

If I had a son or daughter in the Funeral Business

I would tell them...

Funeral service is like no other service or product in the world.

If we are to succeed we need to stop believing it is.

Death is a deeply personal and deeply emotional experience.

Regardless of religious belief it is both sacred and awesome

I would tell them...

It's ok to borrow ideas from the Ritz Carlton and Disney

But when we try to become THEM...to be what we are not

When we start to refer to ourselves as concierges and event planners

**We risk trivializing the sacred and
Sacrificing our relevance**

We risk emphasizing **form over **substance****

We focus on the **superficial over the **significant****

I would tell them...

**Death is transcendent
It involves deep emotional drivers and subconscious
archetypes**

**It reaches back to generations never seen and
Forward to generations... as yet unseen**

**YES...Death IS emotional...and it should be
It is disorienting...it is chaotic...
And, YES, it can be frightening**

**But it can also be beautiful and affirming and
transforming**

**It touches the very core of our being and
those whose lives we touch ...or... hope to
touch**

And THAT is OUR job

We are facilitators of that transcendence

I would tell them...

Today's customer is not looking to evade their death

They are looking to manage their dying.

They are not looking for escape

They are looking for authenticity and affirmation

Maybe hospitality is the wrong metaphor

Maybe we are more like physicians or biographers

Maybe we should be looking at the Cleveland and Mayo Clinics and the Cancer Centers of America and Johns Hopkins for cues

I would tell them...

We are not in the business of helping people escape reality.

We are in the business of helping people heal.

People are not looking so much to ignore death as they are to make sure their life is affirmed.

That they mattered to someone.

That someone mattered to them.

That they will live on in a memory.

That they will be missed.

Is that really so much?

I would tell them...

“Preparing for death is one of the most empowering things you can do. Thinking about death clarifies your life.”

Our role is to create a safe place

To **be** remembered

To remember

To touch and be touched

To comfort and be comforted **and**

Connect one with one another

Our role is to guide the birth of each story...their god-given unique story

The story of

hard work

Of sacrifice

Of risks taken

Stories of victory and loss

Joy, Sadness and

Meaning...**most of all** meaning for...

I mattered is what they want to know

All they need to know:

I mattered.... **And... you my loved ones...mattered.**

I would tell them...

I am not going to build that \$3 million dollar monument to myself after all.

We don't yet know what facilities should be like... or if we even need one.

What we do know is that conventional facilities are built inside out with public areas as interior rather than exterior rooms. Dark, Somber.

We need light. For gosh sakes let's leave the lights on even when we have no calls. Even at night. Let's let people think there is life in here.

Let's have cheerful décor. An uplifting décor. No more earth tones. No more tomblike atmosphere.

Maybe we should bake cookies for our guests. YES, we need a cookie smell.

Outdoor party patios...YES, maybe outdoor party patios too...with a big stone grill.

I would tell them...

**Our advertising is obsolete.
No more visuals of grieving widows or shots of
consoling hands or consoling funeral directors.**

**And for all that is holy... let's... get... over...
ourselves.**

No one cares how wonderful **WE are or how many
years **WE** have been in business or how beautiful or
opulent our facilities are. It isn't about us...**

it never was.

**They want to know they won't get trapped in their
grief and that life will be happy again.**

**All the somber downbeats we express in our
advertising and communications only make us look
worse.**

Humor...YES, maybe humor. That's the ticket.

I would tell them...

**For gosh sakes get your nose out of that selection room
That's where we used to make our money...**

But not any more.

**This business can not... it will... not sustain itself by
wringing more and more money out of our best
customers...these are our friends for gosh sakes.**

I would tell them...

**Don't get attached to those funeral coaches and fine
limousines, long processions, fixed-pew chapels, big parking
lots and classy buildings. Those are only**

The rusty symbols of our past.

I would tell them...

Our future is dependent on only one thing...that one person loves another.

Without love we are and can only be... disposers of bodies.

It is love...and only love...that makes this a **noble profession....**

A profession...

Not a trade...

A profession that makes a vital contribution to society;

A profession that, if it were removed from the earth, would inevitably be reinvented.

I would tell them...

Love this business or get out.

You can't fight for something you don't love.

Mercenaries inevitably quit.

You can't...**you won't**... make the sacrifices necessary to make it work.

I would tell them...

People, today, will **hit you...**

hard. So what!! Man was not born for
cowardice

I would tell them...

Never, never be surprised when you emerge from that
phone booth as a super hero to rush to someone's
rescue...only to find **the very people you are trying to
help....**

standing on your cape.

You need to be willing...and able... to stand your ground.

Because **what we do is worth it.**

Without it...society would be lesser.

If you don't love something you won't have the
courage to stand and fight.

If you don't love what you do you are condemned
to a life of shallowness and pretend.

I would tell them...

You are **NOT** a Shop Foreman...**YOU** are a Professional...a knowledge worker

Stop letting people with manufacturing paradigms shape your destiny.

We don't make **THINGS**...we don't sell **THINGS**...

We help people restart their lives. We help people affirm their lives. And best of all **we make sure:**

NO-ONE...isforgotten!

Professionals, like us, need a purpose beyond themselves.

So learn how to **lead** people...

Not supervise them

I would warn them...

Stop chasing after rainbows and rabbit trails

We need to learn how to be better stewards

Don't believe everything you hear. There are "*Pied Pipers*" out there.

Practice a healthy skepticism. Never do anything that distracts even slightly from the **main goal...the only goal:**

Serve More Families...Every Year.

I would encourage them...

To understand the **WHY** of what we do:

Why has **every** society for over 4,000 years needed a class of people who cared for the dead and their survivors?

Why do humans **need** to gather in times of distress?

Why do People **need** to tell stories and hug and comfort and sit with and all the other things people do when calamity strikes?

I would tell them...

We are not the inventors of what we do...**we are only the facilitators**

Society **needs** us in this role.

I would tell them...

Be bold and proud of your vocation...your profession...your calling.

I would tell them...

WE ARE NOT IN THE **BURIAL** BUSINESS

WE ARE NOT IN THE **CREMATION** BUSINESS

WE ARE NOT IN THE **EVENT** BUSINESS

WE ARE IN THE **SACRED** BUSINESS OF **HOPE, LIFE**
AND **TRANSFORMATION**

And **Finally...**

I would tell THEM...

When all is said and done...

And the sun is setting on **THEIR career...**

YES, I would tell them...

Do Not Castrate Your Children

Train them up in the way they should go

Give them resources and teach them discipline

And then

Gracefully,

Yes...

**By all means,
Gracefully, quietly**

Get out of their way