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### ICCFA Magazine author spotlight

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► He began his career at McCall Bros. Funeral Directors, Victoria, in 1986, working as an embalmer, funeral director and prearrangement consultant.

### More from this author

► If you have any **questions about online price shoppers**, email Heppell at: robin@funeralfuturist.com

► To download Heppell's **free tutorial**, "Winning Email Price Shoppers with a Cell Phone and a Smile," go to [www.PriceShopperSecrets.com](http://www.PriceShopperSecrets.com)

► To download some **free resources about winning over price shoppers**, go to [www.PriceShopperSecrets.com/iccfa](http://www.PriceShopperSecrets.com/iccfa)

## TECHNOLOGY

More and more, people do their research before buying online rather than via the telephone. What does your website need to say about cremation in order to win their business?

What do you need to say to people who email you?



The first page of a McCall Brothers Funeral Directors video uploaded onto YouTube. The video, which can be found by searching for "cremation cost British Columbia," consists of five PowerPoint slides and audio narration explaining what cremation clients can expect from the firm. In other words, it emphasizes value rather than price and educates people regarding factors besides price that should be weighed when choosing a provider. See page 54 for more slides.

## The five keys to winning over online cremation shoppers

**T**here has been a lot of talk recently about winning over phone shoppers, but there hasn't been a lot said about how to win over cremation shoppers who communicate with you online, despite the increasing number of people who do their research and ask questions that way.

What do you need to do to convince someone who's looking for cremation information on the Internet and via email, rather than through making phone calls, that they should turn to your organization? I'm going to tell you the five keys to winning over online cremation shoppers.

### Keyword research: Knowing what they are searching for

The first key—and this shows you how different what we're talking about is from winning shoppers over the phone—is knowing about keyword research. We need to know how people actually search for cremation information online.

People are going to search for terms such as "cremation" and "(city, state)" and then the words "prices" or "costs." From research that I have conducted, five times as many people search for the phrase "cremation costs" as for "cremation prices," despite the fact that as funeral/cremation professionals, we are always

I suggest you break up your GPL into packages or service offerings and then provide a detailed explanation of each package. This can be done via text, audio or video.



Two more slides from the McCall Brothers Funeral Directors brief video on YouTube. The final slide (below) includes a friendly photo and phone number.



talking about price lists, price shoppers and pricing strategies.

Another interesting fact I discovered was that more people search for “average cremation costs” than for words that mean inexpensive, such as low-cost, cheap or affordable.

Keyword research is crucial because you will be using those words in the next four steps.

**Putting prices on your website –the right way**

The next important thing to focus on is making sure you include information on your website about how people can find out about cremation costs. I am not saying to just throw your General Price List up on your website. If you are going to do that, you need to accompany your GPL with a lot of explanation.

A better way is to break up your price list into service packages and to separate traditional funeral services and cremation services.



Put packages on your website rather than just throwing your GPL online without any explanation. Here’s an example of a package that includes pictures of caskets, urns, other merchandise and a reception to show people some of the many options available with cremation.

You might be thinking, “The FTC says we need to give out our General Price List.” True, but the Funeral Rule doesn’t require you to put your GPL on your website, much less spell out how to list prices online.

I suggest you break up your GPL into packages or service offerings and then provide a detailed explanation of each package. This can be done via text, audio or video.

I would start with an audio explanation, just as you would if you were explaining your cremation services over the phone (but without the fear of the person on the other end of the line telling you to stop). Once you have recorded your audio explanation, have your admin staff transcribe it and *voila*, you now have both your audio and text versions.

To create a video, don’t film yourself talking; take that audio file and combine it with PowerPoint slides that explain your packages through bullet points and/or photos.

Can you see how having the explanation along with your prices is much more powerful than just the GPL itself? Using audio or video also helps to build rapport, one of the keys to winning any price shopper, whether online or over the phone.

Again, I recommend having separate pages for traditional funeral prices and cremation prices. Those of you who really want to be proactive might even consider putting up a completely new website specifically focused on funeral and

cremation costs so the people who are not as price-focused don’t get confused.

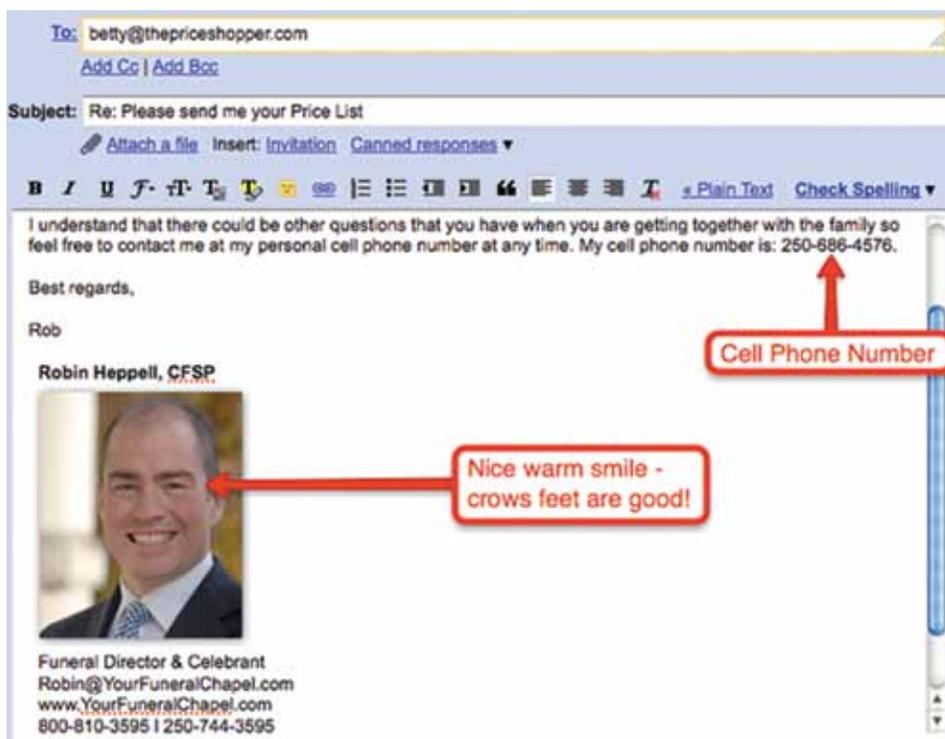
**Online video: Educating shoppers on YouTube**

