

SECURE PROFITABLE CREMATION SALES...

Capturing Two High Profit Market Trends

Family Cremation Memorials

As we all know, the global cremation trend has been growing for half a century. What we, in North America, sometimes fail to grasp is that we are really part of a larger trend. At present, Canada is following in the footsteps of European countries while the United States continues to chase the tail of Canada. In 2008, the cremation rate in Great Britain was 72.44 percent, Canada 64.8 percent, while the U.S. lagged behind at 36.86 percent. As cremation has continued to grow rapidly in other countries, spending has changed as well; a greater emphasis on family cemetery memorials has emerged. In a counterintuitive phenomenon, families are demonstrating a greater need for permanent memorials. Market penetration in European and Asian countries is extremely high compared to North America. In Japan, for instance, with more than a 99 percent cremation rate, virtually 100 percent of families still choose to purchase an elegant cemetery monument. Yes, the Asian attitude toward ancestry plays a large part, but the same is



Cremation Memorials
in Great Britain



Cremation Memorials in Japan

observed in Great Britain. Funeral homes, cemeteries and monument retailers in both the U.S. and Canada have recently suggested that this market is much stronger than we might be thinking. The death care industry ignores it, and not only is revenue lost, but we end up underserving our families, as well.

“Do You Know What This Is?”

Five years ago, a couple came in to the show room of Newport Monument in East Newport, ME for a preneed arrangement. The lady looked at a family cremation columbarium and seemed puzzled. Mr. Bob Creighton, the owner of Newport Monument, asked, “Do you know what this is?” She softly shook her head. Bob explained that cremation urns could be placed inside the chambers of the columbarium; the names and dates could be engraved on the doors, after which the columbarium doors would be sealed permanently. He also pointed out that family photos could also be engraved on the doors.

The lady’s eyes lit up. Bob made his first cremation memorial sale. Since then, Bob asks the same question of every customer. For his customers, the private columbarium provides a final resting place in a traditional cemetery setting and makes much more sense than scattering the ashes, shelving the urn at home or even putting it in a larger community columbarium.

Bob Creighton reports that “99 percent of customers don’t even know that these (family cremation memorials) are even available. We need to provide the options and educate the public. Once people understand the advantages (of cremation and memorialization), most of them like the idea.”

“Display Cremation Memorials in Your Showroom and You Will Have No Problem Selling Them: People Get It!”

Mr. Mike White, owner of Oak Hill Cemetery and Mid Michigan Monument Co. in Owosso, Mi, agrees. “All I have to do is display the cremation memorials in front of



Mid Michigan Monument’s
Display of Cremation Memorials

my show room and explain to my customers how they work. More than 50 percent of cremation customers will buy, especially for preneed purchases.”

“The Cremation Memorials Simply Sell Themselves!”

Naomi Bradbury-Marchand, Marketing and Sales Consultant of Dakota Monument Company observes the same trend. “Once we make the customers aware that they (the cremation memorials) are available, most customers considering cremation will buy them.” Dakota Monument Company started retailing SuperNova International’s full line of cremation memorial products a few years ago; now, the line is expanded to all funeral home customers. “We made posters to give to funeral homes. Once the funeral homes began packaging the memorials in their cremation services, most families chose the option. It is just a matter of making these products available to the customers.”

Unfortunately, not all memorial retailers, funeral homes or cemeteries have caught on to this idea. 99 percent of cremation customers are not aware of the memorialization choices that are available. Most are still offered simple ‘forgotten urns’ that are usually stashed away, or even lost due to moving or other reasons. Scattering the ashes of a loved one in a special place is still commonly done in the U.S. These types of ideas have caused the death care industries’ total revenue to dramatically reduce. Based on the cremation trends in other parts of the world, it is never too late to start marketing a product in North America that half of customers find more satisfying and is incidentally more lucrative.

with a Personal Touch



SuperNova Intl

Family Photos on Memorials

If you have recently visited a local cemetery, you may have noticed that there are more and more family photos being engraved on granite monuments, markers and slants. Modern technologies have made this possible. Five years ago, only manufacturers, wholesalers and a few large retailers could afford to invest in a laser engraving machine (nearly a \$100,000 investment) which had the capability of lasering photos onto dark granite. Because a high-cost operation demands for a high volume, wholesalers and manufacturers who were able to laser engrave onto granite were forced to mainly promote pre-designed, stock laser etchings, such as deer, fishing and farm scenes. You may find a few memorials that have one or two personal portraits; however, they are often combined with pre-designed artwork and sceneries.



Stock Laser Etched Scene

To make laser etching onto granite a more realistic idea for smaller monument retailers and shops, SuperNova Intl introduced a line of affordable patent pending laser machines, called the AP-Lazer. Now, even small retailers can afford to have a laser machine to engrave photos and letters on memorials. Since then, a dramatic change in the marketplace has been observed: families are much more interested in etching multiple family photos onto their loved one's memorial. Once they understand the retailers can laser engrave just about any photo onto granite, their imaginations are ignited and the desires of having their most precious family photos on memorials forever become extremely strong. Families return with more and more photos, forcing them to purchase larger memorials to accommodate all of their loving memories. Consequently, laser engraving has created very emotional memorial art tailored for each individual family.

When Inch Memorials of Northwind, Michigan, acquired their first AP-Lazer Machine from SuperNova, they packaged together 5 photos along with a 24"x12"x4" black granite marker. They are able to retail these 5-photo granite markers for \$2,995. Imagine being able to sell a marker for that price!

The marker of Captain John T. Norris is a perfect example of a high-profit marker. With 4 photos and 2 symbols, the simple Jet Black marker was transformed into a picture worth a thousand words. Everyone who sees this monument will truly feel an emotional connection that is not lost. Family photos and personal elements lasered onto granite are eternally priceless.



Multiple Family Photos on a Marker

Personalization and Customization on Steroids

For the past decade, Death Care in North America has been embracing personalization in a variety of ways, including but not limited: to Funeral Celebrants, personalized caskets, personalized ceremonies, "vignette" lifestyle staging, personalized mourning jewelry (thumbies, cremation diamonds, etc.) and video tributes. Market penetration has been limited and many require added cost in terms of labor and supplies without a corresponding increase in revenue. In fact, gross margin (the critical factor you must control in a high fixed cost business) often goes down as personalization goes up.

Regardless of your religious persuasion, eternal life is a strong and compelling theme, underlying the emotions and buying drivers of consumers surrounding death or even terminal life circumstances. Clearly, having access to something that is as unique as the individual and their family has become increasingly popular. Experience is now showing that the permanence of granite combined with the ability to customize at a very attractive price point is often far more appealing (and coincidentally, far more lucrative for the seller) than many other options available.

Case in point: one of our smaller clients in a rural community serving approximately 70 families annually now generates \$70,000 in PROFIT each year over and above what he earns on burial and cremation services.

Even more important is the improved customer satisfaction and appreciation. He now receives as many notes and letters from monument buyers as he does for his funeral services. The extraordinary level of creative and artistic expression he provides his customers enables them to honor those they love, including pets, for generations into the future. He calls it personalization on steroids.

Capture Two Rising Trends with One Turn-Key Solution

To lead these market trends SuperNova recently designed a Turn-Key Solution for funeral homes, cemeteries and memorial retailers.

An AP-Lazer machine, a starter package of assorted cremation memorials, an online design program and marketing materials (flyers and posters) are all you need to start capturing two strong market trends: cremation memorials and laser-etched family photos. A small investment can be recouped in months and will add an average \$2000 gross profit for more than half of your cremation calls or services.

For more information about the Turn-Key Solution, please call 800.449.2481. Online demos are also available.