticello	\$470.00
Venetian	\$585.00

<sup>\*</sup>Urn vaults are required for this burial option. Please note this in these prices in the table to the right.

Plot Size	Single Plot	\$1,200.00	
Grave	\$790.00		
Endowment Care	\$200.00	\$200.00	
Recording	\$195.00	\$195.00	
Interment	\$335.00	\$335.00	
CA State Fee	\$8.50	\$8.50	
Total without Vault	\$1,528.50	\$1,938.50	

### **Existing Grave**

Endowment Care	\$200.00

Recording	\$195.00
Interment	\$335.00
CA State Fee	\$8.50
Total without Vault	\$738.50

## **Markers**

Size	Grey	Red	Black
16" X 8" **	\$475.00	\$575.00	\$575.00
20" X 10" Child	\$575.00	\$675.00	\$675.00
29" X 22"  Vases drilled in marker	\$875.00	\$975.00	\$975.00

<sup>\*</sup>Setting fee for all flat markers: \$100.00

### Added Options to Existing Marker

Inscription: \$12.00 per letter (\$175 Min.) Repaint \$6.00 per letter (\$175 Min.)

Picture Cut-Out: \$75.00 Frosted Panel: \$80.00 PHOTOS: (7mm X 9mm)
Black & White: \$225.00

Color: \$350.00

Other sizes available upon request.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Only available in the Sungarden section of Gavilan Hills Memorial Park