The next key is online video. Even though I just talked about including videos explaining your prices on your website, that doesn’t mean you should upload your videos only to your website. You also should submit them to video sharing websites such as YouTube, which is owned by Google and also is No. 2 only to Google in terms of number of searches performed.

When someone searches for cremation costs in your town (which will likely be done using those keywords I mentioned earlier), if you have a video on YouTube you’ve flagged with those keywords in the title or description, that YouTube video is going to come up higher in their Google search than your website is. (So be sure your YouTube video includes a link to your website.)

These videos don’t need to be big Hollywood productions; they can be short little videos, maybe three to six PowerPoint slides explaining your prices and services as described above. The nice thing about video is you don’t have to worry about being interrupted by the person on the other end of the phone. You can just assume that the person doing the search has said, “Please tell me whatever you can about your cremation services.”

An online video, as opposed to a



**Email you send to potential clients should include your cell phone number, and your signature (which should be automatically affixed to every email) should include a friendly photo.**

telephone conversation, is available 24/7 and provides a consistent message. If one person sees it, he or she can send the link to other family members and they will all receive the same information.

Once you have uploaded your YouTube video (remembering to type in all the important keywords when prompted), don't stop there. There are other video sharing websites, including Revver, Daily Motion and Vimeo, where you can share your message.

**Email: The most overlooked and powerful way to win cremation shoppers online**

We sometimes forget that probably the most important way to communicate and win cremation shoppers in an online environment is through email.

In reading that, you probably remembered a recent instance when someone asked you to email your GPL. Did you simply respond by hitting reply and attaching your GPL, maybe with a sentence or two inviting them to get back to you if they have any questions? If so, you greatly reduced your chance of winning that call.

The secret to winning cremation shoppers via email is that this written

conversation is similar to a telephone conversation, and you need to think about what you have been taught in phone shopper trainer. As already mentioned, you want to start to build rapport with the person who contacted you.

Even though you've just been asked for prices, you certainly can send them additional information, such as a comparison shopping worksheet, links to your online videos and a checklist of questions to ask about cremation, such as "Do you own your own crematory?" or "How do you ensure that I will receive the correct remains?"

This is the kind of useful information that will lead a shopper to see the value you offer over your competitors. You can rest assured that your competitors probably are taking the easy route of just hitting "reply" and attaching their GPLs.

Try these two rapport-builders on the next online cremation shopper who emails you: include your cell phone number and a picture of yourself in your reply. With your cell phone number, just say, "I understand when you and your family are talking about the information you've gathered you may have more questions, so feel free to contact me on my personal cell phone at any time."

Don't want to give out your cell phone number? It's unlikely anyone is going to call you at 3 a.m. unless it's urgent. Remember what's on the line: winning a call. If you lose too many calls, you are not going to be in business. Giving out your cell phone number is a way of building rapport and conveying trust.

Don't forget to include your photo in your email signature. Just like business cards that include photos, they have more impact than ones that don't.

One last thing with email is that it never hurts to follow up with people who have contacted you that way. You can ask open-ended questions, just like you do over the phone, or point out some helpful information on your website or point them to other videos—don't assume that they have already reviewed every page of your website. In your emails to people, you want to engage them and share resources with them.

**Google AdWords/pay per click: A stealthy way of cherry-picking online shoppers**

The last thing I want to talk about is pay per click ads. The great thing about them is you can target them to specific keywords so if someone searches for "cremation costs in [your town]" a specific ad is displayed, an ad seen only by people who conduct that particular search, which identifies them as a shopper. People looking for other information about funeral homes or cemeteries are never going to see that particular ad, so you can target it to your intended audience.

Remember that with pay per click, the more congruent the ad is—meaning how well aligned the message is in terms of Search Phrase > Ad Copy > Landing Page (page where people are taken when they click on the ad)—the more conversions (ad clicks that result in actual business) you will get and the less those ads will cost.

**In summary: The new way to build rapport**

The next time you have an email cremation shopper, make sure you remember to build rapport with them as you do when talking to someone over the phone. And make sure you have a strategy for the "search shoppers," since if you don't, you really don't know what you are missing in terms of cremation business.